



Rapid **Revision**

Cards

Power and

Conflict

Poetry Anthology

AQA GCSE English Literature



YORK NOTES

York Notes Rapid Revision

Power and Conflict

Poetry Anthology

AQA GCSE English Literature
Revision Cards

Written by Laura Burden

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How to use your revision cards

These cards will make revising quick, easy and fun!
Boost your revision even further by organising your cards.
Here's how:

1. Find the **three sorting cards** at the front of the box: **'Needs more work'**, **'Getting there'**, **'Sorted!'**.
2. Now read each of the sets of **poem cards** (Cards 1 to 30).
3. **Read the poem** on the card (or cards if it is a longer poem), and **answer** the question about the themes. Think carefully before you check the answers.
4. Then, work through the side of the card headed **'Revising the poem'**. This has **three tasks**: **'Match'** (a gap-fill exam-style paragraph), **'Learn'** (three key quotations to learn) and **'Think'** (a chance to write your own paragraph).
5. At this point, decide how well you know the poem and its themes. Either move the card to a pile called **'Getting there'** or, if you feel really confident, **'Sorted!'**.
6. If you **don't feel confident** about your knowledge of the poem, move the card to a pile called **'Needs more work'**.
7. **Focus** on the cards in the **'Needs more work'** pile. When you feel more confident, move them to the **'Getting there'** pile.
8. Next, read over all the cards in the **'Getting there'** pile to make sure you still know your stuff! If you do, move the cards to a new pile called **'Sorted!'**.
9. If you don't, move them back to **'Needs more work'** and try again.
10. **The day before your exam**, read over **all the cards** for perfect preparation!

How to use your themes, techniques and key quotations cards

These cards all help build your skills and knowledge in a quick, fun way. You can use the sorting cards for these, too!

For the **themes** Cards (Cards 33 to 38):

- Read through the bullet points on side 1.
- If necessary, find the poems referred to and re-read the main poem cards. Then, cover up the bullet points.
- Try to answer the 'Three key questions' at the bottom of the card (make a note of your answers if you wish).
- Flip the card over. Check your answers.
- Now, move onto the key quotations. Read them, cover them up one by one, and try to remember the quotation and which theme it addresses.
- For the 'Think' task, either think about how you would use one of the quotations or, if you prefer, write out the finished paragraph.

For the **techniques and skills** cards (Cards 39 to 44):

- Read through the bullet points on side 1 of the card.
- Cover up the bullet points.
- Try to write down or think of **three** key things you have learned.
- Check your answers.
- Turn the card over, read the 'Exam focus' section and then try to complete the 'Think' task.

The **key quotations cards** (Cards 45–47) are self-explanatory. The ones on side 1 are the 'easy' ones; the ones on the reverse require a bit more thought!

How to use your exam practice cards

The exam practice cards show you:

- What an AQA exam question will look like
- What you need to do to get a good mark (cover the Assessment Objectives)
- How to decode the question and plan your answer
- What a Grade 5 answer looks like
- What a Grade 7+ answer looks like

Plus, you'll find lots of additional questions to boost your revision!

How can you use these cards to revise?

1. Read through **each card** and make sure you **understand** what it's telling you.
2. Complete the '**Identify**' and '**Think**' tasks to test your skills.
3. Read through the **Practice questions** and think of at least **five key points** for each. Or, on a separate piece of paper or in your exercise book, **make a plan** for each one.
4. Check your planned points against the **answers**.
5. Now get writing! On a separate piece of paper, or in your exercise book, **write a response** for each question. You could complete **one a week** leading up to your exam.
6. Check your answers against the **Assessment Objectives** and the **Grade 5** and **Grade 7+** extracts.
7. How did you do? Can you find **ways to improve**? If so, make notes in the margin or rewrite your answers.
8. Remember: **practice makes perfect!** Make some time the **week before your exam** to practise your **writing skills** as well as revising key quotations and ideas.

Good luck!

Revision game

Try playing this revision game with a friend.

1. Pull out the poem cards (1–30) and divide them so that you have seven or eight poems each.
2. For the first part of the game, **Player A** chooses **any poem** from their selection and reads a line from it. **Player B** has to say **which poem** it is from.
 - If they get it right first time, they get 3 points.
 - If they need another line before guessing correctly, they get 2 points.
 - If they need a whole verse or up to five lines, they get 1 point.

Player A then asks the question from the card that follows the poem: 'What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?' **Player B** tries to identify the three themes that are explored (as listed on Player A's answer card).

- If they identify all three themes (or similar ones), they get **3 points**.
- If they identify two, they get **2 points**.
- If they identify one, they get **1 point**.

If they can explain how the poem explores one of these themes then they get a **bonus point**.

Note the **final score** for that poem (up to a maximum of 7 points).

3. Now swap so that Player B selects one of their poems and repeat the process.
4. After 14 of the 15 poems have been 'played', check the score. Whoever has the most points wins.
5. If it is equal, use the remaining poem as a tie-breaker.

OZYMANDIAS by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1



Background

This poem was first published in 1819. It describes the ruins of a vast statue that a traveller has seen in the desert. In the Romantic period, it was very fashionable to travel to Egypt to explore the buildings and artefacts of its ancient civilisation.



The poem

- 1 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 **shatter'd** visage lies, whose **frown**
- 5 And wrinkled lip and sneer of **cold command**
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on **these lifeless things,**
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
- 10 '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.

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?
Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?



OZYMANDIAS

A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- Disintegration and decay
- Arrogance and vanity
- The vastness of nature

How these are explored:

- Shelley describes the **fallen, decayed** statue of an **arrogant king**, which is all that remains of him.
- Shelley's **language choices** throughout the poem, such as **'shatter'd'**, highlight the statue's disintegration.
- He uses **reported speech** – an account given by **'a traveller from an antique land'** – to show that Ozymandias is now simply part of a traveller's tale.
- He uses **irony** to contrast the statue's inscription with what remains of Ozymandias's **'works'**.
- The use of **imperative verbs** (**'look', 'despair'**) in the statue's inscription highlight Ozymandias's arrogance and vanity, and highlight the theme of power.
- The **temporary nature** of **power** and **achievement** are highlighted in the statue's **decay**.
- Shelley uses **alliteration** (**'boundless and bare'**) and **enjambment** (**'Round the decay of that colossal wreck'**) in the final lines to highlight the empty vastness of the desert where Ozymandias's **'works'** once stood.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

The harsh, guttural in 'cold command' illustrates Ozymandias's heartlessness and love of power; his expression showing contempt for his own people. Shelley was inspired by a statue of the King Ramses II being brought to London and uses visual to describe the head of a

Egyptian

alliteration

imagery

despot



Learn

1. Arrogant inscription: '**Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!**' (l. 11). Ozymandias seems to be taunting other kings, arrogantly boasting of his superiority.
2. Human power is temporary: '**Nothing beside remains.**' (l. 12). A short sentence emphasises that Ozymandias's power and achievements have crumbled and disappeared.
3. Power of nature: '**The lone and level sands stretch far away.**' (l. 14). The timelessness and power of nature contrast with the temporary power of kings.



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

In this sonnet, Shelley suggests that human power is fleeting and transitory. The phrase

LONDON by William Blake



Background

This poem is taken from William Blake's *Songs of Experience*, published in 1794, shortly after the French Revolution. It describes the rapidly growing city as a place blighted by the impact of the Industrial Revolution: a city of inequality and oppression.



The poem

- 1 I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
- 5 In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:
- 10 How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appalls,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.
- 15 But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?
Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?



A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- Suffering and oppression
- Power and wealth
- The corruption of innocence

How these are explored:

- The speaker describes a journey through the streets of London. The poem's largely **regular rhyme scheme** and **heavy rhythm** suggest a slow walk and reflect the **depressing sights** he encounters.
- Blake uses **repetition** to highlight the **universal suffering** of the people of London.
- He uses a range of **vocabulary** related to suffering and anguish, e.g. '**weakness**', '**woe**', '**cry**', '**fear**', '**sigh**', '**tear**'.
- **Alliteration** adds dramatic emphasis to Blake's **emotive vocabulary**, e.g. '**mind-forged manacles**', '**Blasts**', '**blights**'.
- Blake refers to those in power **indirectly**, e.g. the wealthy are implied in '**each chartered street**'; royalty in the '**palace**'; religion in the '**church**'. This focuses our attention on the people of London and their suffering.
- His use of shocking **imagery**, with phrases such as '**youthful harlot**', and '**infant's tear**', suggests a city of corruption and potential violence.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

Blake uses to convey the speaker's dissatisfaction with London. The word 'mark' has meanings, including to and to scar. Furthermore, in stanza 2 the (deliberate repetition) of 'In every' suggests that no corner of the city is free from oppression and social inequality.

notice

repetition

various

anaphora



Learn

1. Power and wealth: '**each chartered street,/ ... the chartered Thames**' (ll. 1–2). Even the city's streets and river are owned by the wealthy.
2. Suffering: '**Marks of weakness, marks of woe**' (l. 4). Repetition emphasises the impact of suffering on the people of London.
3. Oppression: '**mind-forged manacles**' (l. 8). The metaphor suggests oppressive chains created by and imprisoning people's minds.



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

In this poem, Blake suggests that, in London, society is unequal in terms of power and wealth



Background

This is an extract from an extremely long autobiographical poem which Wordsworth began writing aged 28 and left unfinished at his death 52 years later. Many of the episodes in the poem describe journeys the poet undertakes.



The poem

- 1 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
- 5 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,
- 10 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,
- 15 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
- 20 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,

- 25 And growing still in stature the grim shape
 Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
 For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
 And measured motion like a living thing,
 Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
 30 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
 35 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
 40 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.

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?

Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?

Extract from **THE PRELUDE****A** **Answers****Key themes or ideas:**

- The beauty of nature
- The power of nature
- The freedom of childhood

How these are explored:

- The peaceful night and beauty of nature are suggested in highly **focused descriptive detail**, e.g. '**Small circles glittering idly**'.
- The **first person voice**, '**I found/A little boat**', recalls a **childhood experience** in this narrative poem.
- Wordsworth suggests an unsettled mood at the start of the poem, describing feelings of '**troubled pleasure**', while '**the voice/Of mountain-echoes**' foreshadows the disturbing **personification** of nature that follows.
- The mountain is **personified** as a threatening force in the phrase '**Upreared its head**'. Wordsworth **repeats** the word '**huge**' to emphasise the scale and power of the mountain.
- The boat is also personified ('**She was an elfin pinnacle**'), suggesting the narrator feels an affinity with it. Because he can control his little boat, he feels in **control of nature**.
- He **contrasts** the beauty of nature with its power as '**huge and mighty forms**' overwhelm memories of '**pleasant images of trees**' and '**green fields**'.

REVISING THE POEM

Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

Wordsworth uses vivid to convey the power of nature in this poem. The word 'huge', used to describe the mountain, is, and phrases such as 'Upreared its head' the peak. In the final lines it is clear that the memory of the event the poet's imagination.

personify imagery repeated haunts

Learn

1. Beauty of nature: **'sparkling light'** (l. 11). The adjective 'sparkling' suggests an almost magical beauty.
2. Beauty is forgotten: **'no pleasant images of trees,/ ... no colours of green fields'** (ll. 40–1). The repetition of 'no' emphasises nature's power in destroying the speaker's memories of its beauty.
3. Disturbing nature: **'mighty forms, that do not live/ Like living men, moved slowly through the mind'** (ll. 42–3). The ominous image suggests the powerful impact the experience has had on the speaker.

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

At the start of the extract, Wordsworth presents nature as beautiful and benign

MY LAST DUCHESS by Robert Browning

7



Background

This poem was written in the nineteenth century but is a dramatic monologue in the voice of the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the sixteenth century. It can be read as a criticism of the powerful and wealthy and their attitudes to status, women and marriage.



The poem

Ferrara

- 1 That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
- 5 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Frà 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
- 10 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
- 15 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà 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
- 20 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.
- 25 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
 She rode with round the terrace – all and each
- 30 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
- 35 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
- 40 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
- 45 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
- 50 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,
- 55 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

MY LAST DUCHESS

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore? Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?

A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- The inferior position of women in the sixteenth century
- Power and control
- Strong narrative voice

How these are explored:

- The **possessive pronoun** in the title, 'My Last Duchess', suggests the Duke sees her as a possession.
- The Duchess is **never named**, only referred to by the **pronoun 'she'**, which effectively **depersonalises** her.
- The Duke is the only speaker in this lengthy **dramatic monologue**, suggesting he does not allow interruption, but expects his listener's full attention.
- The **repetition** of 'alive' draws attention to her death.
- Browning uses features of spoken language, e.g. **exclamatory phrases** such as 'Oh sir' and **direct address** (the **pronoun 'you'**) to create this **dramatic monologue**.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

Browning's use of (words that stand in for a noun) convey the speaker's dominance over his dead wife. The Duchess is and always referred to as '.....' which strips her of identity. Furthermore, the possessive 'My' in the conveys the speaker's sense of ownership.

unnamed

title

she

pronouns



Learn

1. Duchess's flaws: '**she liked whate'er/She looked on, and her looks went everywhere**' (ll. 23–4). The Duke suggests she should have reserved her appreciation only for him.
2. Arrogance: '**and I choose/Never to stoop**' (ll. 42–3). Enjambment positions 'Never' at the beginning of the line for emphasis.
3. Ambiguity: '**all smiles stopped together**' (l. 46). The short phrase emphasises suddenness. Was she killed?



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

In this poem, Browning suggests that the controlling Duke did not find his late wife's behaviour satisfactory

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson



Background

This poem describes a charge made by the British army at Balaclava during the Crimean War (1853–6). The brigade's commanders made a tactical error due to miscommunication. More than two-thirds of the brigade were killed or wounded.



The poem

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | 3. |
| 1 Half a league, half a league, | Cannon to right of them, |
| Half a league onward, | Cannon to left of them, |
| All in the valley of Death | 20 Cannon in front of them |
| Rode the six hundred. | Volley'd and thunder'd; |
| 5 'Forward, the Light Brigade! | Storm'd at with shot and shell, |
| Charge for the guns!' he said: | Boldly they rode and well, |
| Into the valley of Death | Into the jaws of Death, |
| Rode the six hundred. | 25 Into the mouth of Hell |
| 2. | Rode the six hundred. |
| 'Forward, the Light Brigade!' | 4. |
| 10 Was there a man dismay'd? | Flash'd all their sabres bare, |
| Not tho' the soldier knew | Flash'd as they turn'd in air |
| Some one had blunder'd: | Sabring the gunners there, |
| Theirs not to make reply, | 30 Charging an army, while |
| Theirs not to reason why, | All the world wonder'd: |
| 15 Theirs but to do and die: | Plunged in the battery-smoke |
| Into the valley of Death | Right thro' the line they broke; |
| Rode the six hundred. | Cossack and Russian |
| | 35 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke |
| | Shatter'd and sunder'd. |
| | Then they rode back, but not |
| | Not the six hundred. |

5.
Cannon to right of them,
40 Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
45 They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.
6.
50 When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
55 Noble six hundred!

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?
Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- The bravery of the soldiers
- The incompetence of military leaders
- The great sacrifice made by the soldiers

How these are explored:

- Tennyson uses **repetition** throughout the poem to convey the danger of the conflict and the bravery of the soldiers. In conjunction with the relentless **rhythm**, it evokes the **pace** of the charge.
- He uses **figurative language** to convey the **violence** of battle: '**thunder'd**', '**Storm'd**', '**jaws of Death**'.
- Positive **adverbs** focus the reader's attention on the soldiers' achievement ('**Boldly**', '**well**') rather than their commanding officers' error.
- Tennyson selects **emotive** verbs ('**Flash'd**', '**Plunged**', '**Reel'd**'), to convey the dramatic action.
- He uses **imperative** verbs, such as '**Honour**' in the final lines, to direct the reader's response.
- The **rhetorical question** '**Was there a man dismay'd?**' implies the soldiers' **bravery**.
- **Alliteration**, such as '**shot and shell**', relays the sound of battle, which also draws attention to the **courage** of the soldiers.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

Tennyson's choices convey the speaker's admiration for the shown by the soldiers. Words such as 'Sabring' and 'Plunged' are dynamic and Furthermore, in stanza 6 the 'Honour' directs the audience's reaction to the Light Brigade's deeds at Balaclava.

emotive

verb

imperative

heroism



Learn

1. Inevitable death: **'the valley of Death'** (l. 3). A dramatic and emotive reference to the battlefield, implying the consequences of the charge were inevitably deadly.
2. Danger: **'Canon to right of them,/Canon to left of them'** (ll. 39–40). The repetitive structure highlights the danger into which the soldiers were ordered to charge.
3. Heroism: **'horse and hero fell'** (l. 44). Alliteration links the death of soldiers and their horses, creating sympathy for both.



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

In this poem, Tennyson suggests that the heroic soldiers faced great danger



Background

Wilfred Owen fought and died in the First World War (1914–18). In 1916, Owen was sent to hospital suffering from the effects of war. This poem was written in 1918, when he had returned to the Front. It explores the soldiers' suffering due to the conditions in which they were trying to survive.



The poem

1 Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive 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,

5 But nothing happens.

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.

10 What are we doing here?

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,

15 But nothing happens.

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,

20 But nothing happens.

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.

25 – Is it that we are dying?

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, –

30 We turn back to our dying.

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,

35 For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,
 Shrivelling many hands, puckering foreheads crisp.
 The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,
 Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,

40 But nothing happens.

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?
 Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?

A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- Fear and suffering
- Loss of faith in God
- The terrible power of nature

How these are explored:

- The poem describes the experiences of a group of soldiers **waiting in the trenches** to be called to fight. They occasionally hear bullets but they feel more **under attack** from the **weather**.
- **Repetition** in the **refrain-like** final line of each stanza conveys the soldiers' frustration, powerlessness and loss of hope.
- Owen uses **personification** and **emotive language** ('**the merciless iced east winds that knife us**') to convey the threat of nature.
- **Rhetorical questions** create a tone of uncertainty and fear ('**Is it that we are dying?**').
- Owen uses a range of vocabulary (a **semantic field**) related to suffering to highlight the soldiers' experience: '**agonies**', '**misery**', '**shudders**'.
- The deadly frost described in the final stanza is attributed to God: '**Tonight, His frost**', reflecting the viewpoint that the soldiers' '**love of God seems dying**'.
- **Imagery** of '**jewels**' is ironically beautiful.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

Owen suggests thatpresents more of a threat to the soldiers than war. Although there are signs of the, such as the 'Northward' gunnery, the bullets are presented as being 'Less deadly than the'. Furthermore, the verb '.....' in line 14 suggests that the dawn itself poses new dangers.

conflict

air

attacks

nature



Learn

1. Powerlessness: '**But nothing happens.**' (ll. 5, 15, 20, 40). Repetition suggests frustration and fear.
2. Loss of hope: '**love of God seems dying**' (l. 35).
The soldiers feel their situation is hopeless and that even God has forsaken them.
3. Emotional coldness: '**their eyes are ice**' (l. 39).
The soldiers' emotions are frozen as they watch their comrades die.



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

In this poem, Owen suggests that the soldiers have lost all hope
.....

STORM ON THE ISLAND by Seamus Heaney

13



Background

This poem was written at the start of 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland, where the government building is called Stormont. It could be read as a political allegory which touches on outbreaks of violence.



The poem

- 1 We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
The wizened earth had never troubled us
With hay, so, as you can see, there are no stacks
- 5 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 can listen to the thing you fear
- 10 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
- 15 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 by the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

Q Question

What key themes or ideas does the poet explore?
Use the highlighted text in the poem to help you.

- How does the poet's use of voice/language contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of form/structure contribute to the poem's effect?
- How does the poet's use of particular techniques contribute to the poem's effect?



STORM ON THE ISLAND

A Answers

Key themes or ideas:

- The destructive power of nature
- The portrayal of a rural community
- Allegorically, the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland

How these are explored:

- Heaney uses the **plural** and **possessive pronouns**, 'we' and 'our' to create a **viewpoint** which is that of the whole community, as if explaining their world to outsiders.
- **Figurative language** in the form of **personification**, **simile** and **metaphor**, conveys the power of the storm and sea.
- Heaney uses a **conversational, informal tone** from time to time through **direct address** ('you know what I mean') and **colloquial** phrases ('as you can see') as if to convey an untroubled, everyday mood – at odds with the reality of the situation.
- He uses the **semantic field** of **attack and warfare** which increases in strength as the poem progresses.
- Heaney describes **stormy weather** on the island but the violent **imagery** and the play on the word 'Stormont' – 'Storm on the Island' – link the natural conflict to division between people and suggest this reflects Ireland's troubled history.
- Occasional **short phrases** ('We are prepared') express **certainty**.

REVISING THE POEM



Match

Can you match the gaps in the analysis to the words below?

Heaney uses language to convey the power of the storm. The 'spits like a tame cat' suggests that nature has two sides and is unpredictable. Also, the 'space is a ' portrays the natural world as displaying military force.

salvo

metaphor

figurative

simile



Learn

1. Power of weather: **'it pummels your house'** (l. 10).
The verb 'pummels' suggests a continuous thumping or hitting.
2. Sound of the storm: **'a tragic chorus in a gale'** (l. 8).
The metaphor of the chorus links to the tragedy of the Irish situation at the time, in which so many had lost their lives or suffered.
3. Isolation: **'no trees, no natural shelter'** (l. 11).
The repetition of 'no' emphasises the exposure to the elements.



Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

In this poem, Heaney avoids romanticising the relationship between people and the natural world, depicting nature as a powerful and destructive force. Verbs such as

BAYONET CHARGE by Ted Hughes

15



Background

This poem describes a bayonet charge: when soldiers run towards the enemy with a bayonet (a kind of knife) fixed to their guns. This was common in the First World War. The poem focuses on the experience of one soldier.



The poem

- 1 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
- 5 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 –
- 10 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
- 15 Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows
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,
- 20 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.