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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | If- |
| **Summary:** This poem is addressed to Kipling’s son John and is paternal advice defining the qualities of exemplary manhood (albeit rather traditionally – you may have more progressive ideas!). Kipling advocates and celebrates stoicism, fortitude, responsibility and righteousness combined with a sense of humility. | | | | **Biographical: Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865 in India (in Bombay, now known as Mumbai) and died in 1936. Before his death, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was also offered a knighthood, but refused it. Much of his work is based on his knowledge of India and the East (he wrote The Jungle Book stories for children). Kipling’s very patriotic attitudes were challenged by the loss of his son, John, in WW1.** |
| **Stanza 1:** Kipling establishes his style of almost paradoxical statements of advice as he advocates virtues such as patience, trust and objectivity. | | *‘If you can keep your head when all about you*  *Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,’* | Use of iambic pentameter creates a conversational tone of advice with the repetition of the pronoun ‘you’ generating an intimate mood. |
| **Stanza 2:**  Kipling advises that one should remain magnanimous in victory and dignified in defeat – always retaining the quality of humility and be emotionally controlled. | | *‘If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster*  *And treat those two imposters just the same;’* | Use of capitalisation personifies the abstract nouns, suggesting the extreme effect of these experiences; the lexis ‘imposters’ reinforces Kipling’s indifference to the outcomes. | **Interpretation:** Widely directed at any young man growing into adulthood, this poem is a dramatic monologue in a didactic style, featuring a long list of virtues and old-fashioned values – almost a moral call to arms. The instructions on how to behave seem to describe a hyperbolic ideal in an increasingly modern world where life is full of complex challenges.  The poem is a series of conditional clauses starting with the anaphoric ‘If you can…’ with the repetition reflecting the fact that life may be difficult and certain responses hard to deliver at times. The caesura emphasising the syntactical balance in lines such as ‘If you can dream - and not make dreams your master’, advocates the precarious balance between high aspirations yet maintaining a realistic approach, and reinforces how high the expectations are. |
| **Stanza 3:** Kipling encourages developing the sheer grit and determination to be resilient and endure even when life seems unbearable. | | *‘If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew*  *To serve your turn long after they are gone,’* | The use of polysyndeton in the triplet reinforces how much strength is needed emotionally, psychologically and physically to endure difficulties in life. |
| **Stanza 4:** Kipling advocates treating everyone with the respect they deserve as human beings and how important it is to be able to relate to all kinds of individuals whatever their background. | | *‘If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,/or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,’* | The use of metonymy ‘Kings’ here juxtaposed with the image of crowds representing common people reminds the reader that everyone should be treated with respect. |
| **Stanza 4:** Final 3 lines – the whole poem has been building to the fulfilment of what you can become if you achieve all the challenges. | | ‘Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,  And – which is more – You’ll be a Man, my son!’ | Hyperbole, caesura and exclamation mark all heighten the dramatic impact of the climax. The capitalisation of ‘Man’ suggests the great virtue of such a man as almost God-like. |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | PRAYER BEFORE BIRTH |
| **Summary:** The title of this poem establishes the voice of this dramatic monologue as an unborn child. Using this voice, Louis MacNeice crafts a moving protest against the devastating effects of totalitarian regimes such as the Nazis during the Second World War. | | | | **Biographical:** Born in Belfast, Louis MacNeice was an outsider almost from the beginning. He was raised among books, but after his mother’s death his father remarried and Louis was sent to boarding schools in England. He attended Oxford University and rose to fame in the 1930s; in the 1940s, he joined the BBC where he wrote and produced well-regarded radio dramas alongside his poems. |
| **Part 1:** The narrator establishes his identity and naïve persona. (S. 1) | | *“O hear me” “bat or… rat or… stoat or…”* | The imperative and direct address suggest desperation; polysyndeton captures the irrational childhood fears. |
| **Part 2:** The anaphora shifts the poem to an incantation with real world threats (S. 2) | | *“tall walls wall me” “wise lies lure me” “black racks rack me”* | The repetition, alliteration and internal rhyme reinforce the claustrophobic fear here. | **Interpretation:** This poem was inspired by MacNeice’s deep despair at what had happened to Europe during the Second World War. He saw the rise of Nazism and other totalitarian states as a hugely worrying development.  He was not alone, but what makes MacNeice’s protest so moving is its use of dramatic monologue. His clever conceit is to replace his own voice with that of an unborn child, thereby making readers contemplate the influence of these regimes on the most helpless and innocent in society.  In combination with this conceit, he creates a hypnotic rhythm to his poem by using anaphora at the outset of each stanza to give form to the ‘prayer’. The way in which each stanza begins with ‘I’ but closes with ‘me’ also underlines how such a cruel world erases our attempts to define ourselves and form our own identities.  The short stanza referring to the man “who thinks he is God” might be applied to any number of dictators who cost the lives of millions during this era: Hitler, Franco, Mussolini or indeed Stalin. |
| **Part 3:** The poem briefly considers the unborn child’s hopes and dreams. (S. 3) | | *“trees to talk to me” “sky to sing to me” “a white light… to guide me”* | Alliteration and personification add to the magic atmosphere; a metaphor for conscience. |
| **Part 4:** The poem proceeds to detail how the world will corrupt the child. (S. 4) | | *“my words… speak me” “my life when they murder… by means of my hands”* | The inversion of the normal subject / object order captures the child’s total lack of agency. |
| **Part 5:** The child’s fate unravels into a life of humiliation. (S. 5) | | *“rehearse me” “parts I must play” “cues I must take”* | The semantic field of the theatre reinforces that the child is not in control. |
| **Part 6:** The child details two shocking alternatives in the worldand its reaction (S.6-8) | | *“a cog in the machine” “a stone… spill me”* | These metaphors express the child’s fears of becoming a killer or a victim. |
| **Partner Poems: If, War Photographer, The Tyger** | | *“I am not yet born” “otherwise kill me”* | In a shocking climax, the child prefers to be aborted than face either of the fates above. |  |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | Blessing |
| **Summary: We are dropped, in media res, into a parched, dry place where water is so scarce it has to be imagined. Suddenly, a pipe bursts and the people flock round with whatever vessels they can find (including their hands) to catch the water. The poem ends with children playing cheerfully in the spray. The title has religious connotations which are echoed several times in the poem, creating a sense of water as a source of life and salvation.** | | | **Biographical:** Dharker was born in Lahore, Pakistan. Her family moved to Glasgow when she was a baby. The main themes of Dharker's poetry include home, freedom, journeys, geographical and cultural displacement, communal conflict and gender politics. It is likely based on her experience of Dharvi, a migrant camp on the outskirts of Mumbai where water is scarce and temperatures often exceed 40 degrees. Dharker has said about Dharvi: “*…when a pipe bursts or a water tanker goes past, there is always a child running behind trying to catch drips of water. Water is like currency, it’s like money. In a hot country in that kind of climate it’s like a gift. It really is very precious. When the water comes it’s like a god.”* |
| **Stanza 1:** A very brief stanza which introduces us to the scarcity of water in this unnamed place. | *“the* ***skin*** *cracks”*  *“never enough”* | An ambiguous noun. It could mean the dry, parched skin of someone’s lips, or the cracked ground after a prolonged drought.  Lack of water is a constant state. |
| **Stanza 2:** She urges us to imagine the sound of water, which puts us in the shoes of those in the poem. We can’t help but empathise with them and how it must feel to have so little water. | *“drip“ “splash”*  *“voice of a kindly god”* | These onomatopoeias evoke the sound of water, but in small quantities which may be all the people in the poem ever know.  The religious connotations of the title, Blessing, are found here, too, as the sound of water is metaphorically described as the words of a benevolent god. |
| **Stanza 3:** The pace of the poem changes suddenly as a pipe bursts and people crowd around with vessels to catch the water. Dharker uses lots of references to money and precious things to emphasis how vital this water is. | *“sudden rush of fortune”*  *“silver crashes to the ground”*  *“roar of tongues”*  *“congregation”* | We take fresh water for granted, but here getting water is described like someone winning silver coins in a slot-machine jackpot.  This synecdoche draws our attention again to sounds, in this case the hubbub of people jostling around the burst pipe trying to get as much water as they can. ‘Tongues’ also reminds us of their thirst.  More religious connotations here as the people are likened to a group of worshippers. |
| **Interpretation:** A simple, narrative poem, but it reminds us how precious, valuable and life-saving water is, and how so many poor people in the world cannot depend on reliable sources of it. Adults clamour to get a bowlful or even a handful of the “silver”, while children gain huge pleasure and fun from playing in it. |
| **Stanza 4:** The upbeat ending focuses on children enjoying themselves in the gushing water. | *“the liquid sun”*  *“the blessing sings over their small bones”* | This metaphor vividly describes the sight of water in sunlight.  There is an echo of the title, and the vulnerable children are described as being blessed by this miracle of water, something we all take for granted daily. |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **d) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | Search For My Tongue |
| **Summary:** Sujata Bhatt crafts an unusually structured and very powerful poem that reflects her isolating experiences as a foreigner, with English as a second language, living in a new country. She is forced to search for her identity and her voice (represented by the metaphorical ‘tongue’) both of which are threatened in a new environment. Bhatt forces the assumed English reader into her own situation and the difficulties she faces trying to communicate in a foreign language whilst retaining her personal identity. The poem contains three types of language: colloquial addressing of the reader in English; Gujarati script with phonetic transcription; and use of extended metaphor. | | | | **Biographical:** Sujata Bhatt was born in 1956 in Ahmedabad, India. During her childhood she mainly spoke an Indian dialect called Gujarati but moved to a culture dominated by the English language when her family emigrated to the USA in 1968. The difficulties experienced by moving between different languages can clearly be seen in this poem. Some would interpret it as a criticism of English as a dominant empirical language that meant other cultures and languages had to compete to be heard and valued, reflecting amongst others, the legacy of white British rule in India. |
| **Part 1:** Bhatt uses a demanding conversational tone as if in response to a previously asked question (1-6) | | *‘You ask me what I mean…lost my tongue’*  *‘I ask you, what would you do if you had two tongues in your mouth…’* | This colloquial /argumentative tone, introduces the theme of frustration and anxiety at having one’s identity threatened through lack of ability to communicate and establishes the tongue as a metaphor for personal identity. |
| **Part 2:** Bhatt goes on to explain her fears of forgetting how to speak her native language and being forced to reject it in favour of English. (10-15) | | *‘Your mother tongue would rot, rot and die in your mouth until you had to “spit it out”.* | The repetition of ‘rot’ and the lexis ‘die’ suggest a traumatic experience and physical degeneration culminating in rejecting something disgusting through the colloquial imperative “spit it out”. | **Interpretation:** Language and structure are literally linked to meaning in this poem with the inclusion of the Gujarati script that renders a non- Gujarati reader silent, ironically communicating how one can become voiceless in a foreign country without the knowledge of the native language. Even if the reader pronounces the phonetic transcription detailed under the script, they are merely making sounds and not communicating, conveying Bhatt’s message that without language one can feel insignificant, invisible and experience loss of personal identity. The fear of losing your roots, or not being heard and having to fight to have your voice listened to is expressed here. However, a vibrant sustained metaphor of the tongue as a naturally regenerating plant presents the reader with Bhatt’s celebration of the strength and resilience of personal identity and the power of the individual to rise up and be heard, however much one is made to feel personally or culturally inferior. The final idea in the poem starting, ‘Everytime I think I’ve forgotten, I think I’ve lost the mother tongue…’ reflects the fact that this insecurity about personal identity linked to our language and ability to be heard is an ongoing one for people who do not have English as a first language. |
| **Part 3**. Bhatt shifts to a visual representation on the page of her native and new languages competing. (19-30) | | *‘but overnight while I dream’*  *Gujarati script*  *(may thoonky nakhi chay)* | The reader hears her foreign tongue through the phonetic transcription. The meaning is the Gujarati translation of the final section in English. It is positioned in the middle section because it is at the centre of the conflict she’s experiencing. |
| **Part 4:** Bhatt describes her native language, the essence of her sense of self- identity regenerating and growing stronger through an extended metaphor of a plant rooting, shooting, growing and flowering. The ending is powerful and celebratory with the surreal image of her tongue as ‘it blossoms out of my mouth’. | | *‘It grows back, a stump of a shoot grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins’.*  *‘It ties the other tongue in knots’.* | Metaphor of her tongue as a plant and the repetition of grows suggests an organic/natural process of regeneration that is not glamorised but inevitable. |
| Playing on the colloquialism ‘tongue tied’, this use of personification describes the mother tongue dominating the foreign tongue, therefore protecting her self-identity. |
| **Partner poems?** | | *‘the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,’* | The use of anaphora emphasises the ‘bud’ and natural regeneration and conveys her sense of awe and wonder at the power of her own spirit to protect her cultural identity. |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | Half-past Two |
| **Summary: A boy at Primary school is given a detention by his strict teacher who then leaves him alone. He is told he can leave at half-past two but he is unable to read the clock and so waits for much longer. The teacher eventually returns and dismisses him.** | | | **Biographical:** Fanthorpe was born in 1929. After getting her degree in English language and literature, she taught English at Cheltenham Ladies’ College for 16 years. Many of her poems are about children and teachers. |
| **Stanza 1 and 2:** We learn the boy behaves badly and gets a detention; the narrator can’t remember what the bad deed was. | *“once upon a schooltime”*  *“Something Very Wrong”*  *“(I forget what it was)”* | The fairystory opening and the childish neologism establish the boy’s age.  The capitals emphasise the sternness of the teacher.  The divagation in parentheses suggests it can’t have been that bad. |
| **Interpretation:** A major theme is the gap between childhood and adulthood; between innocence and experience. The teacher, presumably busy, let the boy slip her mind, perhaps just for an hour or so. For the boy this Time was a frightening, incomprehensible, endless thing he thought he would never escape.  The poem also explores how certain memories stay with us. The boy can’t remember what his bad behaviour was but will never forget the detention.  It also looks at how grown ups have solved all the quizzes and puzzles about how the world works, but children are still working it all out. This is why the boy has made up his own language of time and why the clock seems to him to be a difficult new language. |
| **Stanzas 3-5:** We learn he knows lots of times, but he doesn’t understand Time. | *“gettinguptime”*  *“timeformykisstime”*  *“Time”* | The familiar, family times he does know are run together into cosy, compound neologisms which he calls “important times”.  The capital on Time suggests fear because he does not understand it. Moreover, his fear the teacher stops him asking for help. |
| **Stanza 6:** The boy stares at the clock but cannot make sense of its language. | *“little eyes and two long legs”*  *“couldn’t click its language”* | Childish personification of the clock’s numbers and moving hands.  Time is a foreign language to him; he just cannot understand it. The onomatopoeic “click” echoes the ticking of a clock. |
| **Stanzas 7 and 8:** The time he waits alone seems to stretch into eternity as he has no way of measuring. | *“out of reach of all the timefors”*  *“the silent noise his hangnail made”* | He is alienated from the times he knows and understands. He feels he will be there “for ever”.  In the silence and expanse of time, tiny things gain huge significance. |
| **Stanzas 9 and 10:** The teacher returns and, without apology, tells him to leave. | *“I forgot all about you”*  *“she slotted him back into schooltime”* | Her words are italicised rather than in speech marks. They are polite but brusque.  To her this oversight was a minor thing, easily resolved. |
| **Stanza 11:** The experience stays with the boy forever. | *“he escaped into the clockless land forever”* | Not understanding Time seems a very frightening and dangerous place. |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **d) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | Piano |
| **Summary: This poem describes how a singer’s performance leads the narrator to feel nostalgic when reliving memories from his childhood when he would sit underneath the piano as home as his mother played. The memories are bitter-sweet as they evoke both feelings of haunting grief for his mother and a sense of loss about a time when life was innocent and straightforward, coupled with comforting and happy memories that offer temporary relief from the pressures of adulthood.** | | | | **Biographical:** David Herbert (D.H.) Lawrence was born in 1885 in a coal-mining town in Nottinghamshire, UK, where his father worked a s a miner. He died in 1930 from tuberculosis and is famous for both his novels and his poetry. Lawrence was devoted to his mother, who died of cancer when he was just 25 and this had a deep effect on him and links to ideas in the poem.  Despite the happy memories that are described at the start of the poem, Lawrence is emasculated by his longing for the past by the end and full of grief for the loss of his younger self and possibly his mother. It is as if he relives these memories in a negative way rather than just recalling them positively. |
| **Stanza 1:** Lawrence creates a vivid vignette of a childhood memory and imagines himself looking at a view of himself as a boy watching his mother smiling and singing as she plays the piano. | | *‘****s****oftly****,*** *in the du****s****k****,*** *a woman is* ***s****inging to me****;***  *Taking me back down the vi****s****ta of years****,*** *till I see*  *A child sitting under the piano…’* | The sibilant effect creates a dream-like mood with ‘dusk’ a fitting visual description of a gentle half- light evoking a memory. Use of enjambment reflects the reader being drawn into the scene as the narrator’s memory takes shape. The syntax slows the pace reflecting the memory emerging. |
| **Stanza 2:** Lawrence is reluctant to allow his mind to access the memory as he knows it will bring him emotional pain and grief. | | *‘In* ***spite*** *of myself, the* ***insidious*** *mastery of song*  ***Betrays*** *me back, …’*  *‘the heart of me weeps to belong…’* | The lexical pattern of trickery and betrayal alters the tone as the narrator submits to the memory and feelings attached to it. The enjambment again suggests how powerless the narrator is to resist entering this past world of childhood where he longs to exist again. | **Interpretation:** The poem starts ‘softly’ with the meaning of the Italian musical term ‘piano’ and leads both narrator and reader back in time through a lexical pattern of sensory images to create a mainly aural appeal: singing, boom. tingling, hymns, tinkling. It is a lyric poem with 12 lines in 3 equal-length stanzas each containing a single, long sentence. The internal rhyme: tingling, strings, sings along with the monosyllabic longer stresses of the final word in each stanza: sings, guide, past give the poem a sense of melody and a steady rhythm reflecting the powerful nature of music to evoke memory. |
| **Stanza 3**. This brings the reader sharply back to the present and the grief felt for a time and people who no longer exist. | | *‘So now,…’*  *‘My manhood is cast*  *Down in the flood of remembrance…’* | The temporal lexis ‘now’ reminds us that the present tense of stanza 1 was in fact a memory.  The metaphorical ‘flood’ suggests that the memory is devastatingly overwhelming. |
| **Partner poems?** | |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | Hide and Seek |
| **Summary:** This one stanza poem covers an hour or two in a boy’s life as he hides from his friends in a shed. A long time passes so eventually he leaves the shed, expecting his friends to hail him as the winner. Instead they have all left and it has gone dark. | | | **Biographical:** Scannell was born in 1922 and grew up poor but developed passions for both poetry and boxing. He joined the army in 1940 but deserted after witnessing soldiers looting corpses and was imprisoned. Later he continued with boxing but soon settled into a writing career. |
| **Lines 1-8:** He enters the shed, calls to his friends and then hides. The shed smells like the seaside, which is a positive image, but already there are some hints of discomfort and loneliness. | *“****s****ack****s s****mell like the* ***s****easid****e****”*  *“this salty dark”*  *“when they come* ***prowling*** *in”* | The boy is excited, but the sibilance here already suggests something sinister and unsettling might happen.  The verb makes the seekers seem like stealthy animals adding to the tension and fear the boy feels. |
| **Narration:** The poem is told from the boy’s POV, yet the pronouns are in the second person (“they’ll never find **you**…yes, here **you** are.”) It could be the poet’s voice, imagining the boy’s thoughts, or the boy’s own inner monologue. |
| **Lines 8-13:** He waits perfectly still and in silence while the seekers move about outside. Then they leave. | *“”h****u****shed…st****u****mbles, m****u****tters…sc****u****ffle”*  *“Stay dumb. Hide in your blindness”* | The repeated assonance here (uh) increases the sense that the seekers are dangerous and animalistic.  The boy is described as unwilling or unable to use key senses here which adds to the growing sense of his loneliness and isolation. |
| **Echoes:** Phrases which occur early on and seem just a little discomforting are echoed near the end with a more sinister tone:  “smell like the **seaside**”/ ”the dark damp smell of **sand** moves in your throat”  “the floor is **cold**”/ “the cold bites through your coat”  “searching the **bushes**”/ “the **bushes** hold their breath”  “**here** they are” / “But **where** are they?” |
| **Lines 14-21:** Convinced the seekers might return, he stays put. He imagines their puzzlement, but begins to realise he is getting very cold, stiff and damp. | *“the cold bites”*  *“You’re the winner”* | Personification makes the cold sound menacing.  The boy is still sure he has won the game. |
| **Interpretation:** It could be a simple, narrative poem about a boy whose excitement turns to fear when he realises his friends have forgotten about him. It’s possible the piece is a metaphor about adult life: what excites and thrills us at first often disappoints and frightens us later on in life. Either way it cleverly evokes feelings of loneliness and isolation. |
| **Lines 22-27:** He emerges from under the sacks and out into the garden. He expects victory but instead finds he is alone in the dark garden. | *“uncurl and stretch”*  *“where are they?”*  *“the darkening garden watches” “the bushes hold their breath”* | He makes himself physically full size again after being scrunched up, but inside he feels very small when he realises he has been abandoned by the seekers.  The surroundings are personified in a sinister way: is the garden hiding from him or seeking him? |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | SONNET 116 |
| **Summary:** William Shakespeare crafts a paeon to the power of love which may also be an ironic meditation on his own participation in a love triangle. Despite this, it has become one of the most popular poems read at weddings today. | | | | **Biographical:** Shakespeare’s 154-poem sonnet sequence is believed to have been written largely in the early part of his career in the 1590s with patronage from a mysterious benefactor (possibly the Earl of Southampton) who became the ‘Fair Youth’ of the early sonnets. |
| **Part 1:** The poet stresses the psychological component of love. (l. 1-2) | | *“the marriage of true minds” “impediment” “alter” [altar]* | This metaphor introduces the context of the ceremony continued in the next lines. |
| **Part 2:** The poet defines explicitly what love is not.  (l. 3-4) | | *“alters / alteration” “remover / remove”* | The mirroring of these terms suggests the way the couple’s feelings influence each other. | **Interpretation:** On the surface, this is quite a straightforward Shakespearean sonnet written in iambic pentameter with the typical rhyme scheme. Shakespeare outlines the many tests which true love can withstand and ends the poem with his own personal guarantee that this must be believed.  However, his inclusion from the first line (“Let me not”) together with the allusion to the wedding ceremony (in which the congregation are requested to speak if they are aware of any transgression by the couple) suggest that he may have a more personal interest in proceedings. Is it the couple’s love he celebrates or his own undying devotion to one of them despite their forthcoming marriage?  Shakespeare uses some wonderful extended metaphors in the poem, including that of navigation (“the star to every wandering bark”) and agriculture (“his bending sickle’s compass”). The personification of Time as an antagonist is a staple in Shakespeare’s sonnets but rarely more dramatically handled than in this third quatrain.  The final couplet may have rhymed more euphonically in Shakespeare’s own dialect! |
| **Part 3**. The poet shifts to a more imaginative metaphor of navigation. (l. 5-8) | | *“O no!” (exclamation) “star to every wandering bark”* | This choice rejects the imitation of the last lines for a more transcendent faith. |
| **Part 4:** The poet acknowledges that physical beauty must pass. (l. 9-12) | | *“his bending sickle’s compass come”* | The alliteration adds to this personification alluding to the harvest / Grim Reaper. |
| **Part 5:** The poet adds his own guarantee as an author, lover and friend. (l. 13-14) | | *“Love alters not” [altar]* | An echo of the earlier denouncement / possible pun to allude to the wedding. |
| **Partner poems?** | | *“to the edge of doom”* | A hyperbole which alludes to both death as well as the final Judgement Day. |
| *“never… nor no…”* | The preponderance of negatives strikes a curiously downbeat tone here. |  |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI |
| **Summary:** The title literally means ‘The Beautiful Lady without Mercy’. John Keats crafts a ballad inspired by Arthurian legend with a memorable *femme fatale* while obliquely commenting on his personal circumstances and the health of his family. | | | | **Biographical:** John Keats was born in England in 1795. He became part of the famous Romantic Movement. *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1819) was written not long before Keats’ early death in 1821 from tuberculosis. He would have been aware of the serious nature of this illness from nursing his brother; tragically, he was to soon discover that he had contracted the disease himself. |
| **Part 1:** The narrator questions the knight on his presence in winter. (S. 1-3) | | *“sedge has withered” “no birds sing” “harvest is done”* | Keats uses pathetic fallacy to suggest how the knight is out of kilter with the seasons. |
| **Part 2:** The knight starts to tell his tale of falling in love with the lady. (S. 4-6) | | *“a lily on thy brow” “on thy cheek a fading rose”* | The imagery of flowers continues this theme, vividly capturing his pale appearance. | **Interpretation:** This poem was inspired by Keats’ admiration for mythology – in this case, Arthurian legend – as well as his own personal circumstances. The year 1819 saw the young Keats (who was only 24) at the height of his poetic powers crafting many masterpieces which are still famous to this day; his work received little recognition until his untimely death in 1821 though.  The tragic ending of the knight may allude to the illness and death of his brother Tom whom he had nursed through tuberculosis during the previous year. He may also have been conscious of his infatuation with Fanny Brawne, a young lady to whom he was betrothed but did not have the financial means to marry. He did not yet know that he too would succumb to tuberculosis.  A sense of mystery pervades the poem: in a clever manoeuvre (similar to Shelley’s *Ozymandias*),Keats places the narrator at one remove from the knight himself. This frame for the narrative means that the reader can ultimately decide whether the knight is genuinely a victim of supernatural forces or just delusional. |
| **Part 3**. The lady’s magical powers become apparent; he is bewitched. (S. 7-8) | | *“long… light… wild”* | The tricolon of adjectives uses liquid alliteration / assonance to evoke the lady’s soft beauty. |
| **Part 4:** The knight is lulled to sleep and realizes that he is trapped forever. (S. 9-11) | | *“roots of relish sweet…”* | Another tricolon which suggests the drug-like intoxication the knight suffers. |
| **Part 5:** The knight turns once more to the narrator to conclude. (S. 12) | | *“wild wild eyes”* (no punctuation) | The repetition (echoing the earlier description) becomes more ominous here. |
| **Partner poems?** | | *“Ah! Woe betide”* (hyphenated caesura) | This exclamation captures the knight’s fresh realization of his imprisonment. |
| *“pale… pale… death-pale”* | The barren hinterland he now inhabits is reinforced by this echoing repetition. |  |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | POEM AT THIRTY-NINE |
| **Summary:** Alice Walker uses a fast-paced, stream of thought style to write about her father after his death. At times it feels like a eulogy as it celebrates his great achievements and best qualities, but Walker does not shy away from exploring their times of conflict, too. Although it is a poem about death, the tone is warm and loving. | | | **Biographical:** Walker was born in 1944, the youngest of eight siblings. Her parents were poor sharecroppers. Segregation in Georgia meant she went to an all-black school, but she excelled academically at school and beyond. She was very active in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. She had an abortion while at college, and later had relationships with women as well as men. She is the author of poetry, prose and journalism. |
| **Stanza 1:** She declares she misses her father, and talks about her very early memories. | *“How I miss my father”*  *“I wish he had not been so tired when I was born”* | The declaration begins with ‘How’, which sounds like a sigh.  Simple, monosyllabic words are used, as a child might. |
| **Stanza 2:** Memories of how he taught her good financial skills. | *“he must have said”*  *“bits of paper* [were] *a way to escape the life he knew”* | ‘Must’ suggests it happened very early on. She can’t fully remember the details but financial independence was always taught by him as it was a way out of poverty. | **Interpretation:** This free verse poem seems to meander along but there is a tighter structure than first appears. Walker seems to age throughout, and this is reflected in the changing vocabulary from the simple, monosyllabic words in the first stanza to the more complex, metaphorical language later.  It is helpful to know something about Walker’s racial and economic background when reading this poem, but it also functions as a loving reflection upon a father/daughter relationship. It is touching how he taught her, a little girl, about money while he, the grown man, took immense pleasure in cooking. The collection of gerunds at the end reflect this mixing of traditional gender roles Walker is happy to take on as an adult.  “He” and “I” recur very often, emphasising that it is not about her father so much as about their relationship and his enduring importance to her.  Walker’s age when writing the poem, thirty-nine, is also important. She would have already drifted away from her father, as adults inevitably do, so the poem’s tone is nostalgic and loving rather than anguished. |
| **Stanza 3:** A hint of darkness here as she explores conflict. | *“truth… a beating”*  *“must have grieved him before the end”* | Corporal punishment was used, but he was a man who valued truth; he does not seem cruel.  Might she be referring to her abortion or her bisexuality? |
| **Stanza 4:** She repeats her declaration and talks about him cooking | *“How I miss my father!” “yoga meditation”*  *“craved the voluptuous sharing”* | The addition of an exclamation mark heralds a shift in tone from melancholy to joyous.  Cooking was a not just about subsistence to him but was spiritual. It was an act of love. |
| **Stanza 5:** She considers how like him he is. | *“I look and cook just like him”*  *“seasoning my life..feed whoever”* | The assonance here draws attention to the similarity.  There is a metaphorical meaning here, too, perhaps about how varied her life has been or how her writing has nourished countless readers. |
| **Stanza 6:** Speculation about her father’s opinion of her as an adult. | *“He would have grown”*  *“cooking, writing, chopping wood, staring”* | An echo of “must have” in stanza 2. She is confident he would approve of her.  Interesting collection of gerunds: male and female; domestic and academic; productive and reflective. |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **d) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | War Photographer |
| **Summary:** The poem tells the story of a war photographer’s experiences, having seen unimaginable horrors in foreign countries which he has photographed to feature in magazines of weekend newspaper supplements. The persona (possibly Duffy herself) questions the impact these ‘nightmare’ images have both on the photographer himself and on the readers who view the pictures from the comfort of their homes far away from the conflict. Duffy raises questions about the complexity of the modern world and the difficulty of reaching solutions to seemingly impossible problems. | | | | **Biographical: Dame Carol Ann Duffy (B. 1955) is the current Poet Laurate (appointed 2009) and significantly the first female and first openly gay person to hold this office. She is Professor of Contemporary Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University.**  This poem is based on Duffy’s friendship with Don McCullin, a war photographer, and expresses the dilemma of being in a situation where there is horror all around you, and you have to record it, remaining detached, in order to report it to the rest of the world. The poem raises the question: is war photography really a ‘solution’ to these conflicts? |
| **Stanza 1:** He tries to show respect to the people in the images, impose order on chaos and maintain control of his emotions. | | *‘…****s****pools of* ***s****uffering* ***s****et out in ordered row****s****.’*  *‘…he a priest preparing to intone a Mass.’* | Sibilance creates a ghostly macabre effect as he lays out the reels of film, like corpses.  Religious imagery connotes respect for the dead. |
| **Stanza 2:** The peaceful reality of England is juxtaposed with the horror of war torn countries. | | *‘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****.’* | Use of oxymoron highlights the insignificance of western world troubles.  ‘Rural England’ is juxtaposed with the horror of vulnerable children escaping mines and bombs, reinforced by the full rhyme. | **Interpretation:**  Duffy suggests the photographer feels haunted by the memories of what he has seen as they reappear as he manually develops the film. Despite the fact he tries to remain objective and in control of his emotions, reassuring himself with the *declarative statement*, ‘*He has a job to do’*, he is almost suffering from post- traumatic stress as his hands ‘*tremble’* as he ‘*slops*’ developing solutions. *Visual and auditory images* bring back the sights and sounds of the war zone and the photographer feels conflicted that his editor will only select a few of the thousand images of suffering. It is ironic that the pictures aren’t even headline news, but photographs that will feature in a magazine, as additional reading in a weekend paper that people will flick through and spend only seconds looking at. If they are emotionally affected at all, it will be short-lived, as they continue with their leisure activities on a typical Sunday. We are addressed as readers as ‘they’ in the final line and Duffy invites us personally to consider how we respond to seeing such photographs. |
| **Stanza 3:** The tension builds as the images emerge and bring back the sights and sounds of the war zone. | | *‘A stranger’s* ***f****eatures* ***f****aintly start to twist before his eyes…****a half-formed ghost****. He remembers the* ***cries*** *of this man’s wife,’* | Soft fricatives reinforce the concept of an emerging image and the metaphor suggests a haunting effect accompanied by the sounds of distress through the auditory image. |
| **Stanza 4:** The reality of how the rest of the world remains largely unaffected by the horrors he has witnessed despite his role is explored. | | *‘A* ***hundred*** *agonies…from which his editor will* ***pick out five or six…’*** | Juxtaposition of numbers shows the overwhelming scale of the problem compared with the coverage it receives away from the war zone. The colloquial verb phrase ‘pick out’ suggests a quick, unemotional selection. |
| **Structure overview**: Regular sestets and rhyme scheme attempt to impose a sense of regularity/order out of the chaos of war and reflect the photographer’s attempts to rationalise and control what he has seen as he tries to do his job. | | | |
| **Partner poems?** | |  | |
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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | THE TYGER |
| **Summary:** William Blake crafts an awestruck portrait of this mystical creature marvelling first at the capabilities of its creator before questioning its motives. Exactly what the tyger itself represents is a matter of **interpretation**. | | | | **Biographical:** William Blake was a poet / engraver working in London during the onset of the Industrial Revolution. A true maverick, he questioned the establishment relentlessly – especially the hypocrisy of the institutional Church. He illustrated his own poems for many collections including the *Songs of Innocence & Experience* (1794) which included *The Tyger*. |
| **Part 1:** The poet unveils the terrifying and awe-inspiring sight of the creature. (S. 1) | | *“Tyger, tyger” “thy fearful symmetry?”* (first of 13/14 questions) | The repetition and strong trochaic metre give the rhythm of a blacksmith at his anvil. |
| **Part 2:** The poet considers the creation of such an awesome creature. (S. 2) | | *“burning bright” (evoking the orange stripes of the tyger)* | The plosive alliteration reinforces the tyger’s power and visual splendour. | **Interpretation:** This poem was engraved on the reverse of the plate for *The Lamb*, its companion from the *Songs of Innocence*. While that poem is ironically reassuring in its answers to the child’s naïve questions, *The Tyger* is relentlessly questioning and confronts adult concerns on the problem of evil.  Critics have ranged widely in their interpretation of the poem. In terms of the political, the French Revolution had initially been a source of celebration to radicals like Blake in England. However, as the idealism of the early revolution was replaced by the totalitarianism of The Terror, its energy seemed much more troubling. The politician Edmund Burke referred to France as a ‘republic of tigers’.  Meanwhile, the Industrial Revolution was changing the face of English society with forces which shifted the country away from its more traditional agricultural base. Life would never be the same again: but would it truly be better?  Finally, Blake was deeply troubled by how a benevolent God could permit the suffering he witnessed daily on the streets of London. |
| **Part 3**. The imagery of creation shifts to the workshop / factory. (S. 3-4) | | *“deeps or skies” “what wings / what the hand”* | The RQs here emphasise the bravery and the angelic / human form of the creator. |
| **Part 4:** The poet makes a more explicit comparison to ‘The Lamb’. (S. 5) | | *“what shoulder / what art” “hammer / chain / furnace / anvil”* | The imagery of the Industrial Revolution pervades this section of the poem. |
| **Part 5:** The poet echoes his opening with one important shift in wording. (S. 6) | | *“stars threw down their spears”* | This metaphor shifts the territory to the cosmic and metaphysical again. |
| **Partner poems?** | | *“Did he smile…?” “… the Lamb make thee?”* | The RQs here have shifted to a more accusatory tone about the creation of the tyger. |
| *“dare frame…”* | The shift of the modal verb from capability to responsibility marks the poem’s climax. |  |

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| **A) Summary and structure of the poem** | **B) Key quotations and references from the poem** | | **C) Key techniques and/or vocab to discuss quotes** | **C) Key context / interpretation: some vocabulary and further discussion** | MY LAST DUCHESS |
| **Summary:** The title establishes the voice of this dramatic monologue as a boastful Duke. Using this voice, Robert Browning gradually uncovers the Duke’s persona until we learn the shocking truth of how he dispatched the Duchess, together with his total lack of remorse. | | | | **Biographical:** Robert Browning (1812 – 1889) was an English poet and playwright whose mastery of the dramatic monologue made him one of the foremost Victorian poets. His poems are known for their irony, characterization, dark humour, historical settings, and challenging vocabulary and syntax. ‘My Last Duchess’ is probably his most famous poem today. |
| **Part 1:** The Duke invites the envoy to admire the portrait of the Duchess. (l. 1-12) | | *“my last Duchess” “will’t please you sit” “none puts by the curtain”* | The possessive pronoun and adjective combine to suggest her disposability. The setting of the painting is established. |
| **Part 2:** The Duke reflects upon what he sees as her flirtatious nature (l. 13 - 31) | | *“perhaps… perhaps…” “how shall I say?”* | The adverb captures the Duke’s paranoia; The rhetorical q and caesura his superficial charm. | **Interpretation:** This monologue is set in 1564 and is based on the real-life Duke Alfonso II who ruled the state of Ferrara in Italy during the latter half of the 16th century. In the poem, he is discussing his first wife Lucrezia de Medici who died under suspicious circumstances shortly after marrying the Duke.  What makes this poem so much more than a period piece is the beguiling and vivid voice of the Duke. Browning brilliantly captures the superficial charm of the sociopath in rhyming couplets. By casting us in the role of the envoy enquiring about the dowry for a new bride, he brings the reader intimately close. Dramatic irony is carefully used to allow us to see beneath the Duke’s veneer of respectability and discover the brutal truth he scarcely conceals.  In the modern era, cinema audiences have developed a similar fascination for the archetype of the serial killer. With his intention to remarry, the Duke reminds us that such personalities are nothing new under the sun. Like England’s own Henry VIII, the Duke’s behaviour illustrates the shocking power some men in the past possessed to dispatch their wives however they saw fit. |
| **Part 3:** The Duke’s annoyance at his wife’s attitude grows. (l.31 - 45) | | *“my gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name” “I choose never to stoop”* | The Duke’s narcissism and pride become clear in these declarations: dramatic irony. |
| **Part 4:** The Duke orders his wife’s death. (l. 45 - 47) | | *“I gave commands” “All smiles ceased together”* | His use of euphemism reveals a remorseless sociopath. Caesuras here adds emphasis. |
| **Part 5:** The Duke invites the envoy to return to the rest of the company. (l. 47 - 55) | | *“Will’t please you rise?” “smiles / alive / rise”* | His smooth etiquette following this admission indicts him; the assonance adds eloquence. |
| **Part 6:** On the way, the Duke suggests he deserves an ample dowry. (l. 47 - 55) | | *“master’s… munificence” “fair daughter’s self…  is my object”* | His silver-tongued performance disturbs as he expects to abuse his patriarchal position further. |
| **Partner Poems: Dramatic monologues for voice; themes of violence / death** | | *“Notice Neptune though”* | His nonchalance is underlined by his continued boasting about other artworks. |  |