

GCSE English Literature

Poetry Anthology Revision – Note-based Summary Sheet

Poem	Context	Contextual Links	Themes
'Ozymandias' by Percy Bysshe Shelly	This poem was written in 1819 (Romantic era) and was inspired by the recent unearthing of an Egyptian Pharaoh statue. The Egyptians believed that Pharaohs were immortal gods and their legacy would last forever.	-Shelley and Wordsworth both exploited social beliefs by beginning to question religion and focus instead on nature and science. These are conflicts which resonate through both of their poems.	Power of humans and man/ power of nature/ pride - focuses on the power of Ozymandias, representing human power. Power is then lost and is only visible due to art. Nature has ruined the statue – nature and time have more power than anything else.
'London' by William Blake	William Blake was a poet in Georgian England (specifically under the reign of William IV, but this is largely referred to as the Georgian era). This poem is set during a time of poverty, child labour and a horrific war with France. Women had no rights, death rates were high and the Industrial Revolution had resulted in many large oppressive factories. Blake's poems often railed against these and how London, arguably the greatest city in the world at that time, was filthy and corrupt.	-Blake, similarly to Wordsworth, questioned social and political values of the time. This is evident through their poems as Blake challenges the elite and Wordsworth challenges the conflict between man and nature, whereby nature always prevails.	Individual experiences/ anger/ loss and absence - negative view of the city. For Blake, the conditions faced by people caused them to decay physically, morally and spiritually In contrast, 'The Prelude' 'The Emigree' present contrasting individual experience of a place. One is negative, the other is a positive outlook.

<p>'Extract From The Prelude' by William Wordsworth</p>	<p>Wordsworth was a romantic poet, who challenged dominant beliefs about the world we live in and the way people thought at the time. During this time, epic poems of great length were common, as were poems which looked at man's place within the world. This poem explores the spiritual and moral development of a man growing up.</p>	<p>-Wordsworth presents this conflict between society and elitist ideologies that were being imposed upon society. This is similar to 'My last Duchess, London, Charge of The Light Brigade, Checking Out me History' and 'Tissue'. All of these poets explore the personal struggle poets faced as they battle with personal, cultural, political or social differences/divides.</p>	<p>Power of nature/ fear/ individual experiences Wordsworth is often on his own throughout <i>The Prelude</i> and this is important to him. He can think more clearly and is more affected by events and places as a result. The poem seems to suggest that you can sometimes experience feelings and events more clearly at night, perhaps due to loneliness.</p>
<p>'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning</p>	<p>Browning was a poet in the 19th century and the son of a wealthy bank clerk. He didn't fit in much in London society, he left the country and went to Italy to marry fellow poet Elizabeth Barrett (later Browning) because of her protective father. As a result they were both familiar with over controlling patriarchs in the family as well as Italy itself. The poem is loosely based on the Duke of Ferrara and is written from his perspective, talking to a messenger about arranging his marriage. The assumption being that he was dissatisfied with his former wife and had her killed.</p>	<p>-Browning explores the oppressive nature of patriarchy through his poetry, this suppressive nature is apparent through 'Ozymandias' and 'London' with the overbearing nature of those in power.</p>	<p>Power of humans/ pride: My Last Duchess is all about power: the political and social power shown through the speaker (the Duke) and his attempt to control his marriage in the same way that he rules his lands- with his iron fist.</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">‘Charge of The Light Brigade’ by Alfred Lord Tennyson</p>	<p>The Crimean war saw British troops fighting in Russia. At this time people fought on horses, alongside basic guns and cannons. Soldiers would rush in and attack before they could reload or stop them. The light brigade was very lightly equipped; it was more for scouting from the back rather than charging straight in. During a battle, miscommunication sent the light brigade charging head first into the cannons of the other side. It was a huge catastrophe and many died. It showed to the British that mistakes can happen. The men were respected for following orders, even though they knew they may be wrong. Some, however, have criticised the way they blindly followed orders.</p>	<p>-Tennyson explores the idea of trepidation and fear which can be fed down through society and encourages us to question the values/ideas that society are encouraged to believe by those in powerful positions, which is a similar theme in the poems: ‘My Last Duchess’ and ‘Ozymandias.’</p>	<p>Warfare/ courage/ death: Charge of the Light Brigade highlights the vicious battle the soldiers endure. All of the soldiers show so much bravery within their battle but ultimately the tragedy is many of the soldiers died in the Light Brigade.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">‘Exposure’ by Wilfred Owen.</p>	<p>Owen was a soldier and officer in WW1. He witnessed the horrors of front line warfare and these are evident in poems that were published after the war. The war was criticised because of the huge loss of life. Owen’s poems often highlighted muddy, dangerous trenches and contrasted them to those in charge who lived in comfort. His poems aim to show the truth of the conditions to people back home.</p>	<p>-Owen’s anger towards working and living conditions during the war is a dominant theme running through a variety of poems. There are other poem with the aim to exploit social issues and concerns, such as ‘London’ and ‘My Last Duchess.’</p> <p>-This also has similarities to Tennyson, as both represent warfare and life as a soldier during war time/battle.</p>	<p>War/ weather/ despair: In this poem he looks at a particular aspect of how death claimed the lives of so many soldiers. Death is seen as inevitable. The freezing conditions are seen as being dangerous as the enemy. The soldiers are fighting two battles at once and at one point, bullets are seen as less deadly than the cold.</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">‘Storm on the Island’ by Seamus Heaney</p>	<p>Heaney is a contemporary poet who grew up in Ireland in a farming community and most of his poems are about homely subjects. He uses agricultural and natural images in his work as metaphors for human nature. The poem is set around a small, isolated cottage near the sea in a storm and the exposure to the elements.</p>	<p>-Heaney has links to the romantic poets with the fundamental focus on nature (The Prelude/Ozymandias) and the battle between nature and man.</p>	<p>Isolation/ fear/ man and the natural world: In this poem, man and nature are in opposition to one another. The people are trying their best to survive, but nature is throwing the works at them, adding insult to injury with a dried-up, tough land and vicious windstorms. The power of the storm is impressive, but totally scary; it feels like it could sweep you away without any warning. And on this island, there is nowhere to hide, so they have to face their fears head-on.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">‘Bayonet Charge’ by Ted Hughes</p>	<p>This is about a nameless soldier going over the top in the trenches. Soldiers would have bayonets attached to the end of their rifles and would use them to stab enemy soldiers. The nameless soldier seems to become more of a weapon than a man as he charges towards the enemy. Ted Hughes was a former RAF serviceman. He includes lots of natural and historical ideas in his poems and often looks at man’s impact upon nature.</p>	<p>Similarly to other poets, Hughes explores how society is vulnerable and susceptible to believing those in a position of power. The fact that soldiers are depicted as ‘weapons’ signifies how man is naïve and easily manipulated as seen in Ozymandias, My Last Duchess, London, Exposure and Charge of The Light Brigade.</p>	<p>War/ oppression/ tragedy: This poem tries to step inside the body and mind of a soldier carrying out one of the most terrifying acts of this or any war: charging straight into rifle fire with the aim of killing enemy soldiers face-to-face. In doing so, Hughes dramatises the struggle between a man's thoughts and actions.</p>

<p>'Remains' by Simon Armitage</p>	<p>The poem is written from the perspective of a soldier stationed in Iraq or Afghanistan. They are on patrol and appear to fire at some bank robbers and one of the looters appears to have a gun so they open fire. The rest of the poem looks at the soldier who cannot, even long after the event, continue to carry the image of the dead man in his mind. This poem explores post-traumatic stress and mental illness which causes panic attacks, depression and suicidal thoughts.</p>	<p>-Armitage's poem has contextual links with contemporary and historical references to war and the effects. This is evident in 'Charge of the Light Brigade', 'Bayonet Charge', 'Poppies' and 'Exposure.'</p>	<p>War/conflict/guilt/life/death</p> <p>There is discomfort throughout the poem – the soldier is wracked with guilt about his role in the shooting and this is transferred to the reader through the jarring structure. The physical setting of the war zone is also uncomfortable for the reader. The reference to 'daylight on the other side' brings us to reflect on life and death.</p>
<p>'Poppies' by Jane Weir</p>	<p>The poem looks at a mother of a son who has grown up and gone to war. The poem contains many clues that this is a modern conflict, however the poem ends at the memorial, suggesting the son died at war and is now missed by the mother who fears the worst. The poem is based heavily around the idea of poppies and the idea of memory. The poem explores sadness and pride and unusually avoids commenting on the war itself.</p>	<p>-Poppies explores the effects of war, which is a common contextual link in the following poems: Remains, London, Bayonet Charge, Exposure and Charge of The Light Brigade.</p>	<p>Nature/ grief /sacrifice</p> <p>Poppies are used as a symbol of both war and sacrifice. The effect of this is to help the reader remember the people who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. Furthermore, the presence of poppies gives the poem multiple meanings and methods of interpretation. Poppies can be seen to symbolise death, eternal sleep or remembrance</p>

<p>'War Photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy</p>	<p>The poem is written about a war photographer who has returned home and is developing his photos. The process of developing old style film photos is rather unusual for many to understand today. Old style film is very sensitive to light, so it must be done in a dark room lit with red light. All of this can create a sinister atmosphere. The poem is also looking at the contrast between war zones and the safety of being back home and the way people just do not understand the truth, after all a single photo cannot show everything. War photographers do a dangerous job; many are killed or injured as they get in harm's way to get the photos they are after.</p>	<p>-Conflict and the impact is a common trend explored by a number of poets, particularly from an unusual perspective or an outsider, such as Jane Weir's 'Poppies, Tissue' and 'London.'</p>	<p>War/ increasing indifference to the victims of conflict: This poem addresses the peculiar challenge faced by war photographers, whose job requires them to record terrible, horrific events without being able to help them directly. Additionally, we are shown the way that these images are not really effective in making people appreciate the true horror of war.</p>
<p>'Tissue' by Imtiaz Dharker</p>	<p>Imtiaz is a poet with Pakistani origins and was raised in Glasgow. Her poems explore religion, terrorism and global politics/identity. The poem is written from the point of view of someone today looking out at the conflict and troubles of the modern world. The poem remarks how nothing is meant to last and that the world would be better if it shared more qualities with 'tissue.'</p>	<p>-Dharker explores politics and conflicts with religion which are common themes within 'The Prelude' and 'My Last Duchess.'</p>	<p>Power/ instability/ human essence: Tissue explores the varied uses of paper and how they relate to life itself. This poem refers to the power of paper to change things and to record our memories. The speaker suggests that paper (used as a metaphor for buildings) is at the mercy of greater forces, such as the weather. It compares the significance and fragility of paper documents to the fleeting nature of building structures.</p>
<p>'The Emigree' by Carol Rumens</p>	<p>Emigree relates to the word emigrate, the idea that a person goes and settles in another country, sometimes not feeling welcome to return. The poet bases many of the ideas on modern examples of emigration like Russia or the Middle East where people are fleeing conflict and tyranny, or those countries that change in their absence to some form of dictatorship.</p>	<p>-The poem, similarly to 'Ozymandias' explores the tyrannous and authoritarian rule that can suppress and smother society.</p>	<p>Exile/light and shade: The speaker seems to be an exile from an unknown city. References to sunlight are repeated all the way through.</p>

<p>'Checking Out Me History' by John Agard</p>	<p>The poem explores identity, how history is taught and the conflict between fact and truth which is sometimes obscured by race or gender. The poem gives examples of powerful black figures from history, often involved in a conflict of some sort. Noticeably the poet emphasises how we often celebrate our national or cultural history, without looking at the history and culture of those we were in conflict with.</p>	<p>-The conflict with identity and race is prevalent within a number of poems. For instance, 'Emigree' and 'Tissue' also portray the poet's personal battle/obstructions with their own identity or culture.</p>	<p>Historical/ racism/ truth</p> <p>The narrator is trying to show the difference between black and white history and the way that white history dominates.</p> <p>He is proud of his black history but he is and frustrated because its less known (but no less valid) than white history</p>
<p>'Kamikaze' by Beatrice Garland.</p>	<p>The poem is set around the events of a kamikaze pilot flying to war and then turning back before it was too late. Kamikaze pilots were expected to use all their weapons and then commit suicide by flying into targets. It was considered a great honour in Japan to die for your country. The pilot returns home after this mission and is rejected by his family forever. The poet explains at the end which death would have been better: to die as a young kamikaze pilot or to grow old with a family who detest you.</p>	<p>-Garland explores the devastating and at times ironic implications of war. This is also apparent within Ozymandias as irony is portrayed through the 'decaying' statue, a former tyrannous leader who confirms that power is not permanent and decays with time.</p>	<p>The sea/family life</p> <p>The traditional way of life and its close links to the sea have a timeless quality. These vivid memories suggest what he is about to lose and conveys a powerful sense of home-sickness. There are repeated references to family members as the poem unfolds. These references establish the consequences of the pilot's decision - his entire family and community judge him. The reader is invited to question whether the pilot is being judged too harshly, and to reflect on the practice of suicide missions in war.</p>