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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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