**War Photographer**

Carol Ann Duffy

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| What do you notice about the **form** of this poem?* What is the **rhyme scheme**?
* What does the **shape** of the poem on the page remind you of?
* Why is it in the **present tense**?
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**Stanza 1**

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.

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| * The photographer is **never named**. He is always referred to as ‘his’ or ‘he’. Why is this? What effect does it have on the reader?
* Comment on the phrase **‘spools of suffering’**.
* The **red light** of the dark room is described, and Duffy compares it to a religious rite? Why?
* **Caesura** is used in the final line. Why does Duffy put a full stop after each place name? What effect does it have on the reader?
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**Stanza 2**

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.

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| * Why do his hands **‘tremble’** now, while he is developing the photos, but not when he was in the war zone? Could it be anything to the ‘solutions slop[ping]’ in the trays?
* Look at the way she **contrasts** ‘Rural England’, ‘ordinary pain’ and ‘simple weather’ with the ‘fields’ which ‘explode’ under ‘running children’ in ‘nightmare heat’.
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**Stanza 3**

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.

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| * As the man in the photograph starts to emerge, Duffy describes him as a **‘half-formed ghost’**. Comment on this image.
* Looking at the picture reminds him of the events it shows. He says **‘someone must’** take pictures like these. What does Duffy mean?
* There’s no explicit mention of **war** in this stanza, but she is clearly referring to it. How does she do this?
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**Stanza 4**

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.

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| This stanza is interesting because of the people it seems to criticise. She doesn’t mention politicians, warlords or terrorists, however.* What does she say about the **newspaper editor** and how s/he selects images for the magazine?
* How does she describe the **readers** of the magazine?
* Why does she say the photographer stares **‘impassively’** out of the window on his way to his next assignment?
* Who are **‘they’** mentioned in the last line? Look for alternative interpretations.
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