

Week 1: Introduction to Poetry

Poetry - A literary work in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm. It does not need to rhyme.

Reasons that a poet might write a poem:

- To describe a particular event.
- To express an emotion.
- To create something beautiful.
- Because it is their job to create a record of current events. The most prominent of these people is called Poet Laureate.

Poet Laureate - a poet officially appointed by a government who is expected to compose poems for special events and occasions.

Poetic form - Indicates the set of rules, whether it be the number of lines, the length or number of stanzas, rhyme scheme or subject matter etc, that a poem follows. There are over one hundred poetic forms and some of the most common are sonnets, ballads, limericks and lyrics.

Stanza - A group of lines a poem.

Power - The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of other or the course of events.

Conflict - A serious disagreement or argument, typically one that lasts a long time or to be incompatible or clash.

Week 2: Ozymandias

- Ozymandias was written by Percy Shelley. He was seen as very rebellious, as - despite being born in to a wealthy, some would say privileged family- he wanted equality for all.
- Ozymandias was an Egyptian Pharaoh. Ramesses lived to be ninety-six years old and was famous for his military victories. He had over 200 wives and lovers, ninety-six sons and sixty daughters, most of whom he outlived.
- Percy Bysshe Shelley's 1818 sonnet Ozymandias was written soon after the British Museum acquired a large fragment of a statue of Ramses II from the 13th century BC.
- It is thought that Shelley was less interested in the man and more interested in the message. The fall of tyrants (harsh or ungodly rulers) is a theme which was always close to Shelley's heart. Shelley was born in 1792 and was part of the radical, anti-establishment (anti-people in power) generation. 'Ozymandias' was written at a time when democracy and nationalism were raging across Europe at that time.
- Shelley was a Romantic poet and so valued nature, thoughts and feelings over logic and reason.
- Ozymandias is written in the form of a sonnet. Sonnets are nearly always about love (Ozymandias is about self-love as Ozymandias loves himself). All sonnets must have fourteen lines and ten syllables (beats) on every line (this can be called iambic pentameter). All sonnets must have a regular rhyme scheme or a number of regular rhyme schemes.

Week 3: My Last Duchess

- Robert Browning loosely based this poem on the life of Alfonso II d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara from 1533 to 1598.
- Ferrara married Lucrezia di Cosimo Medici when he was twenty-five. Lucrezia was wealthy but did not have significant social status
- Lucrezia died at seventeen, only three years after the couple had married. Though she is thought to have died of tuberculosis, it was widely speculated that she had been poisoned by her husband, who was then seeking the hand of Barbara, the eighth daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I and a woman of significantly more social importance than his young wife. Browning's character is presumably the Duke of Ferrara.
- In this poem, he reveals his sociopathic mind and suggests that Lucrezia was murdered.
- Themes in My Last Duchess are: Power, control, gender stereotypes, wealth, art, appearance versus reality.
- The poem is an example of a dramatic monologue, which uses enjambement instead of end-stopped lines, creating the impression that the Duke of obsessive and relentless in his speech about the Duchess.

Week 4: London

- London was published in Blake's *Songs of Experience* in 1794
- This was a collection of poetry which dealt with themes such as power, corruption, loss of innocence and manipulation.
- The poem criticises the way that London had become very oppressive due to laws which limited individual freedoms.
- It has been suggested that the ruling classes feared a revolution like the French Revolution, so they introduced restrictions to try and prevent this.
- The theme of power and control is suggested in repeated phrases such as "chartered" and the reference to "mind-forg'd manacles," which implies that people felt that even their beliefs and thoughts were restricted.
- Blake deals with issues which he felt had occurred as a result of a wealth divide. These themes include: child labour, prostitution and poverty.
- The poem is written in tightly controlled stanzas, which reflect the idea that there was a lack of freedom.
- The speaker narrates a journey through London, in which they witness terrible atrocities.



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Week 5: Extract From, The Prelude

- As a Romantic poet, Wordsworth was interested in exploring the connection between nature and human emotion, and the way human identity is shaped by experience.
- 'The Prelude' is an autobiographical poem and it explores key experiences in Wordsworth's life. It was published shortly after his death in 1850.
- The extract is written in the first person, and the use of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) makes this poem sound like natural speech.
- The extract begins on a summer evening when the narrator finds a boat tied to a tree. He unties it and takes it out on the lake.
- Initially the narrator seems happy and confident; he describes nature beautifully. However, a mountain appears on the horizon and he becomes scared of its size and power.
- When Wordsworth becomes frightened, we experience a Volta. This is a sudden change in mood or events within a poem: 'When, from behind that craggy ridge...a huge peak'
- Wordsworth uses personification when the mountain 'upreared its head' to give it a monstrous, frightening quality, which emphasises the power nature has over man.
- He turns the boat around and goes home, but his view of nature has changed.
- In the extract, Wordsworth's experiences of nature shock and change him. He no longer recognises the world around him: the sense of confidence he felt at the beginning has been replaced by the realisation that he knows very little about the world around him.

Week 6: Storm on the Island

- Heaney, a Northern Irish poet, often wrote about themes such as childhood, nature and his homeland.
- Heaney was aware of the way nature could be unpredictable and destructive just like human beings. In the end, nature will always overpower man.
- Due to his upbringing, Heaney's poetry captures rural landscapes and the unbeatable power of nature.
- Storm on the Island is a poem about a community preparing to face a coming storm.
- As the poem goes on, their confidence starts to decrease. The overwhelming power and the sounds of the storm are described. By the end of the poem, the fear experienced by the community is apparent.
- Heaney cleverly disguising a hidden meaning behind this poem with the literally meaning of an oncoming storm.
- Storm on the Island is actually a metaphor for the conflict between two religious and political groups in Northern Ireland.
- Republican, who are mainly Catholic, believe the north should join a united, independent Ireland.
- Unionists or loyalists, who are often Protestant, think Northern Ireland should stay as part of the United Kingdom.
- The period known as 'The Troubles' began in the late 1960s and lasted for nearly 30 years. Thousands of people on both sides were killed by bombs and bullets.

Week 7: Exposure

- When war began, in 1914, the people of Britain were led to believe victory would be glory. Volunteers responded to the patriotic call to arms and marched off in good spirits.
- It was predicted that it would end swiftly. However, this did not happen and both sides were locked in a stalemate.
- It was said to be the coldest winter in living memory. The soldiers suffered from hypothermia and frostbite and many developed trench foot, a crippling disease caused by feet being wet and cold and confined in boots for days on end.
- Owen and a number of other poets of the time used their writing to inform people back in Britain about the horrors of the war and in particular about life on the front line. The picture they painted contradicted the scenes of glory portrayed in the British press. Exposure is a particularly hard-hitting example of this.
- Owen had joined the army in 1915 but was hospitalised in May 1917 suffering from 'shell shock' (today known as PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). He wrote the poem from the trenches of WW1. Owen eventually returned to the war but was tragically killed just days before the war ended; he was just 26.
- The poem focusses on the despair, hopelessness and helplessness that the soldiers experience waiting in the trenches. Although there is no fighting, the extreme weather is a formidable enemy. Owen convey his anger and frustration at the loss of life and the horrific conditions.

Themes within 'Exposure'

Nihilism - extreme negativity . The belief that nothing in life has any meaning or value.

Exposure - The noun 'exposure' is linked to the verb 'to expose' and has several meanings: To leave unprotected, to be subject to danger, to put on display; to suffer and eventually die from the cold. These link to the poem which explore mental suffering alongside the physical danger of conflict, death and the loss of belief in any meaning of life.

Weather/Pathetic Fallacy - the weather is constantly referred to as the enemy because the soldiers are exposed to the natural elements. The weather is just as deadly as their opposition.

Despair - the complete loss or absence of hope. The poem consists of the overwhelming feeling of the inevitability of death and loss of faith.

Futility - Pointlessness and uselessness. Owen comments on the uselessness of war and the millions of lives lost for nothing,



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