

Bayonet Charge – Ted Hughes

Key words:

- War
- 'Going over the top' – leaving the trench to charge at the enemy
- Terror/fear
- Confusion
- Patriotism

Top Five Quotes
"Suddenly he awoke and was running" This sounds as if the soldier is confused and vulnerable to the situation around him. It suggests immediate danger and urgency.
"Bullets smacking the belly out of the air" Violent imagery and onomatopoeia describes the sound and impact of the shots.
"He almost stopped" The soldier realises the situation he is in and begins to question why he is there. It shows that he is now fully awake and receptive to the situation around him.
"King, honour, human dignity, etcetera dropped like luxuries" These are the reasons that persuade people to go to war. The use of the word "etcetera" suggests that they are not even worth listing – they mean nothing on the battlefield when you are faced with death. The use of the line "dropped like luxuries" reflects the poor conditions the soldiers have had to live in and what they have given up to be there.

Writer's methods:

- The writer uses enjambment and caesura to create lines of an uneven length and an irregular rhythm. It mirrors the soldier's struggle in running across the battlefield.
- The use of the word "he" keeps the soldier anonymous – it could represent any young soldier at war.
- The poem starts in the middle of the action and covers the soldier's thoughts over a brief period of time. At first he acts out of instinct but then begins to question the situation he's in. Finally, he gives up his thoughts and feelings after feeling betrayed and let down by the people in charge of the war.
- There is lots of imagery, especially violent and natural that reflect the horrors of war.

Context:

- The poem focuses on the experience of a single soldier during a charge towards the enemy. It describes his thoughts and actions as he tries to stay alive.
- It portrays the fear that he experiences at this time and his confusion and disappointment in the patriotic ideals that led him to sign up for war.
- The bayonet charge describes the action of "going over the top" – when a group of soldiers would leave the trench and charge at the enemy – often to their death.

Charge of the Light Brigade – Lord Alfred Tennyson

Key words:

- **Admiration, bravery and patriotism**
- **Horror and violence of war**
- **Obedience, compliance, unquestioning**
- **Sacrifice**

Top Five Quotes

“Rode the six hundred” The first three stanzas end with this refrain, giving the impression that are one group with one purpose, united and unified. It also serves to remind the reader of how huge the impact was/ how many soldiers were affected by the events

“Was there a man dismay’d? Not tho’ the soldiers knew someone had blundered” The soldiers realised the order was a mistake however they do as they are told to do because it is their duty to obey orders, reinforced in **“theirs but to do and die”**

“Into the valley of Death” A biblical allusion, repeated in stanza 1 and 2, from Psalm 23 suggesting that the soldiers would ‘fear no evil’. The biblical references create a solemn tone and heightens the significance.

“into the jaws of Death, into the mouth of Hell” Personification of death and hell to suggest that they are monsters that the soldiers can’t escape from.

“all the world wonder’d:” Ambiguity: this could mean that all of the world marvelled at their bravery **OR** that they questioned why they had been sent into the charge.

“Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred!” The imperative verb ‘honour’ is commanding, forceful and authoritative to leave the reader with the idea that the calvry deserve the upmost respect

Writer’s methods:

- The poem is narrated in the third person making it seem like a story. The regular, relentless rhythm creates a fast pace, imitating the cavalry’s advance and the energy of the battle.
- Rhyming couplets and triplets drive the poem forward but the momentum is broken by unrhymed lines which could mirror the horses scrambling and the soldiers falling. The overall lack of rhyme scheme hints at the chaos of war.
- Repetition is frequently used
- The narrative of the action is presented in chronological order from the charge of the men to the battle to the retreat. The final stanza is shorter and summarises the heroism of the brigade.

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Context:

- The poem was written in 1854 in response to a newspaper article about the battle. Many newspapers at the time were critical of the Crimean War but his poem focuses on the bravery of the soldiers rather than the mistakes of the military leaders.

Checking out Me History – John Agard

Key words:

- Identity and heritage
- Anger and trivialisation
- Celebration and admiration
- Education and Eurocentric
- Perspective

Top Five Quotes

“Dem tell me” ‘Dem’ emphasises the separateness of the British education system and himself. Repetition of ‘Dem’ and me creates a sense of them and us. These lines are repeated at the end in the final stanza, reminding us of the narrator’s anger.

“Bandage up me eye... blind me to me own identity” Suggests a deliberate attempt to history. The image of the bandage is ironic as bandages should heal/ aid however here, they cause blindness and being ‘blind’ to identity is a metaphor for not allowing him to see his own history. There are several metaphors of vision and blindness to suggest that education has kept his true heritage hidden from him. Images of light are positive such as Toussaint being described as a **“beacon”** and **“a slave with vision”** and Nanny de maroon as a **“see-far woman”**

“Dick Whittington” “Robin Hood” “ole King Cole” Use of folklore, nursery rhyme and pantomime to make British history seem trivial and inconsequential. The poem alternates between historical and fictional figures from Caribbean and British culture, emphasising the differences between them.

Writer’s methods:

- Uses a mixture of stanza forms suggesting that he is breaking and confining language rules he has been taught. The Caribbean history stanzas have shorter lines and broken syntax than that the British history stanzas which have lots of simple, childlike rhymes; this emphasises that the Caribbean history is more important and more serious.
- Includes many features from oral poetry tradition including repetition, strong rhythm, chanting and phonetic spellings, linking to the oral tradition of reciting poetry aloud and telling stories (which are used as ways of communicating history.) The use of Caribbean phonetic spellings to create a sense of pride in his background and emphasise that figures from Caribbean history should feature in the teaching of history.

Context:

- Agard often focuses on identity and ethnicity in his poetry, from an anthology called “Half-Caste”
- Inspired to write the poem after seeing a statement in a history textbook suggesting that “West Indian history started in 1492 with the arrival of Columbus”
- Educated in Guyana, a British colony until 1966. His country experienced a Eurocentric education system.

Exposure – Wilfred Owen

Key words:

- Suffering, exhaustion and fatigue
- Boredom and frustration
- Hopelessness and helpless against the power of nature
- Trench warfare and nature

Top Five Quotes

“Our brains ache... winds that knife us...” Personal pronouns ‘our’ and ‘us’ show it is a shared experience, creating a universal, collective impression, showing how this experience is shared by soldiers across the war. The ellipsis at the end of the line suggests that they are waiting for something to happen- but it never does. Nature is personified and seems to be attacking them.

“like a dull rumour of some other war.” This is a biblical reference (Matthew 24:6) foretelling the end of the world- Jesus says “you will hear of future wars” reinforcing the severity and significance of their current situation.

“Dawn... her melancholy army” Personification of nature using the language of battle. Normally dawn brings hope, at the start of a new day, but not here. **“Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces”** the snowflakes are personified; they’re maliciously seeking the men’s face.

“Shrivelling many hands... all their eyes are ice” vivid imagery of what exposure to the cold does to the bodies of the soldiers. The image of the eyes is a metaphor, referring to the eyes of the living and the dead men, showing how they have been overpowered by nature. It also hints at the idea that the living men are no longer able to feel emotion.

“but nothing happens” Final stanza ends in the same way as first stanza, suggesting that even death doesn’t change anything

Writer’s methods:

- The repeated personification of nature (snowflakes, winds, dawn) suggests that it seems to be the real enemy rather than the military presence.
- Each stanza has a regular rhyme scheme, reflecting the monotonous nature of the men’s experience, however these are often half- rhymes (**snow/ renew**) The rhyme scheme offers no comfort or satisfaction; the rhymes are jagged like the reality of the men’s experience and reflects their confusion and fading energy.
- The poem uses rhetorical questions to ask why the men are exposed to such dreadful conditions and whether there’s any point to their suffering. (**what are we doing here?**)

Context:

- Owen wrote Exposure in 1917-1918 from the trenches of World War One, not long before being killed in battle
- Owen wrote many poems about the futility and hopelessness of war, revealing his anger at the waste of life and the horrific conditions

Kamikaze- Beatrice Garland

Key words:

- Patriotism, national identity
- Shame, regret and loss
- Power and beauty of nature
- Imagined account, voiceless

Top Five Quotes

“Her father embarked at sunrise” The word ‘embarked’ creates the sense of a journey, but the title suggests it will be a journey to his death. Japan is known as ‘The Land of the Rising Sun’ so this may be a reference to the location.

“a shaven head full of powerful incantations” This suggests that the pilot was under a spell which hints at the influence of patriotic propaganda (power) that Kamikazes were exposed to; they were told that it was a great honour to die for their country.

“the little fishing boats strung out like bunting on a green –blue translucent sea” This simile creates a homely, pretty, serene, calm atmosphere and depicts a beautiful image of nature- a far cry from war and the destiny of the pilot. Bunting is associated with celebration which makes the image ironic- there is no victorious return for the pilot. There is also irony in that the pilot should have been aiming for large enemy ships but is distracted by “little fishing boats”.

“bringing their father’s boat safe –yes, grandfather’s boat- safe to the shore” The repetition of ‘safe’ hints at the pilot’s mind-set; he doesn’t want his children to go through the pain of losing him.

“and though he came back my mother never spoke again in his presence” We hear the daughter’s voice in direct speech again. She speaks in a more factual, less descriptive way about her father’s subsequent life, which hints at her pain and her empathy with him.

“And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered which had been the better way to die.” The final short sentence could be a comment on the destructive nature of patriotism; the pilot’s family were so ashamed that they treated him as if he were dead.

Writer’s methods:

- The poem is mostly narrated in the third person using reported speech of the pilot’s daughter. The absence of the pilot’s voice shows that he has been cut off from society and the use of the third person emphasises the distance between the pilot and his daughter.
- The first five stanzas form one sentence which covers an account of the pilot’s flight as the daughter imagines it. The end of the sentence represents the plane landing and the final two stanzas discuss the repercussions of the pilot’s actions.
- The imagery of nature, through similes and metaphors, is used to emphasise the beauty and power of nature. The daughter hints that this was one of the main triggers for his actions. **“cairns of pearl-grey pebbles”** and **“loose silver of whitebait”** The colours used here make nature sound precious and valuable.

Context:

- Kamikaze pilots were specially trained Japanese pilots who were used towards the end of World War Two. They flew their planes on suicide missions into enemy ships.

London – William Blake

Key words:

- Anger and hopelessness
- Individual experience
- Loss and absence
- Abuse of power, misery, despair, bleakness

Top Five Quotes
“each chartered street” suggests the whole city is affected, not just areas; “the chartered Thames” Even powerful natural features like the River Thames are under human control and affected by the cities problems. The repetition of ‘chartered’ reinforces the power that those in charge have to control every aspect of the city.
“every face I meet, Marks of weakness, marks of woe.” The repetition emphasises the feeling of bleakness: the despair affects everyone and there is no relief from it.
“The mind-forged manacles I hear.” The metaphor of ‘mind-forged’ suggests that people are trapped in every way, even in their thoughts and attitudes. The speaker hears various distressing noises, making this seem like a vivid, hellish experience.
“black’ning church” The speaker is angry at all forms of power- describing the church using the verb ‘black’ning’ could suggest that it is corrupt or tarnished by its failure to look after people. It is also a grim visual image of the ugliness caused by the industrial revolution.
“youthful harlots curse, Blasts the new-born infant’s tear” We see the contrast between the innocence of youth and the sordidness of prostitution. The innocence of the newborn baby is lost immediately- society damages its members. The ambiguous use of the word ‘curse’ could suggest the prostitute swearing or that they are a curse, a plague, an affliction on the City of London.
“blights with plagues the marriage hearse” Powerful language of illness and disease are used. Destruction is implied by “blights” and “plagues” hints at something that is uncontrollable and destined to affect lots of people. “the marriage hearse” is an oxymoron as it links the happy image of marriage with death. This oxymoron suggests that everything has been destroyed.

Writer’s methods:

- The poem is a dramatic monologue- the first person narrator speaks passionately and personally about the suffering he sees. The ABAB rhyme scheme is unbroken and seems to echo the relentless misery of the city.
- The narrator presents relentless images of downtrodden, deprived people. The first two stanzas focus on the people he sees and hears; the focus shifts in stanza three to the institutions he holds responsible. The final stanza returns to looking at people reinforcing how everyone, even new born babies, are affected.
- The writer uses rhetorical devices to persuade you of his point of view- he uses powerful, emotive words and images to reinforce the horror of the situation. Repetition is used to emphasise the number of people affected.
- The poem includes the depressing sights and sounds of the city- the first stanza is about what is seen, the second stanza what he hears and the last two stanzas combine the visual and aural.

Context:

- Blake wrote and illustrated two volumes of poetry which explored the state of the human soul. The ‘Songs of Innocence’ are positive poems which focus on childhood, nature and love, whereas the ‘Songs of Experience’ (including London’) look at how that innocence is lost, and how society has been corrupted.

My Last Duchess – Robert Browning

Key words:

- **Pride and arrogance**
- **Jealousy and vengeance**
- **Control, manipulation, dominating**
- **Status and possession**

Top Five Quotes

“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall, Looking as if she were alive.” The opening lines create a sinister tone, particularly when referencing her as ‘looking alive’. The reader understands immediately that she is not. The personal pronoun ‘my’, used repeatedly creates a possessive, controlling and domineering tone, suggesting that he owns the Duchess herself and not just the painting.

“...none puts by The curtain I have drawn for you, but I...” The Duke controls who looks at the painting, but he could not control who looked at his wife whilst she was alive.

“that spot of joy” this image is repeated, indicating that his wife’s blushes bothered him greatly.

“I gave commands; then all smiles stopped together” This euphemism suggests that he had his wife murdered however it is intentionally ambiguous and indirect. The phrase creates a cold, cynical tone.

“Notice Neptune, though, Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity” He returns to the subject of his collection, reinforcing his power and wealth. The story of his last Duchess serves as a subtle warning to his visitor about how he expects his next wife to behave. The imagery associated with ‘taming’ reinforces the Duke’s unswerving desire for ultimate control.

Writer’s methods:

- The poem is a dramatic monologue written in iambic pentameter. This reinforces the impression that the Duke is conversation with his visitor. The rhyming couplets show the Duke’s desire for control, however the use of enjambment suggests that he gets carried away with his anger. This presents an image of an unstable character, whose obsession for power is unsettling.
- Structurally, the power is framed by the visit to the Duke’s art gallery, but the Duke gets caught up talking about the Duchess instead of describing the art. The poem builds towards a confession before the identity of the visitor is shockingly revealed.
- The poet uses dramatic irony as the things that the Duke says about the Duchess seem quite innocent but they have more sinister meanings for the reader.

Context:

- Browning may have been inspired by mysterious events surrounding Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara (a region in Italy) The Duke’s wife, Lucrezia, died in suspicious circumstances and there rumours that she may have been poisoned.
- Although published in 1842, Browning wrote many poems inspired by the Italian Renaissance (14th-16th Century) where fine art work flourished.

Ozymandias - Percy Bysshe Shelley

Key words:

- **Pride and arrogance**
- **Tyranny**
- **Insignificance**
- **Temporary**
- **Time and nature**

Top Five Quotes
"I met a traveller...who said" The poem is framed as a second hand account; it is clear that the narrator has not even seen the statue himself, reinforcing how unimportant Ozymandias is.
"shattered visage" Irony is used to show that even a powerful human can't control the damaging effects of time
"survive" "lifeless" shows how art can outlast human power, but the ruined statue shows that ultimately art can't immortalise power.
"Look at my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Irony is used as he tells other rulers to 'despair' because of the size and grandeur of his 'works' but they should despair because their power is temporary and ultimately unimportant, like his.
"The lone and level sands stretch far away" The desert is vast and survives far longer than the broken statue, emphasising the insignificance of the statue.

Writer's methods:

- Irony is used frequently to reinforce that human power is temporary and that even powerful humans cannot control the damaging effects of time.
- Iambic Pentameter is used however the rhythm is often disrupted reflecting how human power and structures can be destroyed
- Sonnet form is used however, does not follow a regular sonnet rhyme scheme reflecting how human power and structures can be destroyed

Context:

- Shelley was a Romantic Poet. Romanticism: belief in portraying emotions rather than reason and particularly focused on the power of nature
- Shelley had an intense dislike of monarchies, absolute power and oppression of ordinary people.

Poppies- Jane Weir

Key words:

- Loss, struggle, acceptance
- Fear, anxiety
- Memories, nostalgia
- Freedom

Top Five Quotes

“Three days before Armistice Sunday... Before you left” The repetition of ‘before’ emphasises the parallel between national and personal mourning and remembrance

“I wanted to graze my nose across the tip of your nose” This reference to a sense of touch shows how the mother longs for the closeness she had with her son when he was small and emphasises the distance between them now. It creates a domestic, motherly image.

“steeled the softening of my face.” and **“I was brave”** The mother asserting her bravery subverts the idea that it is only those who go off to war who are brave. The sibilance and caesurae reflects the mother’s attempt to stay in control.

“I listened, hoping to hear your playground voice catching on the wind.” The ending of the poem links leaving to join the army with leaving to go to school and underlines the sense of loss she feels as her son grows up. The alliteration in ‘hope to hear’ echoes the way she is straining to hear him and bring back memories of him.

Writer’s methods:

- The first person narrative means that the reader gets a strong impression of the mother’s emotions. There is no regular rhythm or rhyme which makes it sound like the narrator’s thoughts and memories.
- The poem is chronological, describing preparations for the son leaving, his departure and then what the mother does afterwards. However, the time frame is ambiguous- memories of the son’s childhood are intermingled with memories of his leaving and they’re not clearly distinguished.
- Images of war and violence symbolise the son’s new identity and the danger that he’s in. References to **“Armistice Sunday”** and **“war memorial”** make the reader question whether he is still alive.
- Domestic imagery is also used, mixed with the images of war to show the poignancy of home and family life. **“my stomach busy making tucks, darts, pleats”** (sewing imagery) conveys her sense of nervousness and anxiety.

Context:

- Poppies was a poem commissioned in 2009 by Carol Ann Duffy for an anthology of 21st Century War poems.

Storm on the Island – Seamus Heaney

Key words:

- Safety, preparation, confidence
- Fear, unfamiliarity, helplessness
- Hopelessness and helplessness against the power of nature
- Storm or political violence?

Top Five Quotes
“We are prepared... it is a huge nothing that we fear” . Contrast between the impression created of the islanders in the opening (safety/ security) and final image (terror/ dread)
The sea and trees are suggested as possible “company” repetition used to reinforce the isolation and loneliness of the setting
“Exploding comfortably” Oxymoron juxtaposes the feelings of fear and safety created by the sea
“spits like a tame cat Turned savage” The simile reinforces how familiar things can become frightening and intimidating during a storm
“You know what I mean” The narrator speaks directly to the reader in a conversational, friendly tone, encouraging them to reflect on their own experiences; suggests that it is common, universal, collective.

Writer’s methods:

- Written in blank verse, mirroring the patterns in everyday speech and makes the poem sound like part of a conversation. The use of the direct address, second person pronoun ‘you’ reinforces this feeling.
- The tone changes from one of safety, using words such as “squat” “slate” “rock” to a sense of danger using language used to describe war “strafe” “salvo” and violent verbs such as “pummel”

Context:

- The poem could also be about the political divides in Northern Ireland between the Catholics and the Protestants as the title hints at the name given to the Parliament Buildings in Northern Island.

The Emigree – Carol Rumens

Key words:

- Nostalgia and memory
- Threat
- Light
- Loss of a loved one (a city personified)
- Freedom

Top Five Quotes

“There was once a country” It sounds like a fairy-tale, with connotations of childhood. The use of the word ‘was’ suggests that the country may no longer exist.

“It may be at war, it may be sick with tyrants” The city is personified to show the speaker’s strong connection with it. It also contrasts with the speaker’s overwhelmingly positive view of it.

“It tastes of sunlight” When the speaker uses her home language, she feels a warmth towards her home country. The use of taste reflects how powerful the memory is.

I have no passport, there’s no way back at all” This could reflect the possibility that the speaker had to leave the country quickly, possibly as an asylum speaker or refugee. It makes it sound hopeless.

“They mutter death, and my shadow falls as evidence of sunlight” Despite the threat of death, the city is still associated with sunlight. The use of the ‘shadow’ falling as ‘sunlight’ suggests that the city lives on within the speaker and will always live on.

Writer’s methods:

- The writer uses the first person to create a personal experience and memory
- The first two stanzas use a lot of enjambment but there are more end-stopped lines in the final stanza, reflecting a feeling of confinement in her ‘city of walls’.
- The short stanzas show the poem to be built up in layers, just as she says human life is.
- Light imagery is used – it is seen as a powerfully positive thing. The city is constantly linked with ‘sunlight’ suggesting happy memories and a warmth that is now missing
- Personification is used constantly to show how strong the speaker’s bond is with it.
- Language of conflict shows that the city may not be as perfect as the speaker remembers it. It could reflect a child’s memory and their naivety, not fully understanding what is happening around them.

Context:

- An emigree is a person who has left their home country to live in another.
- In this poem, the speaker remembers a city in a country that she left as a child. She has a purely positive view of it.
- The city seems to be under attack and unreachable, but the speaker still sees it in a positive way.
- The city may not be a real place – it could represent a time, a person or an emotion that the speaker has been forced to leave.

The Prelude – William Wordsworth

Key words:

- Identity and character
- Beauty, magical, splendour
- Shock, confidence, fear and guilt
- Reflection, growth and change

Top Five Quotes
“One summer evening (led by her) I found a little boat tied to a willow tree” Wordsworth personifies nature as ‘her’. In this opening, he creates a happy rural image for the reader.
“an act of stealth and troubled pleasure” The narrator knows that he is doing something wrong. This is the first clue that something isn’t quite right. ‘Troubled pleasure’ is an oxymoron hinting, or foreshadowing, at the narrator’s guilt.
“Proud of his skill” The narrator seems confident, perhaps arrogant about taking the boat and his rowing ability. This contrasts with the mood later in the poem.
“She was an elfin pinnacle” The metaphor, suggesting that the boat is fairylike and magical creates a scene that seems other worldly and non threatening.
“When, from behind that craggy steep till then The horizon’s bound, a huge black peak, black and huge” This is the turning point (volta) of the poem and completely changes the tone. The introduction of the mountain introduces the use of very different language: darker and more threatening. The narrator understands how powerful nature is.
“with purpose of its own and measured motion like a living thing, Strode after me.” The mountain is portrayed as calm, powerful and in control, contrasting with the narrator’s fear.
“Trouble to my dreams.” The ending creates an unsettling image and helps the reader to empathise with him. This is a huge contrast to the tone and mood at the beginning of the poem. This reinforces the overwhelming, and lasting, effect that the incident, and the power of nature, had on him.

Writer’s methods:

- Personification of nature as ‘her’ and the boat as ‘her’ to create positive, rural imagery and a blissful tone at the beginning of the poem. This is contrasted with the description of the mountain which “Upreared its head”.
- The extract is a first-person narrative. This creates a personal tone and describes a turning point in the poet’s life. The use of blank verse makes it sound serious and important and the regular rhythm makes it sound like natural speech which again reinforces how this was a personal and deeply important moment for the poet.
- The poem is divided into three clear sections structurally: In the first, the tone is light and carefree. There’s a distinct change as the mountain appears where the tone becomes darker and more fearful. In the final section, the narrator reflects on how the experience has changed him.

Context:

- The poem is autobiographical and comes from a collection of poems which explores key moments and experiences in Wordsworth’s life. The first collection of poems was titled ‘Childhood and School-time’.
- Wordsworth was a romantic poet, exploring ideas between nature and human emotion and the way identity and character is shaped by experience.

Tissue – Imtiaz Dharker

Key words:

- Power of nature
- Controlling nature of paper
- Creation
- Life
- Freedom

Top Five Quotes

“Paper that lets the light shine through” The first word in the poem is ‘paper’ which highlights its power and its importance to us. ‘The light’ can have a religious meaning, with connotations of good, suggesting that some things written on paper can bring positive change.

“If buildings were paper, I might feel their drift” This suggests that buildings are a temporary construct, reflecting the fact that everything is changing all the time.

“Maps too. The sun shines through their borderlines” Maps are a human creation as are borderlines which create division rather than freedom. The sun shining through them shows us that borders are temporary and ever changing but the light is constant.

“Fine slips...might fly our lives like paper kites” Fine slips refer to receipts and how they can be used to tell a story about our existence. The simile at the end suggests how money can control our lives

“Turned into your skin” This line appears at the end of the poem and stands alone which turns the poem’s attention the reader, asking them to consider their own creation and life.

Writer’s methods:

- The writer keeps her focus broad, talking about humanity in general rather than one individual.
- The lack of a regular rhythm or rhyme scheme gives the poem a freedom and openness which reflects the poet’s desire for freedom and clarity.
- The short stanzas show the poem to be built up in layers, just as she says human life is.
- Light imagery is used – it is said to enable people to see and break through barriers
- Creation is a key theme here, man-made things like buildings and borderlines are contrasted with the creation of humans
- The use of the word tissue creates a link between humans and paper. Both types of tissue are fragile, yet powerful. The word ‘tissue’ originally meant something that had been woven in layers and it reinforces the idea that human lives are also built up this way.

Context:

- The poem forms part of a collection that looks at how well we know the people around us.
- It looks at different things that control our lives – money, religion, nature, pride and governments are all mentioned.
- The speaker imagines a world that breaks free of some of these restrictions, where human constructions are less permanent and important.

Remains – Simon Armitage

Key words:

- War
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Guilt
- Memory
- Perspective

Top Five Quotes

“Probably armed, possibly not” The soldier had a sense of doubt which juxtaposes with the definite action that followed. These lines are repeated towards the end of the poem, when the soldier sleeps, showing his inner turmoil and the fact that he replays the incident in his mind.

“Rips through his life” The soldier didn’t just shoot the man’s body, his bullets have torn through his life. This makes the reader think about life – was the looter a father? A husband? It is a very powerful image that shows the soldier’s instant regret of his actions.

“Tosses his guts back in his body” A very cold, casual action which shows very little respect for the dead looter. It gives the sense that this was a regular occurrence and the soldier’s mate was unaffected by it.

“End of story, except not really” This is a volta that reflects the soldier’s guilt, even when he has left the war zone. It shows that he didn’t leave the incident there; he has returned home with the memory that still haunts him.

“His bloody life in my bloody hands” This could be taken with double meaning. ‘Bloody’ could represent the looter’s blood or it could be the soldier swearing in anger. “My bloody hands” reflects the soldier’s guilt at his taking of the looter’s life.

Writer’s methods:

- There’s no regular rhyme scheme or line length which reflects the anecdotal, conversational tone of the poem.
- The stanzas are all 4 lines in length which reflects the uniformity of the army. The poem breaks from this structure to show that the soldier has broken away from the army and also to reflect the suggestion that the soldier’s mind is broken from the guilt of his actions.
- Includes lots of imagery. Firstly, there is graphic imagery of the looter’s death that reminds the reader of the horrors of war. Secondly, there is lots of references to sleep and closed eyes that shows reflects the fact that the soldier replays the events every time his eyes are closed. He is haunted by his actions and cannot escape them, not even with the help of drink and drugs.

Context:

- Armitage writes from the perspective of a soldier who served in Iraq. He has based the poem on the soldier’s account of a time when he killed a looter.
- The soldier, along with others who have been trained to act in the same manner, kill a looter who is running away from a bank.
- The soldier is tormented with guilt as he is unsure as to whether the looter was armed or not.

War Photographer – Carol Ann Duffy

Key words:

- War
- Pain
- Detachment
- Memories
- Anger

Top Five Quotes

“As though this were a church and he a priest preparing to intone a mass” The religious simile reflects the solemn nature of the photographer’s work. It could be likened to a funeral, where the lives of the dead (as portrayed in his pictures) are celebrated.

“His hands, which did not tremble though seem to now” This shows the irony of the photographer’s situation. His hands did not tremble in the war zone as he had a job to do and acted instinctively. However, he is home now in **“rural England”** and is able to reflect and remember – making him shake at the memories of it.

“A hundred agonies in black and white” This is an emotive metaphor to describe the photographer’s photos. Each picture represents a person’s suffering and agony. The fact that there is a hundred reflects the horrors of war and the huge amount of people who are affected by it.

“A half-formed ghost” A photo is developing (hence it being half-formed) that shows someone who is now dead (a ghost). The photographer asked the wife of the man if he could take the picture as he lay bleeding into the **“foreign dust”**.

“The reader’s eyeballs prick with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers” This reflects the photographer’s anger that the readers of the newspaper will feel sad for a very short period of time and then move on with their everyday lives. This is also reflected in the final words of the poem **“they do not care”**.

Writer’s methods:

- There are four stanzas of equal length and a regular rhyme scheme. The poem is **“set out in ordered rows”** like the photographer’s pictures. It reflects the care that the photographer takes in his work.
- The use of enjambment (where one line flows into the next) reflects the gradual revealing of the photos as they develop.
- The poet juxtaposes **“Rural England”** to the war zones that the photographer has visited. It shows a contrast in the pain that people suffer – in England, it is ordinary pain that simple weather can dispel. In war zones, there are fields that explode beneath the feet of children running in a nightmare heat. It is also ironic that the photographer feels the most pain when he’s home in rural England, reliving the memories in his pictures.

Context:

- A war photographer has returned to England from a war zone to develop pictures that he’s taken.
- A photo begins to develop and the photographer begins to remember the horror of a man dying and the cries of his wife.
- The end of the poem focuses on the people in England who will see his pictures in the Sunday newspaper. The speaker thinks that they do not really care about the people and places portrayed in the photographs.