

Language

Technique

Structure

Context

'storytelling' - idea of setting a moral message.

Ozymandias

By PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Ozy - ozium (to breathe);
Mandias - to rule. Power - 'breathes rule';
Lack of power - 'rules over air'.

emphasis on age/time

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said— "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Human impermanence / lack of power.
Time has taken even his 'Works'.

Double meaning - either
'Nothing is left' or 'Nothing but the remains of a once great leader'.

Reference to statue 'bracketed' by harsh 'c' sounds - emphasizes smallness in vast nature.

Without body = w/o heart.
No connection between brain and heart - could not recognise own limitations.
Sibilance - reflects hissing sand - emphasizes emptiness.

Sculptor accurately captures Rameses II - semantic field of cruelty.

Elevated vision of self. (Ozy) Emphasized by harsh 'c' sounds.

Couplet of Ozy's own words - emphasizes cruelty and arrogance - 'King of Kings' - reference to Jesus? Ozymandias believes he is better than God?

Irony when paired with following lines

Combination of alliterative sounds and long assonant vowels emphasize vastness and flatness of desert.
Nature is more powerful than man.

Sonnet structure but not strictly followed.

Emphasizes how 'structure' of Ozy's empire has crumbled.

Usually a love poem - mocking Ozy's love of self? Celebrating romantic notion of ancient kings and power of time?

CONTEXT: Romantic poet - celebration of nature's power.

Written at a time where USA rejected monarchy of UK and France killed King & Queen - Even power instilled by God can be rejected - nature cannot.



structure Context Language Technique

London by William Blake — 1794

I wander thro' each charter'd street

Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.

And mark in every face I meet

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

Anataclasis: repetition of a word with different meanings → emphasis on how poverty physically harms the poor.

In every cry of every Man,

In every Infants cry of fear,

In every voice: in every ban,

The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

cursing.

How the Chimney-sweepers cry

Every blackning Church appalls,

And the hapless Soldiers sigh

Runs in blood down Palace walls

Metaphor: Hints at French Rev. Also suggests monarchy has blood on their hands.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear

How the youthful Harlots curse

Blasts the new-born Infants tear

And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Oxymoron emphasizes corruption at all points in life — future brings nothing but decay.

Most memorable / impactful.

Literally: disease is killing and maiming BUT metaphorically, the future is diseased — a cycle of poverty.

Iambic tetrameter — Control is emphasized.

'Wander' and 'flow' suggest freedom of movements — contrast with 'charter'd'.

'Charter'd' = mapped BUT also has a sense of legislation. Thames is turned into a commodity.

Repetition = criticism of control? Government has too much control?

Emphasis on control.

Anaphora — repeated phrase at the start of each sentence — supports Blake's appeal for change

Emphasis on torturous conditions of London. loathed this.

Alliteration: a metaphor for psychological chains.

Onomatopoeia — appeals to sense of sound — Also use of emotive lexis.

Repetition of 'hear', also hidden within first letters of 3rd stanza — a call to those in power to listen to the people?

Criticism by Romantics of child labour.

Could suggest physically due to pollution OR metaphorically due to corruption of religion.

Destructive nature of war: soldiers give their lives for a system which mistreats them.

Connotes secrecy & illicit behaviour.

Young prostitute — link to above ideas of corruption of youth. Double meaning: 'curse' = swearing OR 'Harlot's curse' slang for syphilis

Corruption of youth from birth.

⇒ Four sets of quatrains in iambic tetrameter and clear rhyme scheme — echoes closely controlled and 'charter'd' streets of London.

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c. 1850

Extract from a novel-length poem.
Romantic poet - emphasis on power of nature.

Extract from "The Prelude" by William Wordsworth

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,

Earlier in poem suggests "her" is nature.
Happy, rural scene established
Man made boat anchored by tree (nature - power over man).
Narrator is familiar/comfortable with place.
(Change by end)
Narrator seems to feel they are doing something wrong.
Oxymoron - suggests narrator's guilt?
Assonance - 'i' sounds reflect boat flowing on water; peaceful & calm scene.
Confidence/Arrogance - contrasts end of poem - emphasis on power of nature by the end.
Contrast used here; emptiness makes mountain's appearance more shocking.
'elf-like boat' makes scene seem magical.
Homophonic 'pinnacle' and 'lustily' paired with assonant 'o' sounds could suggest sexual exploration from a section of the 'novel' called 'School Days'
Peaceful simile emphasizes next line.
Volta - mood changes from calm to ominous.
Powerful, almost animalistic.
Repetition of 'struck' = narrator's panicked response.
Almost in pursuit - night-marish.
Sibilance adds to sinister tone.
Mountain is calm, adding to sense of nature's power (especially in contrast to narrator's panic)

Nature emerges as a powerful force - contrast to lines 15-16.

For so it seemed, with purpose of its own

And measured motion like a living thing,

Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,

And through the silent water stole my way

Back to the covert of the willow tree;

There in her mooring-place I left my bark, -

And through the meadows homeward went, in grave

And serious mood; but after I had seen

That spectacle, for many days, my brain

Worked with a dim and undetermined sense

Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts

There hung a darkness, call it solitude

Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes

Remained, no pleasant images of trees,

Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;

But huge and mighty forms, that do not live

Like living men, moved slowly through the mind

By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Powerful (nature personified)

Mysterious & unknown.

Unsettling image encourages reader to empathise w. narrator & understand experience with nature's power.

⇒ Poem changes from euphony (pleasant sounding words) to cacophony (harsh and rough sounding words) reflecting narrator's experience with nature.

→ Cyclical structure - returns to willow tree, but is very changed - emphasizes nature's power.

→ Hiding place - narrator is afraid and wants to hide; feels like an intruder.

→ Small boat - contrast to description in line 17, No longer magical / innocent.

→ Dual meaning - power of nature has reminded narrator of own mortality.

→ Something amazing - nature's power.

→ Language is vague - contrast to confidence in lines 11-15. Narrator is struggling to express feelings about the incident.

→ Narrator left feeling lonely and isolated - human faced w. nature's power.

→ Another contrast to earlier in the poem - nature is no longer comfortable and familiar.

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Context: Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara, Italy - wife died in mysterious circumstances (1561) - rumours of poisoning.

My Last Duchess - 1842

BY ROBERT BROWNING

FERRARA

Form: Dramatic monologue with rhyming couplets and strict iambic pentameter throughout.
↳ Sense of Duke's power/need for control.
↳ Allows no second voice/questioning.

Duchess is a fresco - integral to the wall; owned as a possession by Duke - image is controlled (Power)

↳ Contrast to lines 54-55.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands

Painter's name - note: Duchess is not named. This is a "name drop" of a famous painter - emphasizes his wealth & power.

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said

Rhetorical question seems polite but is more of a command.

Punctuation doesn't end the line - visitor isn't given a chance to respond.

"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not

Her husband's presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps

Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps

Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint

Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had

A heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,

The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

Duke controls who sees Duchess - significant as he later says he didn't like that "her looks went everywhere".

'If they dare' - implies others fear his temper - also implies others are aware of the rumours. ↑

Direct address to visitor - no second voice present - suggests Duke's self-centred nature; he's not even aware he brought the issue up.

He wanted to be her only focus.

Suspicious reference to death ("that dies") - hint at her fate?

Irritation? Calculated response? ↳ Control of image of self.

Duke did not like not being her only focus/joy.

Consonance - plosive 'b' and 'd' sounds, paired with hissing sibilance and fricative 'f' sounds reveal the Duke's contempt for the Duchess.

Duchess represents Romantic notion of appreciation of small, natural wonders - Browning wants us to admire/sympathise with her.

"piece" objectifies Duchess - "now" implies he was dissatisfied with her in life.

Repetition - wife's blushes bother him. In the Victorian Era, blushing was a sign of female sexuality.

Cold and heartless - heavily implies that he had her killed.

Suggests visitor is eager to leave his presence - disturbed? Duke insists they leave together - control.

She rode with round the terrace—**all** and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—**good!** but thanked
Somehow—**I** know not how—**as** if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name

With anybody's gift. Who'd **stoop** to blame

This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech—which I have not—to make your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this

Or that in you **disgusts** me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let

Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—

E'en then would be some **stooping** and I choose

Never to **stoop**. Oh, **sir**, she **smiled**, no doubt,

Whene'er I **passed** her; but who **passed** without

Much the **same** **smile**? This grew; **I gave commands**;

Then all smiles stopped together. **There she stands**

As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master's known munificence

Is ample warrant that no just pretence

Of mine for **dowry** will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

At starting, is **my object**. **Nay, we'll go**

Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a **rarity**,

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in **bronze** for **me!**

Use of caesura here creates a sort of stuttering, as if Duke is becoming angry and losing his strict control of rhythm.

Shows pride in his family name and status - suggests he thinks he has benefitted Duchess and she should be grateful.

False modesty - clearly Duke has "skill in speech" - shows he has an awareness of how to manipulate people.

Revealing word choice - contemptuous.

Repetition of verb reveals he views the Duchess as below him.

Time of poem's setting, men were seen as superior.

Sibilance again reveals Duke's contempt for Duchess.

Caesura symbolises sudden end of Duchess' life

Repetition of line 2 - juxtaposes revelation just before; makes revelation more impactful.

Real Duke's 2nd wife was daughter of an Emperor, not a Count - suggests he has scared Count into not following through with marriage.

Sum paid to marry someone's daughter - Duke is arranging next Duchess.

Dual meaning - 'my goal' but another instance of objectifying a woman - she will become another possession.

"My" first word of poem's title - starts and ends with reference to Duke; reveals how self-centred he is.

Shows off another piece of art - could be seen as a metaphor for him, a "God" 'taming' his wife - warning next wife? 'Rarity' & 'bronze' emphasize his wealth and extensive art collection.



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— 1917. NO actually served in WWI — experienced horrors of war and exposure to weather.

Exposure

By Wilfred Owen

Exposure to elements — sense of vulnerability.

Collective voice/experience — could emphasize lack of individuality.

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that **knife** us...Wearied **we** keep awake because the night is silent...Low drooping flares **confuse** our memory of the salient...

Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,

But nothing happens.

Each stanza ends with a half line — reflects fading hope/energy.

Personification

implies the wind is attacking them.

Ellipses hint that they're waiting for something to happen — it never does.

Synaesthesia — emphasizes confusion.

Wind is personified — implies violence/lack of control.

Reminder of pain nature can inflict.

Juxtaposition — dawn is usually positive/hopeful but here just brings misery.

Nature = enemy.

Sibilance — mimics whispering of bullets.

Oxymoron — snow represents evil/death brought by war/weather.

Alliteration — emphasizes relentless nature of the snow.

Alliteration used to reflect weather means it's an ever-present force in the poem.

Watching, **we** hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,

Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.

Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,

Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.

What are we doing here?

Rhetorical question shows pointlessness of war.

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...

We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.

Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army.

Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,

But nothing happens.

Colourless/lifeless

Repetition — idea of "months of boredom punctuated by moments of terror".

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.

Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,

With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,

We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,

But nothing happens.

Nature is uncaring — 'w' alliteration echoes wind's sound.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces —

We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed,

Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,

Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.

Is it that we are dying?

Animalistic — soldiers are made vulnerable before nature's power.

Answer to line 11? Daydream of better days cut short by reality.

Many emotions — another reason for brain ache?

Allusion to bible describing apocalypse — "you will hear of wars and rumours of wars"

Links to key theme — nature is more deadly.

Caesura suggests soldiers are succumbing to their exposure.

Slowly our **ghosts** drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed

With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;

For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;

Shutters and doors, all closed: **on us the doors are closed,**

We turn back to our dying.

Links to assumption men will not survive the war.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;

Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.

For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;

Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,

For love of God seems dying.

→ EITHER: loss of faith OR God is turning his back on them -

Tonight, **this frost will fasten on this mud and us,**

Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp.

The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,

Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,

But nothing happens.

→ Vivid descriptions - reveals deforming way nature / exposure affects the men.

→ Exposure to death has made them indifferent.

→ Cyclical structure of poem takes reader back to the start: death changes nothing.

Emphasizes feeling of futility and pointlessness.

Emphasizes that war has made them shadows of what they were.

→ Assonance emphasizes long, painful journey

Nature has made them so cold they can't be warmed - jewels are beautiful but cold.

→ Ironically casual - expecting death.

Reference to idea that beauty of life at home is preserved by their actions but many families live in fear for their loved ones.

→ Nature is personified - seems to trap them.

→ The dead men? Those burying them? Nature has overpowered them - they can no longer feel emotion.

1966

Storm on the Island

By Seamus Heaney

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us.
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees
Which might prove company when it blows full-
Blast: you know what I mean - leaves and branches
Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale.
So that you listen to the thing you fear
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.
You might think that the sea is company,
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits
The very windows, spits like a tame cat
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo,
We are bombarded with the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

→ Strafes: rake with gunfire; salvo: lots of guns firing at once.
→ Warlike imagery increases threat of storm but also links to political violence.

→ Oxymoron used to emphasize idea of invisibility of both storms and political ideas - however both can have huge physical effects.

'Stormont' NI parliament building;
'Island' = homophone for 'Ireland' - hints that the 'storm' is a political disturbance.

Shared experience - links to idea of community experience

Words used create a sense of security - comparison to line 19.

→ First lines written in iambic pentameter with end stops - adds to sense of security

Sense of stoic acceptance - ground doesn't produce crops for storm to destroy - turning negative positive

→ Links to idea of refusal to feel fear about political ideas.

Conversational tone - relationship between poet and reader; shared experience.

'Company' repeated to emphasize sense of loneliness.

Alliteration of plosive 'b' sounds could link to IRA bombings.

Violence of wind - links to ideas of political violence and sense that it's easy to forget it affects a whole community.

→ Oxymoron - juxtaposition of fear and safety - like the poem itself!

Simile / zoomorphism - something familiar is becoming dangerous - storm is frightening - like politics!

→ Assonance - different 'i' sounds & personification of storm is dangerous & turbulent.

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1957

Bayonet Charge

By Ted Hughes

Both verb choices suggest confusion / bewilderment.

Comparing nightmarish imagery of war running from unknown presence - war is irrational.

Terror of how echoes that of innocence of nature soldier - against wartime horrors of war - juxtaposed.

Starts 'in media res' (in the middle of things) - suggests narrator was trying to escape reality in some way. Could also link to end - awakening from patriotic ideals to reality.

Suddenly he awoke and was running - raw

In raw-seamed hot khaki, his sweat heavy,

Stumbling across a field of clods towards a green hedge

That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing

Bullets smacking the belly out of the air -

He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm;

The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye

Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest,

In bewilderment then he almost stopped

In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations

Was he the hand pointing that second? He was running

Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs

Listening between his footfalls for the reason

Of his still running, and his foot hung like

Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows

Enjambment throws soldier back into action.

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame

And crawled in a threshing circle, its mouth wide

Open silent, its eyes standing out.

He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge.

King, honour, human dignity, etcetera

Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm

To get out of that blue crackling air

His terror's touchy dynamite.

Conclusion suggests volatility - echoed in 'ticking' of 't' sounds; a count down to an explosion? - with 'terror' used as a reminder of the realities of war.

Several connotations - pain / discomfort; youth / inexperience; raw emotions; unfamiliar, uncomfortable clothes; raw, animalistic behaviour.

Unnamed - universal experience.

Personification creates quite visceral, violent imagery, adding to sense of confusion.

Hypallage - when an adj is transferred to a noun it doesn't refer to. Rifle = pointless AND part of soldier.

Brimming tears restrict view - links to idea of patriotism blinding him in the past.

End-stopped line pauses action as soldier and reader questions why he's there.

Extended metaphor established to question his presence as a 'cog' in the machine - harsh 'c', 'k' sounds echo unforgiving warfare.

Suggests he has turned to stone, echoing later war memorials to dead soldiers.

'Threshing' = harvesting and cutting down crops - echoes war cutting down soldiers?

Pastoral imagery contrasts with and highlights horrors of reality.

Asyndetic list of reasons to join war effort. Dismissive 'etcetera' suggest they don't stand up to reality.

Nobility of ideas above are 'luxuries in the face of reality' - soldier is reduced to 'kill or be killed' rather than idealism.

Repeated imagery contrasts horrors of war.

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Part of a collection exploring the effects of war on ex-soldiers. This poem is based on the real experience of a soldier who served in Iraq.

Remains - [2007]

by Simon Armitage

Double meaning - 'remains' of the looter; could also suggest mental torment and guilt which 'remains' in narrator's mind.

On another occasion, we got sent out

to tackle looters raiding a bank.

And one of them legs it up the road,

probably armed, possibly not.

Starts 'in media res' - suggests many similar instances.

Colloquial language - emphasizes reality - makes story more real and believable.

Well myself and somebody else and somebody else
are all of the same mind,
so all three of us open fire.

Juxtaposition in tone.

Finds comfort in emphasizing that it wasn't just him. Contrast to line 30, where he takes full responsibility.

Three of a kind all letting fly, and I swear

I see every round as it rips through his life -

I see broad daylight on the other side.

So we've hit this looter a dozen times

and he's there on the ground, sort of inside out,

Poem switches to first person singular - personal responsibility?

Brutal and expressive to emphasize horror.

Almost childish - as though he can't process the horror in an adult way.

pain itself, the image of agony.

One of my mates goes by

and tosses his guts back into his body.

Then he's carted off in the back of a lorry.

End of story, except not really.

His blood-shadow stays on the street, and out on patrol

I walk right over it week after week

Then I'm home on leave. But I blink

Colloquial language quite masking of horror - narrator hiding true feelings?

Casual, almost disrespectful, as if army sees life as disposable.

Visual reminder of actions - foreshadows memories which will haunt him.

Soldier expected to carry on with details.

Caesura separates warzone and home life - memories follow him home.

Enjambment with 'blink' carries reader into horror of next stanza.

Uncertainty adds to soldier's guilt - repeated in line 22 to emphasize this.

Anaphora - visual horror of the scene

VOLTA!

Soldier resorts to unhealthy methods to remove image - affects everyday life.

and he bursts again through the doors of the bank.

Sleep, and he's probably armed, and possibly not.

Dream, and he's torn apart by a dozen rounds.

And the drink and the drugs won't flush him out -

he's here in my head when I close my eyes,

dug in behind enemy lines,

not left for dead in some distant, sun-stunned, sand-smothered land

or six-feet-under in desert sand,

but near to the knuckle, here and now,

his bloody life in my bloody hands.

Events are replayed again and again - effects of PTSD.

Repetition emphasizes haunting nature of soldier's guilt.

Semantic field emphasizes soldier's guilt - many PTSD sufferers struggle to sleep.

Metaphor compares thoughts to soldiers on the front line.

Sibilance here links to sinister reality of PTSD. Also shows how the war-torn place is affected by war.

'Stunned' & 'smothered' could reflect soldier's anger at place which caused PTSD.

Slowed pace could also show how PTSD is ever-present & affects his life.

Double meaning: man's blood or soldier's frustration emerging as swearing. No collective responsibility now - soldier feels fully responsible.

Allusion to Lady Macbeth? Speaker becoming unbalanced by guilt - could also suggest idiom of 'having blood on one's hands'.

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Bern explores grief/pain/uncertainty of those left behind when loved ones go to war. It also explores motherhood + impulse to protect your child.

Poppies - 2009

By Jane Weir

Three days before Armistice Sunday and poppies had already been placed on individual war graves. Before you left, I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals, 5 spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

Technique repeated throughout

Sellotape bandaged around my hand

I rounded up as many white cat hairs 10 as I could, smoothed down your shirt's upturned collar,

steeled the softening of my face. I wanted to graze my nose

across the tip of your nose, play at

being Eskimos like we did when

15 you were little. I resisted the impulse

to run my fingers through the gelled

blackthorns of your hair. All my words

flattened, rolled, turned into felt

slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked

with you, to the front door, threw

it open, the world overflowing

like a treasure chest. A split second

and you were away, intoxicated.

25 After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,

released a song bird from its cage.

Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,

and this is where it has led me,

skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy

30 making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without

a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

Battle imagery emphasizes isolation and vulnerability.

On reaching the top of the hill I traced

the inscriptions on the war memorial,

35 leaned against it like a wishbone.

The dove pulled freely against the sky,

an ornamental stitch, I listened, hoping to hear

your playground voice catching on the wind

Specific time - sense of something more personal than publicity of A.S.

Reminder of personal losses of war - links to theme of grief of those left behind.

Juxtaposition of military language and nouns related to childhood - reminds of humanity of those who go to war.

Links motherly love with injuries of war - emotional/physical wounds linked. Could also suggest her hands are tied and she can't stop him from going to war.

Sibilance almost a hushing sound - trying to quiet own emotions.

Desire for closeness and playfulness of son's younger years.

Allusion to JC's crown of thorns - suggests sacrifice of war/loss for those left behind.

Suggests softness/domesticity. Words become lost - can't find a fitting goodbye.

Subverts idea that only those who go to war are brave.

Simile shows world from son's perspective as fresh, precious & exciting.

Son's excitement juxtaposes mother's sadness - suggests lack of control; intoxicated by ideals + patriotism etc.

Metaphor could suggest release of emotions or 'releasing' son.

Doves symbolic of peace but also mourning & new beginnings.

Allusion to 2 doves of Christmas Carol? Emphasizes mother's loneliness/isolation (only one).

Names of other mothers' lost sons - could her son's name be among them?

Simile hints at fragility & alludes to something in two parts.

Son's name lost amongst other names?

Strong visual image of something small and precious against a vast open space - Mother's vulnerability?

Wants to recapture his youth - past she can't bring back.

Suggests injury.

Sewing imagery = domestic. Suggests mother trying to 'stitch' life back together.

Theme: loss — mother struggles to accept son has gone away to army — acts as though he has died. Ambiguous whether or not this is the case. It is still loss, regardless.

Form: first-person narrative means reader is given first-hand impression of mother's emotions — very personal experience.

Context/Themes Language

Structure Technique

War Photographer ~1985.

By Carol Ann Duffy

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.

He has a job to do. Solution's slip in tray

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.

Link to 'Napalm Girl' - highlights importance of war photography
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.

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.

Repetitive assonance creates a sense of duty & drudgery.

Another criticism to Western attitudes; apathy to suffering.

Anastrophe - unusual sentence structure - emphasis on darkroom; sense of silence following chaos.

Sibilance emphasizes harshness of pictures.

Turning chaos into order - trying to make sense of it.

Serious, funerary work - suffering and victims of war.

Biblical reference suggesting human life is temporary.

Each line ending with a rhyming couplet suggests control - photographer trying to keep emotions in check?

PTSD?

UK life = safe - no dangers emotive language.

Ambiguous - literally smth. is happening but also emotionally globally?

Developing photo but also 'half-formed' person - emphasizes youth of many victims.

Another biblical reference?

"All are from dust and to dust we return".

Emotive language.

Critical of dismissive attitudes to foreign wars in West.

Pain, but inconsequential and short-lasting.

Internal rhyme to suggest short duration of feeling.

Lack of emotion; hopelessness?

Consonance and plosive sounds echo warfare. Each of these an area of serious conflict in 1985.

UK = safety & comfort.

Questions morality of war photography

Each verse is end-stopped - compartmentalised to deal with PTSD?

- Context / Themes
- Language
- Structure
- Technique

Metaphor of tissue / paper to represent fragility of human life.

2006

Tissue

by Imtiaz Dharker

Flimsy paper material, but also material which makes up human bodies.

Paper that lets the light shine through, this is what could alter things.

Emphasizes vulnerability from outset.

Paper thinned by age or touching,

Importance recorded - altered by new generations.

the kind you find in well-used books, the back of the Koran, where a hand has written in the names and histories, who was born to whom,

Direct address - universal experience.

Tradition of recording family histories in our own - personal & global significance of certain paper.

the height and weight, who died where and how, on which sepia date, pages smoothed and stroked and turned transparent with attention.

Information on whole entire lives.

Suggestive of age / significance over time.

If buildings were paper, I might feel their drift, see how easily they fall away on a sigh, a shift in the direction of the wind.

Paper linked to human experience - again, fragility / vulnerability emphasized.

Idea that even buildings are temporary - everything is impermanent.

Maps too. The sun shines through their borderlines, the marks that rivers make, roads, railtracks, mountain folds,

Collection title 'The Terrorist at my Table' - link to 9/11? Fragility of human lives / monuments felt after the attacks.

influenced / link to 9/11? Fragility of human lives / monuments felt after the attacks.

Fine slips from grocery shops that say how much was sold and what was paid by credit card might fly our lives like paper kites.

Short, blunt sentence reflects how divisive borders can be.

Shows how borders are fabricated - nature is unaffected.

An architect could use all this, place layer over layer, luminous script over numbers over line, and never wish to build again with brick or block, but let the daylight break through capitals and monoliths, through the shapes that pride can make, find a way to trace a grand design with living tissue, raise a structure never meant to last, of paper smoothed and stroked and thinned to be transparent, turned into your skin.

Even smallest uses of paper tell a story of human experience.

Alliteration creates flow / freedom - unbound by human rules.

Simile suggests how much our lives are ruled by money.

or block, but let the daylight break through capitals and monoliths, through the shapes that pride can make, find a way to trace a grand design with living tissue, raise a structure never meant to last, of paper smoothed and stroked and thinned to be transparent, turned into your skin.

Paper as physical building blocks of life, not only metaphorical - imagines beautiful new design.

Reflects lines 17-18 & 15 - light & nature endures where human buildings don't.

Human arrogance - buildings less important than they seem.

Engagement shifts focus to humans, a structure more intricate than any buildings.

Reflects human mortality - humans not meant to last but play a part in a long story.

One line stanza to emphasize importance of human life - we are all influenced by our history / heritage and the paper that surrounds our lives.

Context/Themes language Technique Structure

Themes of exile / isolation - Émigrée forced to leave her country and adjust to a new one.

The Émigrée - 1993

By Carol Rumens

There once was a country... I left it as a child
but my memory of it is sunlight-clear
for it seems I never saw it in that November
which, I am told, comes to the mildest city.

The worst news I receive of it cannot break
my original view, the bright, filled paperweight.

It may be at war, it may be sick with tyrants,
but I am branded by an impression of sunlight.

The white streets of that city, the graceful slopes
glow even clearer as time rolls its tanks
and the frontiers rise between us, close like waves.

That child's vocabulary I carried here
like a hollow doll, opens and spills a grammar.

Soon I shall have every coloured molecule of it.
It may by now be a lie, banned by the state

but I can't get it off my tongue. It tastes of sunlight.

I have no passport, there's no way back at all
but my city comes to me in its own white plane.

It lies down in front of me, docile as paper;
I comb its hair and love its shining eyes.

My city takes me dancing through the city
of walls. They accuse me of absence, they circle me.

They accuse me of being dark in their free city.
My city hides behind me. They mutter death,

and my shadow falls as evidence of sunlight.

Migrant who has left a country -
"ée" suggests female narrator.

Opening of a story, but also suggests loss.

Details are vague - speaking for all migrants/refugees.

Bright, clear, happy memories.

'November' suggests unpleasantness & hard times, BUT memories linked to a time before.

Metaphor for solid, unchangeable thoughts which keep doubts at bay. Country has changed.

Repetition of 'sunlight' leaves each stanza w. positive view of home country.

Beautiful, heavenly imagery of

Personification - time as enemy / invader. Echoes war-torn country / Red Sea, where Moses led slaves to promised land, new to return.

Childhood language bright & synaesthesia within precious description increases vividness of experience

Personification / metaphor could link to narrator's memories.

Almost like a pet - affectionate & loving. 'Shining eyes' suggests hope/optimism for better future for city.

Repetition emphasizes influence of others / threat of others.

Sense of threat from racism / xenophobia in new city. Juxtaposition of light vs. dark.

City's light maintains identity in new city.

Speaker is coming to terms with dual identities.

Link to theme of isolation.

Contrasting view of new city - restrictive, but they see it as free.

Context / Themes
Language

Structure
Technique

Speaker discusses irrelevance of curriculum to own cultural identity: a one sided view.

Checking Out Me History

By John Agard

2007

Structure - lack of punctuation, irregular rhyme scheme & free verse - rejection of formality of Western poetry.

Dem tell me

Dem tell me

Wha dem want to tell me

Written in dialect - emphasizes separation from British education system. Repetition also suggests he is passive to what they tell him.

Bandage up me eye with me own history

Blind me to my own identity

Link between heritage & identity.

Others deliberately hide his history - irony as bandages are used to heal.

Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat

dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat

But Touissant L'Ouverture

no dem never tell me bout dat

Dismissive - assumes knowledge.

Touissant

a slave

with vision

lick back

Napoleon

battalion

and first Black

Republic born

Touissant de thorn

to de French

Touissant de beacon

of de Haitian Revolution

Important revolutionary figure who led the Haitian Revolution - first black republic created.

Contrast of pantomime legend with black historical figure emphasizes triviality of what he has learned vs. serious history.

Shortness of lines makes these sections stand out. Irregular rhyme scheme vs. predictable rhyme in British education system suggests "new"/learned history is more exciting and unpredictable.

These sections refer to light and vision, contrasting the blindness of the British system.

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de balloon

and de cow who jump over de moon

Dem tell me bout de dish run away with de spoon

but dem never tell me bout Nanny de maroon

Unnamed - clearly indifferent.

Nursery rhymes contrasted with Eurocentric history to emphasize lack of balanced focus.

Nanny

see-far woman

of mountain dream

fire-woman struggle

hopeful stream

to freedom river

Nanny the Maroon led a group of ex-slaves who forged their own communities & fought against British authorities in Jamaica.

Another example of vision and light.

Nanny is connected to nature & water - makes her seem spiritual / links her to hope and freedom.

Two battles won by British — history emphasizes European exceptionalism. Appear to be one battle, showing indifference to facts.

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo
but dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu
Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492
but what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

Famous colonisers contrasted with colonised people to emphasize how European education is one-sided.

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she lamp
and how Robin Hood used to camp
Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole soul
but dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

Both deserve recognition, but Mary Seacole is rarely given historical recognition — they both nursed during the same conflict.

From Jamaica
she travel far
to the Crimean War
she volunteer to go
and even when de British said no
she still brave the Russian snow
a healing star
among the wounded
a yellow sunrise
to the dying

Historical figures & nursery rhymes merged together — Mary stands out.

Chose the morally correct path, helping people even when not funded — defiant and brave.

Bravery emphasized against harsh conditions.

Another source of light — contrast to Florence Nightingale's lamp as Mary is the light. Metaphors link her to the universe, making her grand and important.

Dem tell me
Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me
But now I checking out me own history
I carving out me identity

Cyclical structure of poem hints at problems in education system cycling round every generation.

'But' represents a change — narrator is changing trajectory.

Personal pronouns used to show they are taking charge of their own learning.

Carving suggests a work in progress — a new product in the making. Poem ends on 'identity', which they feel has been denied.

Lack of full-stop suggests history / story isn't yet complete.

A narrative poem exploring a kamikaze pilot's decision to abandon his suicide mission and how he is shunned when he gets home.
Themes: Patriotism vs. beauty of life & nature.

Kamikaze

2013

By Beatrice Garland

Her father embarked at sunrise

with a flask of water, a samurai sword

in the cockpit, a shaven head

full of powerful incantations

and enough fuel for a one-way

journey into history

but half way there, she thought,

recounting it later to her children,

he must have looked far down

at the little fishing boats

strung out like bunting

on a green-blue translucent sea

and beneath them, arcing in swathes

like a huge flag waved first one way

then the other in a figure of eight,

the dark shoals of fishes

flashing silver as their bellies

swivelled towards the sun

and remembered how he

and his brothers waiting on the shore

built cairns of pearl-grey pebbles

to see whose withstood longest

the turbulent inrush of breakers

bringing their father's boat safe

Suggests start of an adventure - use of irony when considering the title.

Contrast of symbol of life (water) and death (sword) - links to theme.

Suggests a powerful spell - influence of propaganda and idea that dying for one's country is a great honour.

Grand metaphor for certain death - irony in fact he returns and is shunned by his family.

Reveals that his story is being recounted by his daughter - memory of war is long-lasting. Pilot has become almost legendary / a tragic hero.

fishing is important to Japan - pilot seeing essence of his country / own experience (lines 19-30)

Simile suggests pilot's shifting allegiance from patriotism to beauty of life.

Sibilance and fricatives reflect smooth sounds of fish through water - nature is made more real for the reader than 'powerful incantations'.

Focus now shifts to pilot's childhood memories

Innocent, playful childhood imagery contrasts with coldness of war / suicide missions.



Interjection of narrator's voice makes it clear that it's pilot's daughter's perspective on what happens. Also shows interest in pilot from her children.

- yes, grandfather's boat - safe
to the shore, salt-sodden, awash
with cloud-marked mackerel,
black crabs, feathery prawns,
the loose silver of whitebait and once
a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous.

Descriptive sensory imagery to highlight beauty of life and motivation of pilot's decision.

Still reminiscing about fish caught but tone becomes darker.

First full-stop of the poem - signifies where pilot's life should have stopped, but it didn't.

And though he came back
my mother never spoke again
in his presence, nor did she meet his eyes
and the neighbours too, they treated him
as though he no longer existed,
only we children still chattered and laughed

End of speculation - rest of poem is her own experience.

Disappointment and sadness in this section - contrasts with hopeful imagery in last section.

till gradually we too learned
to be silent, to live as though
he had never returned, that this
was no longer the father we loved.

Pilot frees himself from 'brainwashing' but is treated as if he were dead anyway.
↳ Irony.

And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered
which had been the better way to die.

'Learned' suggests this behaviour was not natural. Tone of regret in daughter's words about her actions.

Pilot is changed from who he was by perceptions of him as much as by the experience.

final sentence displays destructiveness of patriotism/nationalism - either way he acted, his story ended in a form of death.