

Power and Conflict Poetry – Knowledge Organiser

Remains by Simon Armitage Themes: Conflict, Suffering, Reality of War Tones: Tragic, Haunting, Anecdotal		Exposure by Wilfred Owen Themes: Conflict, Suffering, Nature, Reality of War, Patriotism Tones: Tragic, Haunting, Dreamy		Poppies by Jane Weir Themes: Bravery, Reality of War, Suffering, Childhood Tones: Tender, Tragic, Dreamy, Bitter	
Content, Meaning and Purpose -Written to coincide with a TV documentary about those returning from war with PTSD. Based on Guardsman Tromans, who fought in Iraq in 2003. -Speaker describes shooting a looter dead in Iraq and how it has affected him. -To show the reader that mental suffering can persist long after physical conflict is over.	Context -“These are poems of survivors – the damaged, exhausted men who return from war in body but never, wholly, in mind.” <i>Simon Armitage</i> -Poem coincided with increased awareness of PTSD amongst the military, and aroused sympathy amongst the public – many of whom were opposed to the war.	Content, Meaning and Purpose -Speaker describes war as a battle against the weather and conditions. -Imagery of cold and warm reflect the delusional mind of a man dying from hypothermia. -Owen wanted to draw attention to the suffering, monotony and futility of war.	Context -Written in 1917 before Owen went on to win the Military Cross for bravery, and was then killed in battle in 1918: the poem has authenticity as it is written by an actual soldier. - Of his work, Owen said: “My theme is war and the pity of war”. -Despite highlighting the tragedy of war and mistakes of senior commanders, he had a deep sense of duty: “not loath, we lie out here” shows that he was not bitter about his suffering.	Content, Meaning and Purpose -A modern poem that offers an alternative interpretation of bravery in conflict: it does not focus on a soldier in battle but on the mother who is left behind and must cope with his death. -The narration covers her visit to a war memorial, interspersed with images of the soldier’s childhood and his departure for war.	Context -Set around the time of the Iraq and Afghan wars, but the conflict is deliberately ambiguous to give the poem a timeless relevance to all mothers and families. -There are hints of a critical tone; about how soldiers can become intoxicated by the glamour or the military: “a blockade of yellow bias” and “intoxicated” .
Language -“ Remains ” - the images and suffering remain. -“ Legs it up the road ” - colloquial language = authentic voice -“ Then he’s carted off in the back of a lorry ” – reduction of humanity to waste or cattle -“ he’s here in my head when I close my eyes / dug in behind enemy lines ” – metaphor for a war in his head; the PTSD is entrenched. -“ his bloody life in my bloody hands ” – alludes to Macbeth: Macbeth the warrior with PTSD and Lady Macbeth’s bloody hands and guilt.	Form and Structure -Monologue, told in the present tense to convey a flashback (a symptom of PTSD). -First four stanzas are set in Iraq; last three are at home, showing the aftermath. -Enjambment between lines and stanzas conveys his conversational tone and gives it a fast pace, especially when conveying the horror of the killing -Repetition of “Probably armed, Possibly not” conveys guilt and bitterness.	Language -“ Our brains ache ” physical (cold) suffering and mental (PTSD or shell shock) suffering. -Semantic field of weather: weather is the enemy. -“ the merciless iced east winds that knife us... ” – personification (cruel and murderous wind); sibilance (cutting/slicing sound of wind); ellipsis (never-ending). -Repetition of pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ – conveys togetherness and collective suffering of soldiers. - ‘mad gusts tugging on the wire’ – personification	Form and Structure -Contrast of Cold>Warm>Cold imagery conveys Suffering>Delusions>Death of the hypothermic soldier. -Repetition of “but nothing happens” creates circular structure implying never ending suffering -Rhyme scheme ABBA and hexameter gives the poem structure and emphasises the monotony. -Pararhymes (half rhymes) (“nervous / knife us”) only barely hold the poem together, like the men.	Language -Contrasting semantic fields of home/childhood (“cat hairs”, “play at being Eskimos”, “bedroom”) with war/injury (“blockade”, “bandaged”, “reinforcements”) -Aural (sound) imagery: “All my words flattened, rolled, turned into felt” shows pain and inability to speak, and “I listened, hoping to hear your playground voice catching on the wind” shows longing for dead son. - “I was brave, as I walked with you, to the front door” : different perspective of bravery in conflict.	Form and Structure -This is an Elegy , a poem of mourning. -Strong sense of form despite the free verse , stream of consciousness addressing her son directly – poignant -No rhyme scheme makes it melancholic -Enjambment gives it an anecdotal tone. -Nearly half the lines have caesura – she is trying to hold it together, but can’t speak fluently as she is breaking inside. -Rich texture of time shifts, and visual, aural and touch imagery.
Charge of the Light Brigade by Alfred, Lord Tennyson Themes: Conflict, Suffering, Reality of War, Patriotism Tones: Energetic, Tragic, Haunting		Bayonet Charge by Ted Hughes Themes: Conflict, Power, Reality of War, Nature, Bravery, Patriotism Tones: Bewildered, Desperate, Dreamy		War Photographer Themes: Conflict, Suffering, Reality of War Tones: Painful, Detached, Angry	
Content, Meaning and Purpose - Published six weeks after a disastrous battle against the Russians in the (unpopular) Crimean War -Describes a cavalry charge against Russians who shoot at the lightly-armed British with cannon from three sides of a long valley. -Of the 600 hundred who started the charge, over half were killed, injured or taken prisoner. -It is a celebration of the men’s courage and devotion to their country, symbols of the might of the British Empire.	Context -As Poet Laureate, he had a responsibility to inspire the nation and portray the war in a positive light: propaganda. -Although Tennyson glorifies the soldiers who took part, he also draws attention to the fact that a commander had made a mistake: “Someone had blunder’d” . -This was a controversial point to make in Victorian times when blind devotion to power was expected.	Content, Meaning and Purpose -Describes the terrifying experience of ‘going over the top’: fixing bayonets (long knives) to the end of rifles and leaving a trench to charge directly at the enemy. -Steps inside the body and mind of the speaker to show how this act transforms a soldier from a living thinking person into a dangerous weapon of war. -Hughes dramatises the struggle between a man’s thoughts and actions.	Context -Published in 1957, but most-likely set in World War 1. -Hughes’ father had survived the battle of Gallipoli in World War 1, and so he may have wished to draw attention to the hardships of trench warfare. -He draws a contrast between the idealism of patriotism and the reality of fighting and killing. (“King, honour, human dignity, etcetera”)	Content, Meaning and Purpose -Tells the story of a war photographer developing photos at home in England: as a photo develops he begins to remember the horrors of war – painting a contrast to the safety of his dark room. -He appears to be returning to a warzone at the end of the poem. -Duffy conveys both the brutality of war and the indifference of those who might view the photos in newspapers and magazines: those who live in comfort and are unaffected by war.	Context -Like Tennyson and Ted Hughes, Duffy was the Poet Laureate. -Duffy was inspired to write this poem by her friendship with a war photographer. She was intrigued by the challenge faced by these people whose job requires them to record terrible, horrific events without being able to directly help their subjects. -The location is ambiguous and therefore universal: (“Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh.”)
Language -“ Into the valley of Death ”: this Biblical imagery portrays war as a supremely powerful, or even spiritual, experience. -“ jaws of Death ” and “mouth of Hell” : presents war as an animal that consumes its victims. -“ Honour the Light Brigade/Noble six hundred ”: language glorifies the soldiers, even in death. The ‘six hundred’ become a celebrated and prestigious group. -“ shot and shell ”: sibilance creates whooshing sounds of battle.	Form and Structure -This is a ballad, a form of poetry to remember historical events – we should remember their courage. -6 verses, each representing 100 men who took part. -First stanza tightly structured, mirroring the cavalry formation. Structure becomes awkward to reflect the chaos of battle and the fewer men returning alive. -Dactylic dimeter (HALF-a leaugue / DUM-de-de) mirrors the sound of horses galloping and increases the poem’s pace. -Repetition of ‘the six hundred’ at the end of each stanza (epistrophe) emphasises huge loss.	Language -“ The patriotic tear that brimmed in his eye Sweating like molten iron ”: his sense of duty (tear) has now turned into the hot sweat of fear and pain. -“ cold clockwork of the stars and nations ”: the soldiers are part of a cold and uncaring machine of war. -“ his foot hung like statuary in midstride ”: he is frozen with fear/bewilderment. The caesura (full stop) jolts him back to reality. -“ a yellow hare that rolled like a flame And crawled in a threshing circle ”: impact of war on nature – the hare is distressed, just like the soldiers	Form and Structure -The poem starts ‘in medias res’: in the middle of the action, to convey shock and pace. -Enjambment maintains the momentum of the charge. -Time stands still in the second stanza to convey the soldier’s bewilderment and reflective thoughts. -Contrasts the visual and aural imagery of battle with the internal thoughts of the soldier = adds to the confusion.	Language -“ All flesh is grass ”: Biblical reference that means all human life is temporary – we all die eventually. -“ He has a job to do ”: like a soldier, the photographer has a sense of duty. -“ running children in a nightmare heat ”: emotive imagery with connotations of hell. -“ blood stained into a foreign dust ”: lasting impact of war – links to Remains and ‘blood shadow’. -“ he earns a living and they do not care ”: ‘they’ is ambiguous – it could refer to readers or the wider world.	Form and Structure -Enjambment – reinforces the sense that the world is out of order and confused. -Rhyme reinforces the idea that he is trying to bring order to a chaotic world – to create an understanding. -Contrasts: imagery of rural England and nightmare war zones. -Third stanza: A specific image – and a memory – appears before him.
Kamikaze by Beatrice Garland Themes: Conflict, Power, Patriotism, Shame, Nature, Childhood Tones: Sorrowful, Pitiful		The Emigree by Carol Rumens Themes: Conflict, Power, Identity, Protest, Bravery, Childhood Tones: Mournful, Defiant, Nostalgic		Checking Out Me History by John Agard Themes: Power, Protest, Identity, Childhood Tones: Defiant, Angry, Rebellious, Cynical	
Content, Meaning and Purpose -In World War 2, Japanese Kamikaze pilots would fly manned missiles into targets such as ships. -This poem explores a kamikaze pilot’s journey towards battle, his decision to return, and how he is shunned when he returns home. -As he looks down at the sea, the beauty of nature and memories of childhood make him decide to turn back.	Context -Cowardice or surrender was a great shame in wartime Japan. -To surrender meant shame for you and your family, and rejection by society: “he must have wondered which had been the better way to die” .	Content, Meaning and Purpose -‘Emigree’ – a female who is forced to leave their county for political or social reasons. -The speaker describes her memories of a home city that she was forced to flee. The city is now “sick with tyrants” . -Despite the cities problems, her positive memories of the place cannot be extinguished.	Context -Emigree was published in 1993. The home country of the speaker is not revealed – this ambiguity gives the poem a timeless relevance. -Increasingly relevant to many people in current world climate	Content, Meaning and Purpose -Represents the voice of a black man who is frustrated by the Eurocentric history curriculum in the UK – which pays little attention to the black history. -Black history is quoted to emphasise its separateness and to stress its importance.	Context -John Agard was born in the Caribbean in 1949 and moved to the UK in the 1970s. -His poetry challenge racism and prejudice. -This poem may, to some extent, have achieved its purpose: in 2016, a statue was erected in London in honour of Mary Seacole, one of the subjects of the poem.
Language -The Japanese word ‘kamikaze’ means ‘divine wind’ or ‘heavenly wind’, and has its origin in a heaven-sent storm that scattered an invading fleet in 1250. -“ dark shoals of fish flashing silver ”: image links to a Samurai sword – conveys the conflict between his love for nature/life and his sense of duty. Also has sibilance. - “they treated him as though he no longer existed” : cruel irony – he chose to live but now must live as though he is dead. -“ was no longer the father we loved ”: the pilot was forever affected by his decision.	Form and Structure -Narrative and speaker is third person, representing the distance between her and her father, and his rejection by society. -The first five stanzas are ordered (whilst he is flying on his set mission). -Only full stop is at the end of Stanza Five: he has made his decision to turn back. -The final two are in italics and have longer line to represent the fallout of his decision: his life has shifted and will no longer be the same. -Direct speech (“My mother never spoke again”) gives the poem a personal tone.	Language -“ I left it as a child ”: ambiguous meaning – either she left when <i>she</i> was a child or the city was a child (it was vulnerable and she feels a responsibility towards it). -“ I am branded by an impression of sunlight ”: imagery of light - it will stay with her forever. -Personification of the city: “I comb its hair and love its shining eyes” (she has a maternal love for the city) and “My city takes me dancing” (it is romantic and passionate lover) -“ My city hides behind me ”: it is vulnerable and – despite the fact that she had to flee – she is strong. -Semantic field of conflict: “Tyrant, tanks, frontiers”	Form and Structure -First person. -The last line of each stanza is the same (epistrophe): “sunlight” : reinforces the overriding positivity of the city and of the poem. -The first two stanzas have lots of enjambment – conveys freedom. The final stanza has lots of full-stops – conveys that fact that she is now trapped.	Language -Imagery of fire and light used in all three stanzas regarding black historic figures: “Toussaint de beacon”, “Fire-woman”, “yellow sunrise” . -Uses non-standard phonetic spelling (“Dem tell me wha dem want”), to represent his own powerful accent and mixes Caribbean Creole dialect with standard English. - “I carving out me identity” : metaphor for the painful struggle to be heard, and to find his identity.	Form -Dramatic monologue, with a dual structure. -Stanzas concerning Eurocentric history (normal font) are interspersed with stanzas on black history (in <i>italics</i> to represent separateness and rebellion). - Black history sections arranged as serious lessons to be learned; traditional history as nursery rhymes, mixed with fairytales (mocking of traditional history). - The lack of punctuation, the stanzas in free verse, the irregular rhyme scheme and the use of Creole could represent the narrator’s rejection of the rules. -Repetition of “Dem tell me” : frustration.

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley Themes: Power of Nature, Decay, Pride Tones: Ironic, rebellious		My Last Duchess by Robert Browning Themes: Power, Pride, Control, Jealousy, Status Tones: Sinister, Bitter, Angry		Tissue by Imtiaz Dharker Themes: Power of Nature, Control, Identity Tones: Gentle, Flowing, Ethereal							
Content, Meaning and Purpose -The narrator meets a traveller who tells him about a decayed stature that he saw in a desert. -The statue was of a long forgotten ancient King: the arrogant Ozymandias, 'king of kings.' -The poem is ironic and one big metaphor: Human power is only temporary – the statue now lays crumbled in the sand, and even the most powerful human creations cannot resist the power of nature.		Context -Shelley was a poet of the 'Romantic period' (late 1700s and early 1800s). Romantic poets were interested in emotion and the power of nature. -Shelley also disliked the concept of a monarchy and the oppression of ordinary people. -He had been inspired by the French revolution – when the French monarchy was overthrown.		Content, Meaning and Purpose -The Duke is showing a visitor around his large art collection and proudly points out a portrait of his last wife, who is now dead. He reveals that he was annoyed by her over-friendly and flirtatious behaviour. -He can finally control her by objectifying her and showing her portrait to visitors when he chooses. - He is now alone as a result of his need for control. -The visitor has come to arrange the Duke's next marriage, and the Duke's story is a subtle warning about how he expects his next wife to behave.		Context -Browning was a British poet, and lived in Italy. The poem was published in 1842. -Browning may have been inspired by the story of an Italian Duke (Duke of Ferrara): his wife died in suspicious circumstances and it was rumoured that she had been poisoned.		Content, Meaning and Purpose -Two different meanings of <i>'Tissue'</i> (homonyms) are explored: firstly, the various pieces of paper that control our lives (holy books, maps, grocery receipts); secondly, the tissue of a human body. -The poet explores the paradox that although paper is fragile, temporary and ultimately not important, we allow it to control our lives. -Also, although human life is much more precious, it is also fragile and temporary.		Context -Imtiaz Dharker was born in Pakistan and grew up in Glasgow. <i>'Tissue'</i> is taken from a 2006 collection of poems entitled <i>'The Terrorist at My Table'</i> : the collection questions how well we know people around us. -This particular poem also questions how well we understand ourselves and the fragility of humanity.	
Language - 'sneer of cold command' : the king was arrogant, this has been recognised by the sculptor, the traveller and then the narrator. - 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair.' : <i>'Look'</i> = imperative, stressed syllable highlights commanding tone; ironic – he is telling other 'mighty' kings to admire the size of his statue and 'despair', however they should really despair because power is only temporary. 'The lone and level sands stretch far away.' : the desert is vast, lonely, and lasts far longer than a statue.		Form and Structure -A sonnet (14 lines) but with an unconventional structure... the structure is normal until a turning point (a volta) at Line 9 (...these words appear). This reflects how human structures can be destroyed or decay. -The iambic pentameter rhyme scheme is also disrupted or decayed. -First eight lines (the octave) of the sonnet: the statue is described in parts to show its destruction. -Final two lines: the huge and immortal desert is described to emphasise the insignificance of human power and pride.		Language - 'Looking as if she was alive' : sets a sinister tone. - 'Will't please you sit and look at her?' rhetorical question to his visitor shows obsession with power. - 'she liked whate'er / She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.' : hints that his wife was a flirt. - 'as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody's gift' : she was beneath him in status, and yet dared to rebel against his authority. - 'I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together' : euphemism for his wife's murder. - 'Notice Neptune, though / Taming a sea-horse' : he points out another painting, also about control.		Form and Structure -Dramatic Monologue, in iambic pentameter. -It is a speech, pretending to be a conversation – he doesn't allow the other person to speak! -Enjambment: rambling tone, he's getting carried away with his anger. He is a little unstable. -Heavy use of caesura (commas and dashes): stuttering effect shows his frustration and anger: 'She thanked men, – good! but thanked / Somehow – I know not how' -Dramatic Irony: the reader can read between the lines and see that the Duke's comments have a much more sinister undertone.		Language -Semantic field of light: ('Paper that lets light shine through', 'The sun shines through their borderlines', 'let the daylight break through capitals and monoliths') emphasises that light is central to life, a positive and powerful force that can break through 'tissue' and even monoliths (stone statues). - 'pages smoothed and stroked and turned' : gentle verbs convey how important documents such as the Koran are treated with respect. - 'Fine slips [...] might fly our lives like paper kites' : this simile suggests that we allow ourselves to be controlled by paper.		Form and Structure -The short stanzas create many layers, which is a key theme of the poem (layers of paper and the creation of human life through layers) -The lack of rhythm or rhyme creates an effect of freedom and openness. -All stanzas have four lines, except the final stanza which has one line ('turned into your skin'): this line focuses on humans, and addresses the reader directly to remind us that we are all fragile and temporary. -Enjambment between lines and stanzas creates an effect of freedom and flowing movement.	
Extract from The Prelude: Stealing the Boat by William Wordsworth Themes: Power of Nature, Fear, Childhood Tones: Confident > Dark / Fearful > Reflective		Storm on the Island by Seamus Heaney Themes: Power of Nature, Fear Tones: Dark, Violent, Anecdotal		London by William Blake Themes: Power, Inequality, Loss, Anger Tones: Angry, Dark, Rebellious							
Content, Meaning and Purpose -The story of a boy's love of nature and a night-time adventure in a rowing boat that instils a deeper and fearful respect for the power of nature. -At first, the boy is calm and confident, but the sight of a huge mountain that comes into view scares the boy and he flees back to the shore. -He is now in awe of the mountain and now fearful of the power of nature which are described as 'huge and mighty forms, that do not live like living men.' -We should respect nature and not take it for granted.		Context -Published shortly after his death, <i>The Prelude</i> was a very long poem (14 books) that told the story of William Wordsworth's life. -This extract is the first part of a book entitled <i>'Introduction – Childhood and School-Time'</i> . -Like Percy Shelley, Wordsworth was a romantic poet and so his poetry explores themes of nature, human emotion and how humans are shaped by their interaction with nature.		Content, Meaning and Purpose -The narrator describes how a rural island community prepared for a coming storm, and how they were confident in their preparations. -When the storm hits, they are shocked by its power: its violent sights and sounds are described, using the metaphor of war. -The final line of the poem reveals their fear of nature's power		Context -Seamus Heaney was Northern Irish, he died in 2013. -This poem was published in 1966 at the start of <i>'The Troubles'</i> in Northern Ireland: a period of deep unrest and violence between those who wanted to remain part of the UK and those who wanted to become part of Ireland. -The first eight letters of the title spell <i>'Stormont'</i> : this is the name of Northern Ireland's parliament. The poem might be a metaphor for the political storm that was building in the country at the time.		Content, Meaning and Purpose -The narrator is describing a walk around London and how he is saddened by the sights and sounds of poverty. -The poem also addresses the loss of innocence and the determinism of inequality: how new-born infants are born into poverty. -The poem uses rhetoric (persuasive techniques) to convince the reader that the people in power (landowners, Church, Government) are to blame for this inequality.		Context -The poem was published in 1794, and time of great poverty is many parts of London. -William Blake was an English poet and artist. Much of his work was influenced by his radical political views: he believed in social and racial equality. -This poem is part of the <i>'Songs of Experience'</i> collection, which focuses on how innocence is lost and society is corrupt. -He also questioned the teachings of the Church and the decisions of Government.	
Language - 'One summer evening (led by her)' : 'her' might be nature personified – this shows his love for nature. - 'an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure' : confident, but the oxymoron suggests he knows it's wrong; forebodes the troubling events that follow. - 'nothing but the stars and grey sky' : emptiness of sky. - 'the horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge' : the image of the mountain is more shocking (contrast). - 'Upreared its head' and 'measured motion like a living thing' : the mountain is personified as a powerful beast, but calm – contrasts with his own inferior panic. - 'There hung a darkness' : lasting effects of mountain.		Form and Structure -First person narrative – creates a sense that it is a personal poem. -The regular rhythm and enjambment add to the effect of natural speech and a personal voice. -The extract can be split into three sections, each with a different tone to reflect his shifting mood: Lines 1-20: (rowing) carefree and confident Lines 21-31: (the mountain appears) dark and fearful Lines 32-44: (following days) reflective and troubled -Contrasts in tone: 'lustily I dipped my oars into the silent lake' versus 'I struck and struck again' and 'with trembling oars I turned' .		Language - 'Nor are there trees which might prove company' : the island is a lonely, barren place. -Violent verbs are used to describe the storm: 'pummels', 'exploding', 'spits' . -Semantic field of war: 'Exploding comfortably' (also an oxymoron to contrast fear/safety); 'wind dives and strafes invisibly' (the wind is a fighter plane); 'We are bombarded by the empty air' (under ceaseless attack). -This also reinforces the metaphor of war / troubles. - 'spits like a tame cat turned savage' : simile compares the nature to an animal that has turned on its owner.		Form and Structure -Written in blank verse and with lots of enjambment: this creates a conversational and anecdotal tone. - 'We' (first person plural) creates a sense of community, and 'You' (direct address) makes the reader feel immersed in the experience. -The poem can split into three sections: Confidence: 'We are prepared.' (ironic) The violence of the storm: 'It pummels your house' Fear: 'it is a huge nothing that we fear.' -There is a turning point (a volta) in Line 14: 'But no' . This monosyllabic phrase, and the caesura, reflects the final calm before the storm.		Language -Sensory language creates an immersive effect: visual imagery ('Marks of weakness, marks of woe') and aural imagery ('cry of every man') - 'mind-forged manacles' : they are trapped in poverty. -Rhetorical devices to persuade: repetition ('In every..'); emotive language ('infant's cry of fear'). -Criticises the powerful: 'each chartered street' – everything is owned by the rich; 'Every black'ning church appals' - the church is corrupt; 'the hapless soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down palace walls' – soldier's suffer and die due to the decisions of those in power, who themselves live in palaces.		Form and Structure -A dramatic monologue, there is a first-person narrator ('I') who speaks passionately about what he sees. -Simple ABAB rhyme scheme: reflects the unrelenting misery of the city, and perhaps the rhythm of his feet as he trudges around the city. -First two stanzas focus on people; third stanza focuses on the institutions he holds responsible; fourth stanza returns to the people – they are the central focus.	
Key themes and connections: poems that you might choose to compare		Language for comparison		Assessment Objectives		Poetic Techniques					