Colmers School and Sixth Form

COLMERS SCHOOL
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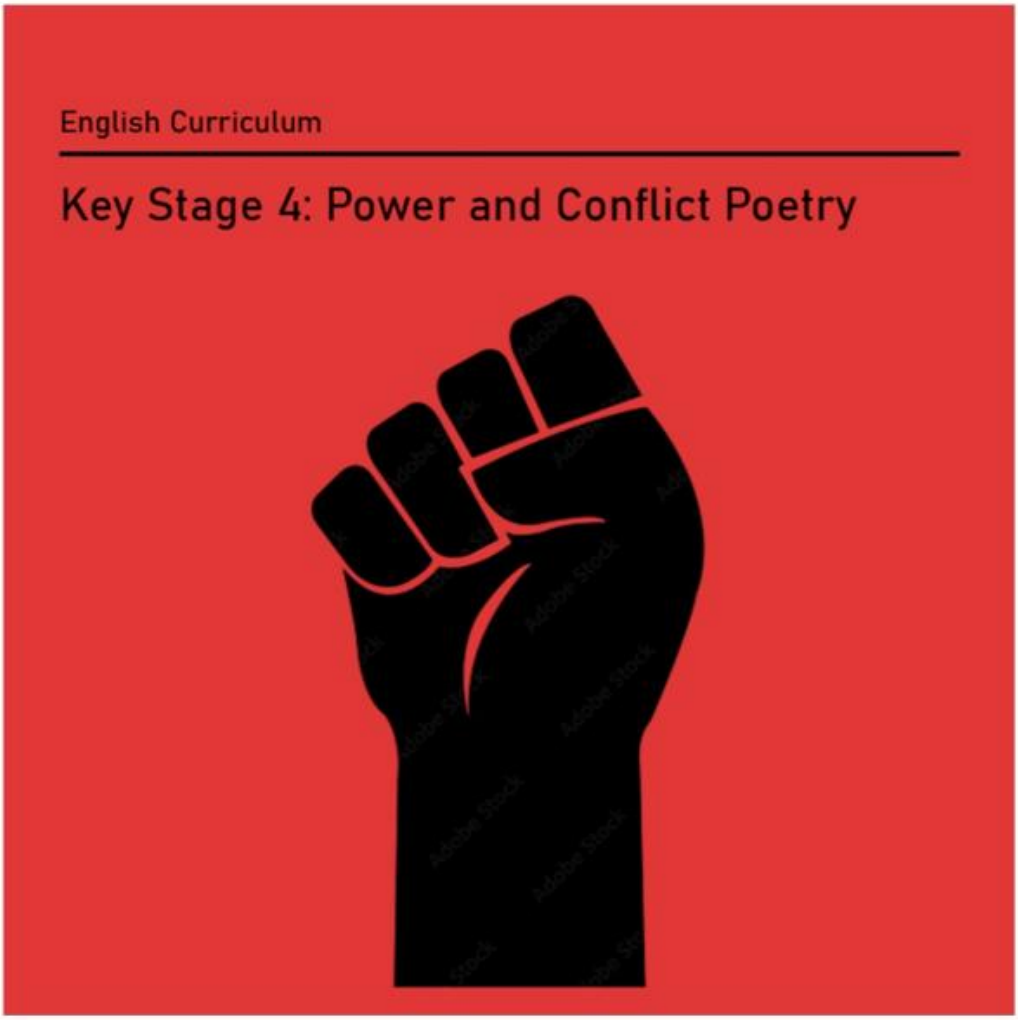
Name: _____ Group: _____

Year 10 Power and Conflict

KS4 English: *War* Poems



Home Learning Booklet

Autumn 1A

Achieving Excellence, Belonging Together, Challenging Mindsets

THE WHY

Home Learning Intentions:

The primary intention is:

- **Retrieval Practice** - of the key ideas in the poems
- **Deliberate Practice** – writing about the poems to prepare for an exam question

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Overview

This is English Literature AQA Paper 2: Section B.

- The poems you will be studying explore the themes of Power and Conflict.
- Within your exam, you will need to look at how poems link together so you can compare and contrast how they explore themes of power and conflict.
- Importantly you will need to learn all the poems well, as you will not know what is likely to come up in your exam.
- Also, remember that 'conflict' is a big term, it can mean war and violence, but it can also be inner conflict about identity and place.

Where to find additional support:

Knowledge Organiser

Poem	Conflict	Power	5 Key Quotations	Structure	Context
Ozymandias	Conflict between a warriors great power being reduced to wreckage.	Human power doesn't last forever. Nature is stronger.	Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Sneer of cold command Look on my works ye Mighty and despair! Nothing beside remains Colossal wreck boundless and bare	The sonnet rhyme scheme is irregular, perhaps symbolic of the broken statue itself, no longer perfect.	It acts as a warning to anyone who thinks they are immortal that power won't last. Also a romantic poet who believed in the power of nature.
Extract from The Prelude	Conflict between man and nature: nature proves it is more powerful.	The power and beauty of nature to make man feel overwhelmed and insignificant.	An act of strength and troubled pleasure Heaving through he water like a swan Huge peak, black and huge With trembling oars I turned O'er my thoughts there hung a darkness	As journey progresses poem becomes rougher. 'And' is repeated to give a breathless feel.	This romantic poet emphasises the power and beauty of nature.
London	Conflict caused by the greatest city in the world having great poverty and oppression.	The abuse of power in Victorian England and the lack of power amongst the poor in society.	Where the chartered Thames does flow The mind-forged manacles I hear Every black'ning church appals The hapless soldiers sign Blights with plagues the Marriage hearse	The regular rhyme scheme reflects the regular walking pace of the narrator as he walks around the city.	Set during poverty of industrial revolution when there was huge poverty. The poet is supporting the French revolutions quest for liberty.
Poppies	Conflict from prospective of mother left behind when son goes to war.	The powerless of the mother who must deal with her son's departure to war.	Before you left I pinned one on to your lapel Crimped petals, spasms of paper red The world overflowing like a treasure chest A single dove flew from the pear tree Hoping to hear your playground voice… on the wind	The poem uses a lot of enjambment to enhance the idea of natural tone and the mother's voice.	The poem is focused on the idea of poppies as symbols of memorial.
Remains	Explores the long term effect that conflict in war has on a soldier.	A soldier's power or lack of power over his own memories and experiences of war.	Probably armed, possibly not We got sent out to tackle looters Pain itself, the image of agony He's here in my head when I close my eyes His bloody life in my bloody hands	Enjambment shows the painful memories run on and on in his mind.	This poem highlights the problem of post-traumatic stress disorder in soldiers.
Storm on the Island	The conflict between man and nature and peoples fear of the weather.	The power of weather to instil fear into man.	We are prepared we build our houses squat The wizened earth had never troubled us Spits like a tamed cat turned savage Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs It is a huge noting that we fear	Present tense suggests the storm is occurring now. Enjambment helps add to the conversational tone.	The poet was born on an isolated storm-battered island which acts as a metaphor for the troubles in Ireland.
War Photographer	Conflict between a war zone and rural England.	The powerful war images contrast with the detached way they are consumed.	Spools of suffering set out in ordered rows Rural England. Home again to ordinary pain. Hands.. did not tremble then but seem to now He remembers the cries of this man's wife He stares impassively… and they do not care	The regular 4 line structure reflects the order he is giving to the chaos in photos.	The poet is bitter about the indifferent way in which people view modern welfare through newspapers.
My Last Duchess	Conflict between how the speaker presents himself and who he actually is.	The power the speaker had over his wife's life.	That's my last duchess… looking as if she were alive Who passed without much the same smile? Had your skill in speech – which I have not – I gave commands then all smiles stopped Notice Neptune though taming a sea horse	Enjambment, caesura and pauses to reflect the speakers train of thought. Rhyming couplets and iambic pentameter show high status.	Based on The Duke of Ferrera from the Italian Renaissance to indirectly comment on sin in the Victorian era.
Exposure	Conflict between a man and the cruel weather in a warzone.	Nature is more powerful and deadly then bullets and shells.	Merciless iced east winds that knife us Mad guests tugging on the wire Pale flakes with fingering stealth come.. for our faces Shutters and doors are closed: on us the doors are closed But nothing happens	The 5th line in each stanza creates an anti-climax. Para-rhyme reflects how unsettled the soldiers are.	The poet wanted to truthfully show the real conditions for soldiers on trenches.
The Charge of the Light Brigade	The bravery of the soldiers and the stupidity on the mission.	The powerful military rhythm matches the rhythm of marching drums.	Into the valley of death rode the six hundred Someone had blundered Stormed at with shot and shell Theirs not to reason why theirs but to do and die When can their glory fade?	It has a military rhyme similar to the sound of marching drums of horse hooves.	A miscommunication led a group of soldiers head first into a battle with catastrophic results.
Tissue	Conflict caused by holding on to things too tightly.	This poem explores how we cling too tightly to power and should build more things with paper like qualities.	Paper that lets the light shine through If building were paper I might feel their drift Maps too. The sun shines through. Fly our lives like paper kites Raise a structure never meant to last	Enjambment creates a human and calm time. The poem starts looking at the joy of things like paper and wonders what the world would be like if it had the same qualities.	Written from the POV of someone looking at the troubles of the modern world, destruction, war and politics and wealth as well as issues like terrorism and identity.
Bayonet Charge	The conflict involved in rushing out of the trenches to attack.	The powerful and raw emotions involved in rushing out form the trenches.	Suddenly he awoke and was running He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm The patriotic tear.. sweating like molten iron A yellow hare that rolled like a flame His terrors touchy dynamite	Enjambment adds to the chaos of the battlefield.	The poem looks at the dehumanising impact of leaving the trenches into no-man's land.
Checking out me History	Conflict between what we are taught and not taught by society.	This poem rebels against the way powerful black figures from history are marginalised.	Bandage up me eye with me own history Dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat But dem never tell me about Mary Seacole Nanny sea-far woman of mountain dream I carving out me identity	The irregular verse and colloquial language mirrors the drum beat of the Caribbean music.	The poem looks at how history is taught and the conflict between fact and truths which is sometimes obscured by race or gender.
The emigree	Conflict between childhood memories of a place and adult understanding.	The power of childhood memories of a place can affect people in adulthood.	My memory of it is sunlight clear I am branded by an impression of sunlight The child's vocabulary I carried here like a hollow doll I comb its hair and love its shining eyes They accuse me of being dark in their free city	The tack of a consistent line structure or rhyme reflects the speaker's confusing feelings about the city.	The poet baes many of the ideas on examples of emigration from countries like the Middle East where people are fleeing corruption and tyranny.
Kamikaze	Conflict between the rules and honour of society and the desire to survive and return to family.	The power of the Japanese government and the power of family.	A one way journey into history A green-blue translucent sea My mother never spoke again We too learned to be silent Wondered which had bene the better way to die	Uses italics for an aside to maybe show the daughter speaking to her own children	It was considered a great honour in japan to die for your country. The pilot in this poem returns home and is rejected by his family forever.

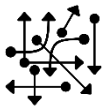
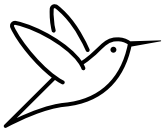
HOW TO USE THIS REVISION SHEET

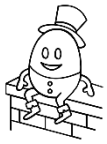
Bronze:
Colour code poems that go well together under each heading.

Silver:
Ask your family and peers to test your knowledge of each poem.

Gold:
Use the grid to help you write essays comparing how power or conflict is shown in two poems.

Key Vocabulary

	**ambiguity**	**When something is unclear or open to interpretation** My Last Duchess is a poem filled with ambiguity, as it is clear that the Duchess has died, but we aren't told how.
	**anecdotal**	**If something is anecdotal, it is a story told by one person about their own experiences.** Poppies is an anecdotal poem.
	**caesura**	**A pause near the middle of a line of poetry caused by punctuation, usually to make a line feel disjointed.** The use of **caesura** in Ozymandias may indicate the sudden and complete nature of the leader's loss of power.
	**colloquial**	**When language is colloquial it is informal.** The colloquial language in Remains shows us that ordinary people were traumatised by what they saw in conflict.
	**dramatic monologue**	**A poem in the form of a speech or narrative by an imagined person, in which one speaker is the narrator, and they inadvertently reveals aspects of their character while describing a particular situation or series of events.** My Last Duchess is a dramatic monologue.
	**enjambment**	**Where one line of poetry flows onto the next line with no punctuation between, usually to show how endless something is.** The poet might write for Many lines without a single Piece of punctuation to break up their flow Because they are using Enjambment.
	**ephemeral**	**If something is ephemeral, it lasts for a very short time.** Ozymandias shows us that human power is ephemeral.
	**extended metaphor**	**A metaphor that runs all the way through a poem or piece of text.** The poem Tissue uses an extended metaphor of paper to represent the fragility of human life.
	**fricative**	Alliteration of F sounds **The freezing flakes of ice.**
	**juxtaposition**	Two things being placed close together with to highlight the contrast of them. **In the poem Kamikaze, the concept of family and community is juxtaposed with ideas of abandonment and isolation.**

	**oppression**	**The act of being maliciously treated unfairly or unjustly.** The people of London in Blake's poem are the victims of governmental oppression.
	**oxymoron**	**A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.** 'Awfully good', 'bittersweet', 'same difference', 'original copy'.
	**patriotism**	**Patriotism is a love of one's country. A patriotic person feels the good of their country should come before all else.** The Japanese fighter pilots in Kamikaze were taught that patriotism is worth dying for.
	**plosive**	**Alliteration of 'p' and 'b' sounds.** **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**eppers.
	**rhyme**	Where the words at the end of a line in a poem sound the same. Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and **despair**! Nothing beside remains. Round the **decay** Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and **bare** The lone and level sands stretch far **away**.
	**Sibilance**	Alliteration of S sounds **The snake slid softly into the silent shrubs.**
	**sonnet**	Sonnets are a form of poetry, usually used in love poetry, that have 14 lines, usually rhyme, and have a volta towards the end. Ozymandias is a sonnet in order to demonstrate the love that the leader had for himself.
	**volta**	A sudden and unexpected change in a poem, usually towards the end. Ozymandias' loss of power at the end is the volta of the poem.

Any others: e.g.

Semantic field

Simile

Oxymoron

Big Ideas: effects of power



Poem	Big ideas:	Title – what it suggests:	Form / structure (headline):
Ozymandias (Shelley)	Power is temporary, human pride crumbles before time and nature. Political authority is fragile; art outlives rulers, but even art decays. References to legacy here and how current leaders should learn from the mistakes of those before.	Name of a once-mighty pharaoh; promises immortality, undercut by ruin. Irony signalled from the outset.	**Sonnet-variant** (loose Petrarchan/ Shakespearean mix); **volta** undermines hubris; **irregular rhyme** mirrors collapse of his power.
London (Blake)	Institutional power (Church, monarchy, industry) causes suffering; oppression is systemic. People are psychologically chained.	A map-word implying ownership/control; the city itself is a prison.	**Quatrains with ABAB**; **refrain-like repetition** ("marks", "chartered"); **regular meter** intensifies the drone of misery.
Extract from The Prelude (Wordsworth)	Nature humbles the arrogant self; encounter with the sublime triggers moral growth. Childhood confidence gives way to fear and awe.	"Prelude" signals a beginning/formation of identity; this "stealing the boat" episode is a rite of passage.	**Blank verse**; **epic-style single verse paragraph**; **volta** when the mountain looms.
My Last Duchess (Browning)	Patriarchal control, jealousy, and entitlement; power abuses hide behind culture and "taste." Reform of the marriage system in place.	Possessive pronoun ("My") hints ownership; "Last" suggests a pattern; "Duchess" masks violence with status.	**Dramatic monologue** in **iambic pentameter**; **enjambment** = conversational control; rhyme scheme **AABB** (heroic couplets) tightens dominance.
The Charge of the Light Brigade (Tennyson)	Patriotism, obedience, and the cost of blunder; celebrates courage while exposing waste. Exposing those in high-ranking positions within the army and how this should be a position that you have earnt and not born into. Political platform to criticise the military.	"Charge" promises action and duty; "Light Brigade" hints vulnerability.	**Ballad-like anaphora**; **dactylic rhythm** suggests gallop; **refrains** ("Half a league…") memorialise sacrifice.
Exposure (Owen)	Nature is the real enemy; soldiers die slowly from weather and waiting. War empties meaning and faith. Owen is critical of the jingoistic and patriotic messages that the soldiers had been indoctrinated with before joining the army. He wants to expose the truth of what the reality of war actually is. Political platform, poem that is critical of the government that is not stopping the war.	"Exposure" = to the elements and to truth; victims are laid bare.	**Half-rhymes** create **pararhyme disquiet**; **cyclical stasis** ("But nothing happens"); **regular stanzas** undermine hope.
Storm on the Island (Heaney)	Community faces unseen power; fear of what cannot be controlled or known. Nature and belief amplify anxiety. Political messages raised regarding religion, something that we cannot see, causes these "storms" suggesting peace.	Plain, literal title (like a weather report) masking deeper threat; "Stormont" echo invites political reading.	**One-stanza dramatic monologue**; **enjambment** = buffeting force; **blank verse** realism; **turn** to unseen fear.

Poem	Big ideas:	Title – what it suggests:	Form / structure (headline):
Bayonet Charge (Hughes)	In battle, ideology collapses into raw survival; patriotism becomes meaningless under terror.	"Bayonet" foregrounds close-quarters violence; "Charge" = forced momentum.	**Free verse**, **caesurae** and **enjambment** jolt pacing; mid-line turns mirror shock.
Remains (Armitage)	Trauma lingers after the act; memory replays violence endlessly. Guilt relocates war into civilian life.	"Remains" = body fragments and psychological leftovers; double meaning signals aftermath.	**Conversational monologue**; **uneven line lengths** mimic recall; **cyclical ending** traps speaker.
Poppies (Weir)	Private grief behind public remembrance; motherhood and loss entwined with national ritual.	"Poppies" invokes remembrance and blood; soft image conceals pain.	**Free verse** with **time shifts/ enjambment**; textile imagery threads memory; **domestic lexicon** vs war.
War Photographer (Duffy)	Ethical tension of witnessing; suffering becomes commodity at home. Distance numbs compassion. How people have become desensitised from the reality of what is happening in these war torn countries.	Job title reduces person to role; clinical, professional mask.	**Regular quatrains** = attempt at order; **metre + caesura** reflect control vs chaos; **voltas** of perspective (field → darkroom → readers).
Tissue (Dharker)	Human systems are fragile; paper and maps can both confine and liberate. Transparency > rigidity.	"Tissue" = paper/skin; thinness suggests vulnerability and light.	**Free verse**, **extended metaphor**; **light/ transparency motif**; loose structure resists borders.
The Émigrée (Rumens)	Exile and memory: love for a homeland persists despite political darkness. Identity is place-shaped.	"Émigrée" centres displacement; foreign term foregrounds outsider status.	**Free verse**, **refrains/ repeated images**; shifting time frames; **ambiguous final stance** (love vs oppression).
Checking Out Me History (Agard)	Colonised education erases heritage; reclaiming narrative restores identity and power. Critical of the education system to be more inclusive.	Colloquial rebellious phrase challenges authority; "History" as gatekept story.	**Dramatic monologue**, **phonetic spellings**, **split registers** (Euro vs Caribbean histories); **anaphora** and chant rhythms.
Kamikaze (Garland)	Shame/patriotic pressure vs human instinct; choice to live leads to social death.	"Kamikaze" frames duty and sacrifice; title pre-loads conflict between nation and family.	**Free verse**, **third-person with embedded daughter's voice**; **shifts in perspective** and natural imagery mark turning point.

Model Revision Card

‘Title of Poem’

Key Image

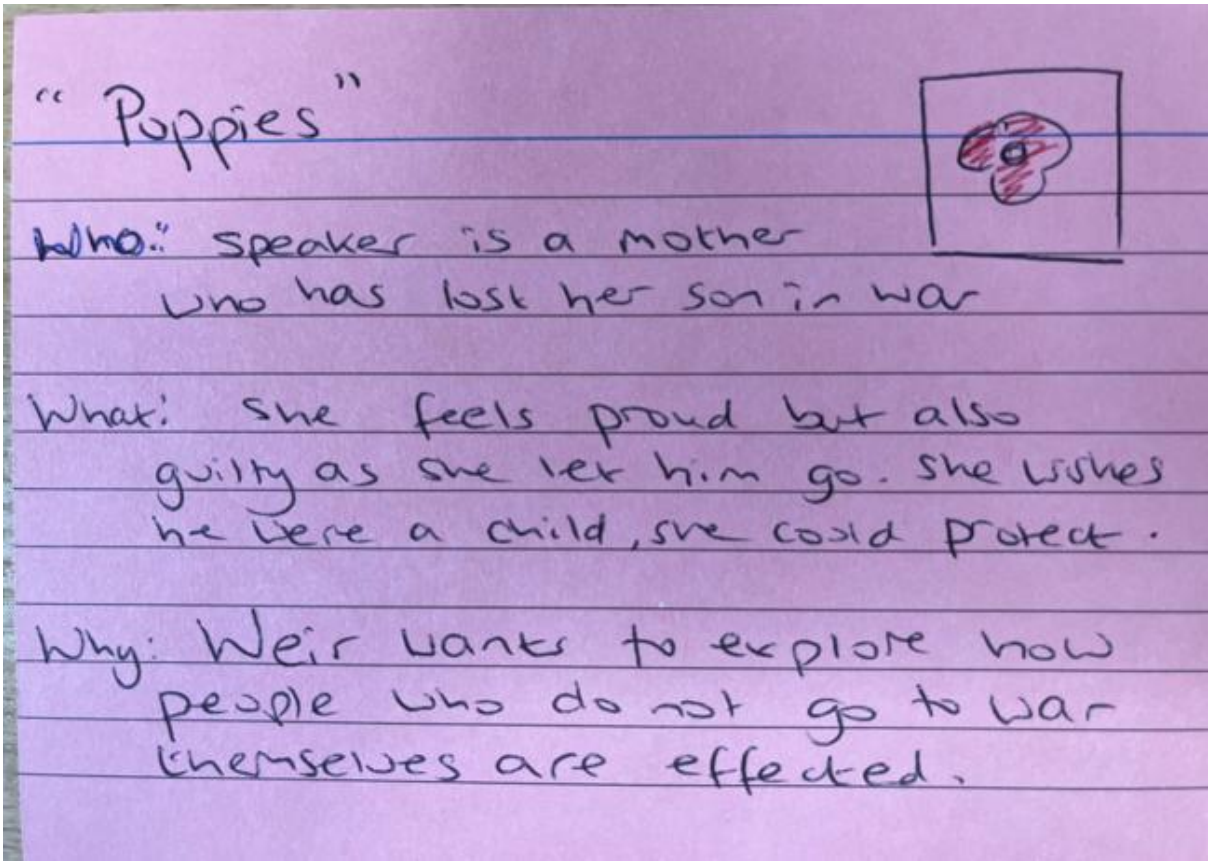
WHO: is the writer or speaker?

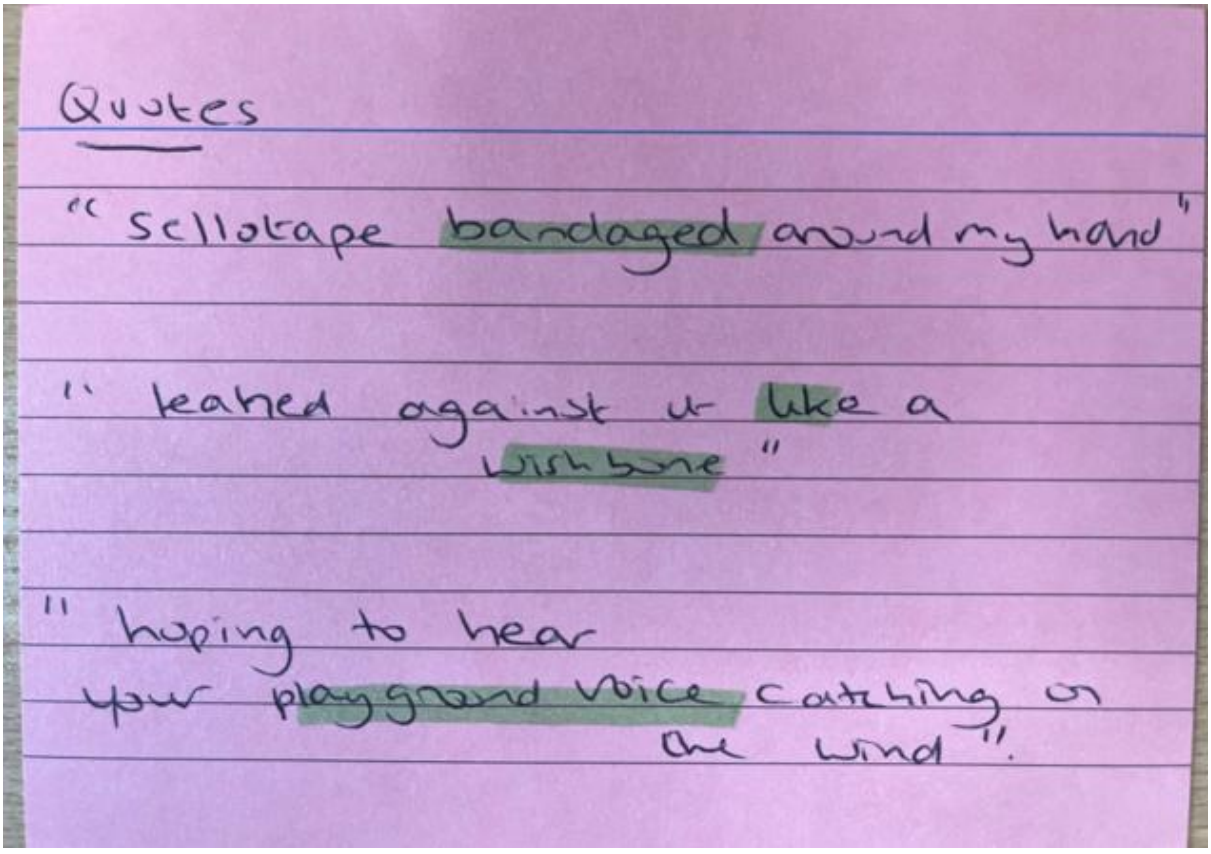
WHAT: is the poem about?

WHY did the writer write it? (Big Idea)

Quotes:

Example Card





Poem 1: Exposure

‘Exposure’ by Wilfred Owen



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The speaker belongs to a unit of soldiers who are lying in the trenches near a battlefield during the First World War. The unit are trying to rest but they are anxious that the enemy could attack at any moment. It is dawn in winter, and the soldiers are exposed to the elements: wind, freezing temperatures, rain and snow. The soldiers imagine returning home to their families in England but the doors are closed – they feel that they have been forgotten. The men continue to wait in the trenches as the frost begins to cover them.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **What is the speaker saying about the situation he finds himself in?**

2. **How does the speaker feel?**

3. **What does he mean by saying 'but nothing happens'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of nature	
Power of humans	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "Slowly our ghosts drag home."

A: **Psychological death** – Calling them "ghosts" shows they've lost their humanity and feel emotionally dead.

B: **Inevitable death** – "Ghosts" suggests they are already close to death, foreshadowing what's to come.

C: **Extreme exhaustion** – "Drag" conveys slow, painful movement, highlighting physical suffering and fatigue.

D: **Disconnection from home** – "Home" implies comfort or escape, but as "ghosts" they can never truly return to normal life.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You could make your revision card now:

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Owen's line "Slowly our ghosts drag home" indicates how the soldiers feel as if they are already dead inside. The metaphor "ghosts" suggests they have lost their emotions and identity because of the war, and it also hints that death is very close. The verb "drag" shows how exhausted and weak they are, emphasising the harsh conditions they are suffering in. Meanwhile, "home" represents comfort and safety, but by calling them "ghosts," Owen suggests they can never truly return to the people they were before the war. This highlights how war dehumanises soldiers and leaves lasting damage.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Poem 2: Bayonet Charge

'Bayonet Charge' by Ted Hughes



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

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

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame
And crawled in a threshing circle, its mouth wide
Open silent, its eyes standing out.
He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge,
King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm
To get out of that blue crackling air
His terror's touchy dynamite.

The title 'Bayonet Charge' reminds the reader of the enormous loss of life caused by this military tactic and hints at the futility of war.
The poem describes a soldier who is charging with his bayonet towards enemy gunfire. The soldier could be 'going over the top' into 'no man's land', (an area of land which exposed soldiers to enemy gunfire). The soldier initially felt a patriotic duty to take part in the war, but this has been replaced by terror.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **What is the speaker saying about the situation he finds himself in?**

2. **How does the speaker feel?**

3. **What does he mean by saying 'the patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of nature	
Power of humans	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "King, honour, human dignity etcetera."

A **Rejection of patriotism** – The soldier dismisses traditional patriotic ideas like serving the "King" because they seem unimportant in battle.

B **Survival over ideals** – Faced with death, concepts such as "honour" and "human dignity" are overshadowed by the instinct to stay alive.

C **Criticism of war propaganda** – Hughes suggests that the noble reasons used to encourage men to fight are empty compared to the reality of combat.

D **Loss of belief** – The dismissive word "etcetera" implies the soldier no longer believes in the values that may have motivated him to enlist.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

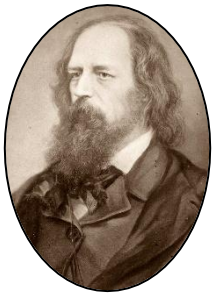
You could make your revision card now:

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Hughes' use of the phrase **"King, honour, human dignity, etcetera"** shows the soldier rejecting the traditional ideas used to justify war. The list of abstract nouns, "King, honour, human dignity," represents patriotic values that are often used to encourage men to fight. However, the dismissive word **"etcetera"** suggests that these ideas seem meaningless to the soldier in the reality of battle. This shows how fear and the instinct to survive overpower noble ideals when faced with death. Hughes highlights the gap between the glorified image of war and the brutal experience of those who actually fight in it.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Task 3: Charge of the Light Brigade



‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ by Tennyson

1.
Half a league, half a league, Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
  Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
"Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
  Rode the six hundred.

2."Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
  Someone had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
  Rode the six hundred.

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

4.Flash'd all their sabres bare,

Flash'd as they turn'd in air

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

5.

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

6.
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
  All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made,
Honor the Light Brigade,
  Noble six hundred!

The poem describes s real battle between six hundred British soldiers on horseback armed with swords who rode towards enemy soldiers armed with cannons. Although the soldiers fought bravely, the military unit suffered severe losses. The speaker ends the poem by commanding the reader to honour the soldiers.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **What is the speaker saying about the battle and losses?**

2. **How does the speaker encourage to reader to feel?**

3. **What does he mean by saying 'honour the charge they made'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of nature	
Power of humans	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "Theirs not to reason why/theirs but to do and die."

A: **Duty and obedience** – The soldiers are expected to follow orders without questioning them, showing the importance of discipline in the army.

B: **Lack of control** – The phrase suggests the soldiers have no power over their fate and must trust their commanders' decisions.

C: **Bravery and sacrifice** – "Do and die" presents the soldiers as courageous because they continue despite knowing the danger.

D: **Criticism of military leadership** – Tennyson may be highlighting the tragic consequences of blind obedience, as the soldiers carry out orders even when they lead to certain death.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You could make your revision card now:

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Tennyson's statement, **"Theirs not to reason why / Theirs but to do and die,"** emphasises the soldiers' unquestioning obedience to authority. The repeated word **"theirs"** suggests that their duty is fixed and unavoidable, while the contrast between **"reason"** and **"do and die"** shows that they are not expected to question orders, only to carry them out. This highlights the discipline and loyalty of the Light Brigade, making their actions seem brave and honourable. However, it could also be interpreted as a criticism of military leadership, as the soldiers are sent towards almost certain death without having any control over their fate. Through this, Tennyson portrays both the courage of the soldiers and the tragic consequences of blind obedience.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Task 4: Remains



‘Remains’ by Simon Armitage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The speaker is a soldier who describes how he and two other soldiers fatally shoot a thief who is running away from a bank robbery. The man’s corpse is treated with little respect as it is loaded into the back of a lorry. The speaker walks past the scene of the shooting regularly. When the soldier returns home on leave, he is troubled by flashbacks and nightmares of the shooting. The speaker abuses drugs and alcohol to help him forget, but the memories continue to haunt him.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **What is the speaker saying about the situation he finds himself in?**

2. **How does the speaker feel after returning home?**

3. **What does he mean by saying 'and the drink and the drugs won't flush him out'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of conflict	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "probably armed, possibly not."

A: **Moral uncertainty** – The soldier is unsure whether the man was actually a threat, creating doubt about whether the shooting was justified.

B: **Guilt and trauma** – The uncertainty shown by "probably" and "possibly" suggests the soldier cannot stop questioning his actions, contributing to his guilt.

C: **Confusion of war** – Armitage highlights how soldiers often have to make split-second decisions with incomplete information.

D: **Dehumanising effects of conflict** – The fact that the man is shot despite uncertainty suggests how war forces soldiers to act before fully considering the consequences.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You could make your revision card now:

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Armitage's phrase **"probably armed, possibly not"** highlights the soldier's uncertainty about whether the man he shot was actually a threat. The adverbs **"probably"** and **"possibly"** show his doubt, suggesting that he is unable to be sure whether his actions were justified. This uncertainty contributes to the soldier's guilt, as he repeatedly questions the morality of what happened. Furthermore, the quote reflects the confusion of combat, where soldiers must make life-or-death decisions in a matter of seconds. Through this ambiguity, Armitage emphasises the psychological impact of war and shows how traumatic memories can continue to haunt soldiers long after the conflict has ended.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Task 5: War Photographer

'War Photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy



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

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

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

A hundred agonies in black and white
from which his editor will pick out five or six
for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyeballs prick
with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers.
From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where
he earns his living and they do not care.

A war photographer is in his darkroom developing pictures. He is back in England after photographing a warzone overseas. He prints a picture of a man (possibly dead or seriously hurt) and remembers the cries of the man's wife. Of the hundreds of horrific photos taken, only five or six will in a magazine in the Sunday paper. The photographer expects that the readers will only be momentarily affected by the images.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **What is the writer saying about the situation the photographer is in?**

2. **How does she try to create empathy for the war photographer?**

3. **What does he mean by saying 'they do not care'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of war	
Power of humans	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "in his dark room he is finally alone."

A: **Escape from chaos** – The photographer is away from war and finally has a moment of peace and silence.

B: **Emotional isolation** – "Alone" suggests that nobody else can fully understand the traumatic experiences he has witnessed.

C: **Burden of responsibility** – The dark room is where he develops his photographs, forcing him to confront the suffering he has captured.

D: **Contrast between war and safety** – The calm, enclosed "dark room" contrasts with the violence of the battlefields, highlighting the different worlds he moves between.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You could make your revision card now:

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Duffy's line **"In his dark room he is finally alone"** highlights the isolation of the war photographer. The adverb **"finally"** suggests a sense of relief, as he has escaped the noise and danger of the war zones. However, the word **"alone"** also implies emotional isolation, as the photographer must deal with the traumatic images and memories by himself. The **"dark room"** can be seen as both a physical place where photographs are developed and a symbol of the suffering and darkness he has witnessed. Furthermore, the contrast between the safety of the dark room and the violence of the battlefields emphasises the difficult reality of his job. Through this, Duffy explores the lasting psychological effects of war and the loneliness of those who document it.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Task 6: Poppies

‘Poppies’ by Jane Weir



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

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

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

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

The poem describes a mother’s experiences of her son leaving home to go to war. As she neatens his uniform, she resists showing him affection, even though she longs to, and wishes that he was still a child. She watches him leave home, and goes to his bedroom. Later she follows a dove to a war memorial where she sits and thinks of her son.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **What is the speaker saying about the situation she finds himself in?**

2. **How does the speaker feel?**

3. **What does she mean by saying 'I was brave'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of war on civilians	
Power of loss	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "your playground voice catching on the wind."

A: **Memory of childhood** – The mother remembers her child as young and carefree, emphasising how much he has changed.

B: **Sense of loss** – The voice is only a memory, suggesting the child is no longer physically present in her life.

C: **Fear and uncertainty** – The voice "catching on the wind" seems distant and difficult to hold onto, reflecting the mother's anxiety about her son's future.

D: **Emotional connection** – Despite the distance between them, the mother still feels connected to her son through her memories of him.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You could make your revision card now: see example on p10.

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Weir's phrase **"your playground voice catching on the wind"** highlights the mother's longing for her son and her memories of his childhood. The noun **"playground"** evokes images of innocence, happiness and youth, reminding the reader of a time before conflict separated them. Meanwhile, the image of the voice **"catching on the wind"** suggests that these memories are fleeting and difficult to hold onto, reflecting the mother's sense of loss. The wind may also symbolise distance, showing how her son is moving further away from her both physically and emotionally. Through this imagery, Weir presents the powerful bond between parent and child and the pain of separation.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Task 7: Kamikaze

'Kamikaze' by Beatrice Garland



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

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

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

and remembered how he
and his brothers waiting on the shore
built cairns of pearl-grey pebbles
to see whose withstood longest
the turbulent inrush of breakers
bringing their father's boat safe - yes,
grandfather's boat – safe
to the shore, salt-sodden, awash
with cloud-marked mackerel,
black crabs, feathery prawns,
the loose silver of whitebait and once
a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous.

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

till gradually we too learned
to be silent, to live as though
he had never returned, that this
was no longer the father we loved.
And sometimes, she said, he must have
wondered
which had been the better way to die.

The poem focuses on a Japanese pilot who was supposed to complete a kamikaze mission during the Second World War. The pilot takes off, but part way to his target, he sees fishing boats at sea which reminds him of waiting for his grandfather's fishing boat when he was a child. The pilot decides to abort his mission and return home.

Following his return, he is shunned by his wife and neighbour. At first his children do not treat him differently but eventually they too realise they shouldn't speak to him. The speaker considers whether it would have been better if the pilot had died during the mission.

Notes:

Activity One - Comprehension

1. **Who is the speaker?**

2. **How does the speaker feel?**

3. **What does she mean by saying 'only we children chattered and laughed'?**

Activity Two – Big Ideas/Themes

Theme	How does the poem relate to the theme?
Power of nature	
Power of humans	
Conflict causes mental suffering	

Activity Three - Making an argument

Quotation "he must have wondered/which had been a better way to die."

A: **Emotional suffering** – The pilot suffers so much rejection from his family and community that it feels as painful as death itself.

B: **Criticism of honour culture** – Garland suggests that society values military honour so highly that choosing life leads to social death.

C: **Regret and doubt** – The phrase "must have wondered" implies the pilot questions whether returning home was the right decision.

D: **Different forms of death** – The quote contrasts physical death in battle with emotional and social death caused by being shunned by his family.

Which statement do you think is the most sophisticated interpretation and WHY?

I think the most sophisticated statement is…

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

You could make your revision card now:

Activity Four – How to write about the poem

Garland's line **"he must have wondered / which had been the better way to die"** highlights the devastating consequences of the pilot's decision to return home. The verb **"wondered"** suggests that he is filled with doubt and regret, questioning whether he made the right choice. Furthermore, the phrase **"better way to die"** presents a contrast between physical death in battle and the emotional death he experiences after being rejected by his family and community. This suggests that the shame and isolation he suffers are so severe that they feel worse than death itself. Through this, Garland criticises a culture that values honour and duty above human life, showing the tragic impact of society's expectations on individuals.

Explain **why** this is an effective analytical paragraph:

Revision Cards

‘Title of Poem’



WHO: is the writer or speaker?

WHAT: is the poem about?

WHY did the writer write it? (Big Idea)

‘Title of Poem’



WHO: is the writer or speaker?

WHAT: is the poem about?

WHY did the writer write it? (Big Idea)

‘Title of Poem’



WHO: is the writer or speaker?

WHAT: is the poem about?

WHY did the writer write it? (Big Idea)

‘Title of Poem’



WHO: is the writer or speaker?

WHAT: is the poem about?

WHY did the writer write it? (Big Idea)

Knowledge Check Questions

Key Quotes Quiz – Power and Conflict Poems

Questions

1. Exposure: “Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east _____ that knive us…”
2. Exposure: “But nothing happens” is repeated throughout the _____.
3. Bayonet Charge: “Suddenly he awoke and was running – raw in raw-_____ terror”
4. Bayonet Charge: “His terror’s touchy dynamite” is an example of a _____.
5. Charge of the Light Brigade: “Into the valley of _____ rode the six hundred.”
6. Charge of the Light Brigade: “Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and _____.”
7. Charge of the Light Brigade: “Cannon to right of them, / Cannon to left of them, / Cannon in front of them _____.”
8. Remains: “Probably armed, possibly not” is repeated to show the soldier’s _____.
9. Remains: “His bloody life in my bloody _____.”
10. Remains: “End of story, except not really” suggests the soldier cannot _____ the memory.
11. War Photographer: “In his darkroom he is finally _____.”
12. War Photographer: “A hundred agonies in black-and-_____.”
13. War Photographer: “The reader’s eyeballs prick with tears between the bath and pre-_____ beers.”
14. Poppies: “Spasms of paper red, disrupting a _____.”
15. Poppies: “I was brave, as I walked with you, to the front door” shows the mother hiding her _____.
16. Poppies: “Released a song bird from its _____.”
17. Kamikaze: “Her father embarked at sunrise with a flask of water, a samurai sword and enough fuel for a one-way _____.”
18. Kamikaze: “Little fishing boats strung out like bunting” is a _____.
19. Kamikaze: “He must have wondered which had been the better way to _____.”
20. Exposure: “Dawn massing in the east her melancholy _____ attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey.”
21. Bayonet Charge: “King, honour, human dignity, etcetera dropped like luxuries” is a list of abstract _____.
22. Charge of the Light Brigade: “Stormed at with shot and _____.”

23. Remains: “His blood-shadow stays on the street” is a symbol of lasting _____.

24. War Photographer: “Solutions slop in trays beneath his _____.”

25. Poppies: “The world overflowing like a treasure _____.”

26. Kamikaze: “A tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous” is an example of _____ language.

27. Exposure: “Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence” uses _____.

28. Bayonet Charge: “Bullets smacking the belly out of the air” is an example of _____.

29. War Photographer: “They do not care” highlights public _____.

30. Kamikaze: “He no longer existed” suggests he was treated like a _____ person.

Answers



Answers

1. winds
2. poem
3. sweating
4. metaphor
5. Death
6. die
7. volleyed
8. guilt
9. hands
10. escape
11. alone
12. white
13. lunch
14. blockade
15. fear
16. cage
17. journey
18. simile
19. die
20. army
21. nouns
22. shell
23. guilt
24. red
25. chest
26. ominous
27. alliteration
28. personification
29. indifference
30. dead

Further Revision

All other poems available on the portal: here

