

YORK NOTES for

**GCSE**

***Rapid***  
**Revision**

Copyrighted Material



YORK NOTES

# ***Rapid*** **Revision**

**Super speedy revision from the experts!**

**Power and**

**Conflict**

**Poetry Anthology**

**AQA GCSE English Literature**



YORK NOTES

York Notes Rapid Revision

# Power and Conflict

# Poetry Anthology

**AQA GCSE English Literature**

Written by David Grant

# CONTENTS

## THE POEMS

'Ozymandias'	
by Percy Bysshe Shelley	4
Special focus 1: Sound and rhythm	7
'London'	
by William Blake	8
Special focus 2: Voice and viewpoint	11
Extract from 'The Prelude'	
by William Wordsworth	12
'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning	16
'The Charge of the Light Brigade'	
by Alfred, Lord Tennyson	20
'Exposure'	
by Wilfred Owen	24
'Storm on the Island'	
by Seamus Heaney	28
Special focus 3: Mood and tone	31
'Bayonet Charge'	
by Ted Hughes	32
Special focus 4: Quotations and references	35
'Remains'	
by Simon Armitage	36
'Poppies'	
by Jane Weir	40
'War Photographer'	
by Carol Ann Duffy	44
Special focus 5: Form and structure	47
'Tissue'	
by Imtiaz Dharker	48

'The Emigrée'	
by Carol Rumens	52
Special focus 6: Comparing poems	55
'Checking Out Me History'	
by John Agard	56
'Kamikaze'	
by Beatrice Garland	60
Quick revision	64

## THEMES

Social structure and control	66
Memories	68
Responsibility	70
War	72
Nature	74
Quick revision	75

## EXAM PRACTICE

Understanding the exam	76
Planning and writing your response	78
Grade 5 annotated sample answer	80
Grade 7+ annotated sample answer	82
Practice question	84

## GLOSSARY 85

## ANSWERS 86

# OZYMANDIAS by Percy Bysshe Shelley

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.

Language choices from **semantic field** of deterioration and decay used throughout the poem (see also ll. 12–13)

**Imperfect rhyme** supports **themes** of decay and corruption

Harsh-sounding **alliteration** foregrounds Pharaoh's cruelty

Transience of political regimes: Ozymandias's passions – his arrogance – survive in the ruined statue but his 'works' do not

Irony through **juxtaposition** of 'passions' and 'lifeless things' – highlighting decay and the passing of time

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.**

**Ambiguity** – suggests Ozymandias's hand mocked his people, and his heart fed on their suffering? Or suggests the sculptor's hand mocked Ozymandias's face?

**Irony** through structure – placing this immediately after grandiose claim shows its emptiness

**Imperative verb** suggests his power and arrogance

Turning point mid line disrupts **sonnet** form and echoes subject matter: the decay of the statue and the breakdown of Ozymandias's power

Alliteration highlights image of vast, unforgiving desert in which the fallen statue lies shattered and forgotten

Power of nature: the desert endures; Ozymandias's power does not

**End-stopped** lines, in contrast to frequent **enjambment** in rest of poem, add emphasis to this grandiose claim

## What is the poem's setting?

- The poem describes what remains of a **huge statue**, probably of **Ramses II**, in the middle of a **vast desert**.
- Shelley highlights the **emptiness** of the desert's '**lone and level sands**'. He contrasts it with Ozymandias's **proud boast** of '**works**' that are intended to make his enemies '**despair**', but which have long since **decayed** and disappeared.

## What is the poem about?

- Shelley describes the fallen, decayed statue of **an arrogant king** which is all that remains of him.
- The description of the statue is given in **reported speech**: an account given by '**a traveller from an antique land**'.
- The description of the statue's face suggests a callous, **ruthless** leader.
- The **theme of power** is highlighted in the arrogance of the inscription on the statue. The **temporary nature of power** and achievement are highlighted in the statue's **decay**.
- Shelley disrupts the traditional sonnet form, perhaps implying **disrespect** for those in power who make the rules.



## Five Key things about the language

1. Shelley's language choices throughout the poem highlight the statue's disintegration.
2. Shelley creates a formal and dramatic **tone** suggesting Ozymandias's grandeur and the imposing sight of the fallen statue in the barren desert.
3. Shelley uses irony to contrast the statue's arrogant inscription with what remains of Ozymandias's power and his '**works**'.
4. The use of imperative verbs in the statue's inscription highlights Ozymandias's arrogance and vanity.
5. Shelley uses alliteration and enjambment in the final lines to highlight the vast emptiness of the desert where Ozymandias's '**works**' once stood.

## Five key quotations

1. Fallen statue: **'a shatter'd visage'** (l. 4). Time has destroyed the face.
2. Ozymandias's face: **'frown/And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command'** ll. 4–5). The words **'sneer'** and **'cold'** suggest a ruthless and unemotional ruler.
3. Arrogant inscription: **'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'** (l. 11). Ozymandias seems to be taunting other kings, arrogantly boasting of his superiority.
4. Human power is temporary: **'Nothing beside remains.'** (l. 12). A short sentence emphasises that Ozymandias's power and achievements have crumbled and disappeared.
5. 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.

### Note it!

Compare Shelley's depiction of Ozymandias with Browning's presentation of the Duke in 'My Last Duchess'. What does each poet suggest about the nature of power?

## Exam focus

### How can I write about the theme of power? AO1 AO2

You can analyse Shelley's depiction of Ozymandias to explore his presentation of power.

Shelley describes the face of Ozymandias to imply the kind of ruler he was. For example, words such as 'sneer', 'frown' and 'cold' clearly suggest his disrespectful and ruthless attitude. However before this, Shelley highlights that the statue's face is now 'shatter'd' and 'Half sunk' in the desert sand, suggesting how meaningless his arrogance and power are now, centuries later.

Topic sentence makes clear point

Carefully chosen words support the point

Signals a contrasting idea

Comments on the cumulative effect

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about another theme. Use one of the quotations from the list.

The poet suggests that the power of nature is greater than any human power. This is shown in .....

# SPECIAL FOCUS 1: Sound and rhythm

## What are sound and rhythm?

- Poets often choose **specific words** because of the effect of **particular letter sounds**, e.g. words beginning with **plosive** 'p's or 'b's can sound harsh and aggressive.
- The **rhythm** of a poem is created by the **positioning of words** to create **stresses or beats**.

## How do I identify these in a poem like 'Ozymandias'?

- Read the poem **aloud**, looking for words which are given **emphasis** by the poem's rhythm, e.g. '**vast**' in l. 2, '**lip**', '**sneer**' and '**cold**' in l. 5.
- Think about how the poet **disrupts the rhythm** of the poem, e.g. to draw attention, and give emphasis, to the arrogant inscription on the statue in ll. 10 and 11.
- Look at the poet's use of **punctuation**, e.g. how the final sentence slows the rhythm as the empty desert sands stretch into the distance.
- Think about ways in which the **sound** of words adds to their impact, e.g. the harsh **alliteration** of '**cold command**'.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about sound and rhythm? AO2

You could use **verbs** and **adjectives** related to sound and rhythm: e.g. *regular, irregular, constant, disrupt, harsh, soft, rapid, slow, emphatic, dramatic*.

In the second part of the poem, Shelley disrupts its **regular** rhythm with the short sentence '**Nothing beside remains**,' creating an **emphatic** contrast to the arrogant inscription on the statue. Then, **by spreading the final long sentence over three lines**, he **slows** the poem's rhythm to suggest the endless emptiness where Ozymandias's kingdom once stood.

Evidence from the poem

Rhythm words

How rhythm changes

## Now you try!

Think about the other poems in the cluster. Do any of them use sound or rhythm to add emphasis to their ideas?

**My progress** Needs more work ☐ Getting there ☐ Sorted! ☐

# LONDON by William Blake

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.

**Iambic tetrameter**  
(broken at ll. 4, 9–12, and 14–15) creates a heavy **rhythm**

**Power structures:** every aspect of the city is owned by people in power, even its streets and river

**Oppression:** everyone in the city is affected with 'marks' of misery

**Repetition** of 'marks' emphasises people's suffering

Repetition of 'every' highlights universal effects of oppression

**Metaphor** conveys entrapment in psychological chains

**Definite article** suggests the soldier and chimney sweep represent sections of society

Regular **rhyme** scheme could suggest drudgery of everyday life

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.

But most through midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot's curse  
15 Blasts the new-born infant's tear,  
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

**Emotive** vocabulary creates a dramatic, critical **tone**

**Plosive alliterated verbs** imply violence

**Juxtaposition** of 'harlot' and 'infant' suggests the corruption of innocence

**Oxymoron** suggests a link between marriage and death



## What is the poem's setting?

- The poem presents a **negative view** of the city of **London** and **its people**.
- Much of the city is '**chartered**' meaning it is **owned** by the **wealthy and powerful**, while the poor live a life of **misery and oppression**.

## What is the poem about?

- 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.
- He notes the **suffering** of the city's people.
- He suggests that the **Church** is unsympathetic to this suffering and that **revolution** is imminent, describing blood running down palace walls.
- The final image of **cursing prostitutes** and **crying babies** creates a powerful impression of degradation and corruption.
- The **theme** of **oppression** is highlighted throughout the poem, e.g. the speaker hears '**mind-forged manacles**' in every '**cry**' and '**voice**' of the city.



## Five key things about the language

1. Blake uses repetition to highlight the universal suffering of the people of London.
2. He uses a range of vocabulary related to suffering and anguish, e.g. '**weakness**', '**woe**', '**cry**', '**fear**', '**sigh**', '**tear**'.
3. Alliteration adds dramatic emphasis to Blake's choices of emotive vocabulary, e.g. '**mind-forged manacles**', '**Blasts**', '**blights**'.
4. 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.
5. His use of shocking **imagery**, with phrases such as '**youthful harlot**', suggests a city of corruption and potential violence.

## Five key quotations

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. Children: **'every infant's cry of fear'** (l. 6). This is one of two **emotive** references to the suffering of innocent children.
4. Oppression: **'mind-forged manacles'** (l. 8). The metaphor suggests oppressive chains created by and imprisoning people's minds.
5. Conflict: **'blood down palace walls'** (l. 12). The image suggests possible revolution.

### Note it!

Compare the depiction of suffering in 'London' with Owen's depiction of it in 'Exposure'. Are the vocabulary choices similar in any way?

## Exam focus

### How can I write about the theme of conflict? AO1 AO2

You can analyse Blake's use of imagery to explore the theme of conflict.

Blake creates shocking images of conflict in the poem.

For example, he depicts 'blood' running down 'palace walls', suggesting a violent and bloody revolution.

Furthermore, he hints at conflict in the lives of the people of London, juxtaposing a 'youthful harlot's curse' and a 'new-born infant's tear', implying that the innocence of children is soon corrupted. The impression these images create is of a city of conflict, suffering and degradation.

Topic sentence makes clear point

Carefully chosen evidence supports point

Signals a developed analysis

Sums up and refers back to theme

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about another **theme**. Use one of the quotations from the list.

Throughout the poem, Blake highlights the suffering of the people. He describes ....

## SPECIAL FOCUS 2: Voice and viewpoint

### What are voice and viewpoint?

- The **voice** in a poem is the **speaker** or **narrator**.
- The **viewpoint** is the **perspective** that the speaker offers on the theme.

### How do I identify these in a poem like 'London'?

- Sometimes, a clear **narrative voice** is identified in a poem.
- In 'London', a **voice** is created using 'I', but we can't assume this is the poet's own voice. Even when we know the poem is autobiographical, or reflects the poet's own views, the poet has still created a **persona**.
- **Viewpoint** can be **complex** to identify, e.g. is Blake simply describing the people of London, is he criticising them, or does he blame their suffering on those in positions of power?
- Consider the **vocabulary** used, e.g. in 'London', Blake draws on the **semantic field** of pain and suffering to describe the people of the city, implying that he sympathises with them.
- Examine the **mood** and **tone**, e.g. the slow, heavy **rhythm** and vocabulary choices create a sombre mood, suggesting the speaker's distress at the scenes he sees and hears.

### Exam focus

#### How can I write about voice and viewpoint? AO2

You could use **adjectives** or **adverbs** to identify viewpoint: *thoughtfully, enthusiastic, sympathetic, sombre, cautiously.*

Blake uses **emotive** vocabulary such as **'woe', 'fear', 'cry'** and **'sigh'** to describe the people of London, **highlighting** the misery of their lives and a **viewpoint** which is **sympathetic** to their suffering but **critical** of those in power who are responsible for it.

Evidence from the language

Impact of viewpoint on the reader

Voice/viewpoint indicators

### Now you try!

Think about the other poems in the cluster. Which are written in the first **person**? How does the poet suggest the speaker's voice and viewpoint?

**My progress** Needs more work ☐ Getting there ☐ Sorted! ☐

# Extract from THE PRELUDE by William Wordsworth

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 and their impact upon him.

**Personification** of nature, at first presented as a benign female force

First **person** speaker for this autobiographical narrative poem

**Blank verse** and frequent **enjambment** throughout create a reflective, thoughtful mood

Word choice and position emphasise an impulsive decision

**Foreshadows** the power of the mountain, though the **tone** here is light

**Adverb** shows nature's effortless beauty

Nature's beauty is transient

The vastness of nature

**Simile** suggests apparently effortless movement

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 power of the  
natural world

Nature, no longer  
female or benign,  
is presented as  
threatening

Repetition suggests  
and emphasises  
speaker's fear

Harsh consonant  
sounds and repetition  
suggest speaker's fear  
and helplessness

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.

Personification  
used again to  
create a sense of  
threat

Speaker  
returns to his  
starting point,  
though mood  
has changed  
dramatically

**Adjectives** create  
sense of fear and  
uncertainty

**Semantic field**  
of depression  
shows the effect  
on the speaker

**Repetition** of  
negative phrases  
suggests the  
experience is  
dominating  
the speaker's  
thoughts

Return to key word used  
earlier shows enduring  
power of fear

The imagination is  
powerful, but the power  
of nature can overwhelm  
the human imagination

## What is the poem's setting?

- The poem describes a **journey in a rowing boat** across a lake in the **Lake District**, surrounded by mountains.
- The poet focuses much of his **description of the setting** on the **night sky**, both above the boat and reflected in the water, creating a strong impression of **space** and **openness**.

## What is the poem about?

- This **narrative** poem tells the story of the speaker **finding a boat and taking it**. He rows across the lake at night.
- At first the speaker admires his surroundings and is pleased with his **skill in rowing**.
- He is **surprised and disturbed** by the sudden, **threatening** appearance of a '**huge peak, black and huge**'.
- He **turns the boat** and **returns** it to the edge of the lake where he found it.
- The **theme** of **nature** is explored in the impact of the natural world upon the speaker. Though he admires nature's beauty, he is **overwhelmed** and **disturbed** by its power in the '**huge peak**' that becomes '**a trouble to my dreams**' for several days afterwards.



## Five key things about the language

1. The peaceful night and beauty of nature are suggested in highly focused descriptive detail, e.g. '**Small circles glittering idly**'.
2. Wordsworth suggests an unsettled **mood** at the start of the poem, describing feelings of '**troubled pleasure**', while '**the voice/Of mountain-echoes**' **foreshadow** the disturbing **personification** of nature that follows.
3. The mountain is personified as a threatening force.
4. Wordsworth uses **repetition** to emphasise the scale and power of the mountain.
5. He contrasts the beauty of nature with its power as '**huge and mighty forms**' overwhelm memories of '**pleasant images of trees**' and '**green fields**'.

## Five key quotations

1. Beauty of nature: **'sparkling light'** (l. 11). The **adjective** 'sparkling' suggests an almost magical beauty.
2. The mountain: **'a huge peak, black and huge'** (l. 22). Repetition of the adjective 'huge' suggests the scale of the mountain, dominating the speaker's thoughts.
3. The power of nature: **'Strode after me'** (l. 29). This personification presents nature as a threatening, dangerous force.
4. Beauty is forgotten: **'no pleasant images of trees,/ ... no colours of green fields'** (ll. 40–1). Repeating 'no' stresses nature's power in destroying the speaker's memories of its beauty.
5. 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.

### Note it!

Compare Wordsworth's depiction of the natural world with its destructive power as shown in the conditions described in 'Exposure'. Do both poets show its impact in a similar way?

## Exam focus

### How can I write about the use of personification?

AO2

You can write about how Wordsworth uses personification to explore nature's power.

Wordsworth personifies the mountain to suggest the dramatic effect it has on him. For example, he describes how the mountain 'Upreared its head', and then 'Strode after me', presenting the mountain as a dangerous and threatening monster. This power is further shown as the sight of it makes him turn back and leave the 'sparkling' beauty of the lake.

Topic sentence makes clear point

Carefully chosen quotations

Signals a developed analysis

Links and contrasts two different aspects of the poem

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about another theme. Use one of the quotations from the list.

The poet also suggests the lasting effect that this disturbing experience of nature had on him. At the end of the poem he .....

# MY LAST DUCHESS by Robert Browning

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.

Rhyming couplets in iambic pentameter – though enjambment creates the rhythm of natural spoken language

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,

Dramatic monologue – speaking to the count's representative

Duke's desire for control

'dies' and 'throat' foreshadow Duchess's death

Pronoun 'she' used throughout the poem – depersonalises Duchess who is never named

Repetition emphasises Duke's displeasure at Duchess's faults

Duke was not satisfied with his wife's opinions and behaviour

Exclamatory language and short sentence show strength of his feelings



Dashes suggest his anger and incredulity

**Juxtaposition** of Duke's 'favour' and a lowly 'mule' suggests Duchess had no respect for rank or status

Status and power – respect for his status should outweigh all else

**Irony** – long monologue shows he does have this skill

Vocabulary highlights Duke's view of Duchess as an object

**Verb** suggests Duke's belief that she should have allowed him to control her behaviour

**Tone** is almost sarcastic, suggesting anger

Duke was not satisfied with his wife's opinions and behaviour

**Juxtaposition** – sudden change of subject suggests she was murdered, but it is of little importance

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!****

Attitude to women – he is arranging to marry his next Duchess

**Ambiguity** – murder is implied but not explicitly stated

Duke describes another of his possessions, suggesting he thinks his former wife, her painting and this statue are of similar worth

Final **first person pronoun** emphasises his self-centredness and arrogance

## What is the poem's setting?

- The poem is set in **sixteenth-century Italy**, in the house of the **Duke of Ferrara**.
- His house is decorated with **artworks** of which he is very **proud**; he boasts of Frà Pandolf's **skilled portrait** of the previous Duchess and the '**rarity**' of his bronze statue.

## What is the poem about?

- The poem is written in the **voice** of the **Duke** of Ferrara as he describes a **portrait** of his **former wife**.
- The description of the **portrait** makes the Duke think about how **his wife disappointed** him by not appreciating **his attention** and **status**.
- It is suggested towards the end of the poem that the Duke **murdered** his wife.
- It is revealed that the Duke is **talking** to the representative of the Count whose **daughter he now hopes to marry**.
- The **theme** of **power** is implied in the fear with which the Duke is regarded ('**if they durst**') and his ruthlessness in murdering his wife because he thought she was disrespectful.



## Five key things about the language

1. The **possessive pronoun** in the title, 'My Last Duchess', suggests the Duke sees her as a possession.
2. The Duchess is never named, only referred to by the pronoun 'she', which effectively depersonalises her.
3. The Duke is the only speaker in this lengthy **dramatic monologue**, suggesting he does not allow interruption, but expects his listener's full attention. This impression is reinforced by the frequent use of enjambment.
4. The **repetition** of '**alive**' (ll. 2 and 47) draws attention to her death.
5. 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.

## Five key quotations

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. Expectations of respect: '**as if she ranked/My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name/With anybody's gift.**' (ll. 32–4). The **verb** 'ranked' has **connotations** of hierarchy.
3. Enjoyment of nature: '**The dropping of the daylight in the West,/ ... the white mule**' (ll. 26–8). The Duke lists all the pleasures that the Duchess should not have valued.
4. Arrogance: '**and I choose/Never to stoop**' (ll. 42–3). Enjambment positions 'Never' at the beginning of the line for emphasis.
5. **Ambiguity**: '**all smiles stopped together**' (l. 46). The short phrase implies suddenness. Was she killed?

### Note it!

Compare Browning's presentation of the Duke's expectations of his wife with the expectations explored in 'Kamikaze'. Do the poets create sympathy for these figures in a similar way?

## Exam focus

### How can I write about Browning's use of voice? AO2

You can explore how the Duke's voice suggests his power and status.

Browning creates the voice of the Duke through language choices that imply his arrogant view of his status. For example, the verb 'stoop' implies lowering his rank and he emphatically declares 'I choose/Never to stoop'. Instead, he chooses to murder his wife, suggesting how ruthlessly he punishes those who do not respect his position in society.

Makes clear point about the theme

Quotations carefully selected

Develops analysis further

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about another theme. Use one of the quotations from the list.

The Duke makes clear the ways in which his wife failed to meet his expectations of respect. For example, .....

# THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

This poem describes a charge made by the British army 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, which celebrates the men's bravery in unquestioningly obeying orders, was published six weeks after the charge.

1.

1 Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

Use of **dialogue** suggests narrator was an eyewitness, implying an accurate account

Strong repetition, **rhythm** and **rhyme** make poem memorable

5 'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

**Allusion** to Psalm 23 highlights deadly nature of the conflict

2.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'  
10 Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
Some one had blunder'd:  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
15 Theirs but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

**Rhetorical question** implies soldiers' courage

Repetition emphasises soldiers' sense of duty and bravery

Power and status: soldiers have no choice but to follow orders

3.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
20 Cannon in front of them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
25 Into the mouth of Hell  
Rode the six hundred.

Repetition shows how soldiers are surrounded by danger

**Metaphorical** verb suggests violence of cannon blasts

**Alliteration** relays sounds of battle

Near-synonyms create an image of the battle devouring the soldiers – repeated in stanza 5 to emphasise their heroism

Copyrighted Material  
**THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE** by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

4.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turn'd in air  
Sabring the gunners there,

30 Charging an army, while  
All the world wonder'd:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke;  
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.

40 Cannon to right of them,  
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!

Imagery of sight as well as sound

Violent-sounding **verbs** highlight soldiers' bravery

Attitudes to war: suggests soldiers' bravery and physicality of battle

**Repetition** across the line break creates a dramatic pause, slowing the pace as outcome of charge is revealed

Parallels to **stanza 3** show soldiers' return

'**imagery**' Natural imagery conveys violence of the battle

**Dactylic dimeter** replicates sound of horses' galloping hooves

**Repetition** of 'left' emphasises the huge loss of men

Repetition of line highlights the wondrous bravery of the soldiers: they deserve to be wondered at

**Imperative verb** directs audience's response

The only time an **adjective** is attached to this repeated phrase: the final, lasting impression of these soldiers

## What is the poem's setting?

- The poem describes the **charge into battle** of six hundred men on horseback.
- The poet vividly conveys the **sights, sounds, danger** and **chaos** of the **battlefield**.

## What is the poem about?

- Six hundred soldiers charge directly towards the **Russian guns**, during the Battle of Balaclava.
- The soldiers know that a **mistake** has been made but they **do not question their orders** to charge.
- They meet the enemy in a valley. The **soldiers fight bravely** but **many are killed or wounded**.
- The **theme** of **power** is evident in the soldiers' **unquestioning obedience**, and **conflict** in the **violence** of battle.
- The poet calls for all to **celebrate the soldiers' bravery**.



## Five key things about the language

1. 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.
2. He uses **figurative language** to convey the violence of battle: '**thunder'd**', '**Storm'd**', '**jaws of Death**'.
3. Positive **adverbs** focus the reader's attention on the soldiers' achievement ('**Boldly**', '**well**') rather than their commanding officers' error.
4. Tennyson selects **emotive verbs** ('**Flash'd**', '**Plunged**', '**Reel'd**') to convey the dramatic action.
5. He uses **imperative verbs** to direct the reader's response.

## Five key quotations

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. Dramatic language: **'thunder'd ... Storm'd ... Charging ... Plunged'** (ll. 21–32). Verb choices suggest the chaotic action and pace of the battle.
3. 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.
4. Heroism: **'horse and hero fell'** (l. 44). **Alliteration** links the death of soldiers and their horses, creating sympathy for both.
5. Reader's response: **'Honour the Light Brigade,/Noble six hundred!'** (ll. 54–5). Tennyson clearly directs the reader to respect the soldiers' bravery.

### Note it!

Compare Tennyson's depiction of war with that of Hughes' in 'Bayonet Charge'. Do they express a similar **viewpoint**?

## Exam focus

### How can I write about Tennyson's use of language? AO2

You can analyse Tennyson's viewpoint to explore his depiction of war.

The language choices in the poem present the battle as chaotic and dramatic. For example, the verbs 'thunder'd' and 'Storm'd' use sounds taken from nature to convey the cannon fire while 'Charging' and 'Plunged' create a sense of frantic action, helping to focus the reader on the bravery of the soldiers. However, although praising their bravery, the poet also briefly mentions that 'Some one had blunder'd', suggesting that he blames their deaths on this mistake.

Topic sentence makes clear point

Carefully chosen words

Signals a development of the analysis

Explores different parts of the poem

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about another theme. Use one of the quotations from the list.

The poet strongly suggests how he feels the reader should respond to the deaths of the soldiers. He does this through .....