

Power and Conflict  
English GCSE  
Literature Paper 2  
Poetry Revision Guide

*Get yourself ultra-ready for your English Literature GCSE exam with this helpful revision guide.*



## Introduction

There are fifteen poems that you will have studied in preparation for the poetry section of your GCSE English Literature Paper 2 exam. They are as follows:

*The Prelude*

*Storm on the Island*

*Exposure*

*The Charge of the Light Brigade*

*Bayonet Charge*

*Remains*

*Poppies*

*War Photographer*

*Kamikaze*

*Ozymandias*

*London*

*My Last Duchess*

*The Émigrée*

*Checking Out Me History*

*Tissue*

In Section A of your exam you will be given one of these poems which will be included in full in the exam booklet.

However, you will also need to **compare** this given poem to one other in the collection based around a **theme** that will be given to you. Here is an example:

**Compare the ways the poets present ideas about anger in ‘Checking Out Me History’ and one other poem from ‘Power and Conflict’**

In order to do this you will need to think carefully about which poems fit into which particular themes or ideas.

## Revision Activity: Comparing Poems

Use your knowledge of the 15 anthology poems to tick off every theme you think each poem fits into. This should help you see which poems would work best together in the exam.

4: Complete the table, ticking off all the relevant boxes for exam poem.

5: Which poems would be best to compare with **Checking Out Me History** on the theme of **anger**? Make notes on how anger is shown in the two poems you choose and how it is similar or different to **Checking Out Me History**.

6: Begin writing out an answer to this exam question and think about how you are showing your comparisons in your answer.

Poem	The Power of Humans	The Power of Nature	The Effects of Conflict	The Reality of Conflict	Loss or Absence	Memory	Anger	Guilt	Fear	Pride	Identity	Powerful Emotions	Lack of Power	Abuse of Power
<b>The Prelude</b>														
<b>Storm on the Island</b>														
<b>Exposure</b>														
<b>The Charge of the Light Brigade</b>														
<b>Bayonet Charge</b>														
<b>Remains</b>														
<b>Poppies</b>														
<b>War Photographer</b>														
<b>Kamikaze</b>														
<b>Ozymandias</b>														
<b>London</b>														
<b>My Last Duchess</b>														
<b>The Émigrée</b>														
<b>Checking Out Me History</b>														
<b>Tissue</b>														

Now that you've thought about how you will link the poems together, it would be a good idea to recap every poem in detail. Over the next 15 pages you will find detailed information and analysis on each poem, plus ways of helping you make notes on every poem in the collection.



## The Prelude

### **What happens in the poem?**

The speaker is out walking in the Lake District, an area of England that is known for its stunning natural beauty (mountains, trees, plants, and flowers – essentially, beautiful countryside). When out walking the speaker finds a boat and steals it.

During his journey he describes the natural world around him and

seems full of admiration and happiness, but then his mood changes as he encounters an enormous, black mountain. This fills him with fear and dread. The speaker then decides to head home, but his whole view of nature has been fundamentally altered.

**Context:** William Wordsworth belonged to a group of poets known as the Romantics. The Romantics were a group of writers, artists and musicians from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Romantics had a very clear political philosophy and they wanted to stop the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. Rather than following the rules of society, the Romantics believed every person should follow their own ideals.

They felt it very important that people only express their personal feelings. They also felt a sense of responsibility to everyone in society: they felt it was their duty to use their work to change society.

**What is this poem about?** This can be quite a difficult poem for students to get their heads around; this is because Wordsworth is being very metaphorical. The nature that surrounds him is a representation of his state of mind: at first he is confident, self-assured and ultimately happy, but later his mood completely alters. He becomes anxious, fearful and scared. It is about a man finding his own identity and how he fits into the world around him.

**Structure:** The extract from The Prelude is written in blank verse, or unrhyming lines of iambic pentameter (ten syllables a line: 5 bars, 2 beats per bar). Iambic pentameter is the type of meter that best mimics natural speech and presents a realistic representation of the speaker's thoughts and feelings.

At times the poem employs enjambment (where lines carry on into each other) to represent an overflowing of emotions.

### **Language:**

Go through the poem and using highlighters or coloured pens:

- Highlight all the parts of the poem which show a positivity to nature
- Highlight all the parts of the poem which show a negativity towards nature
- Highlight all the examples of the speaker *personifying* nature and explain why the speaker does this.
- The speaker uses the pronoun 'her' on a number of occasions in this extract. Why does he do this? Who might 'her' be? Which is it feminine?
- What do you notice about positivity and negativity within this poem? What does this tell you about the speaker's thoughts?

## Storm on the Island

**What happens in the poem?** An isolated community is preparing itself for the onslaught of a severe storm. The speaker describes the preparations, his thoughts and feelings about the storm, the storm itself and how it affects him.

**Context:** Seamus Heaney grew up in rural Northern Ireland, where his father was a farmer. Much of Heaney's poetry focuses on the countryside of his childhood and his descriptions of nature can often act as metaphors for human behaviour – in many ways this is similar to Wordsworth's 'The Prelude'. Heaney spent much of his life living and teaching in Northern Ireland and devoted himself to his writing.



**What is this poem about?** Like many of Heaney's other poems, this one is packed with images of nature. He describes the work the people of the community are doing to ensure they are protected from the oncoming storm; the speaker also describes the power of the storm through very military-like imagery and shows the growing strength of it, but ultimately this is a 'huge nothing' that they fear- which is the wind.

**Structure:** The poem is presented in one stanza, which could be used to represent the isolation of the island within the storm.

Both enjambment and caesuras are used at times throughout the poem to emphasise the preparations of the people on the island and the ferocious power of the storm.

Moreover, the poem is presented in blank verse: 19 lines of unrhyming iambic pentameter. Again, like 'The Prelude', iambic pentameter is used as it best represents the natural way of speaking. When you couple this with the at times informal language of the speaker ("you know what I mean") it feels as if the speaker is addressing us directly.

### **Language:**

- Highlight all the parts of the poem which shows the people on the island are well prepared and are safe.
- Highlight all the parts of the poem which show the power of the storm.
- Find all the military images used within in the poem. What do you think is the conflict within the poem? What do you think is the speaker's attitude towards the storm? Why?
- At which points is the poem at its most tense? When is it least tense? Why do you think Heaney constructed his poem like this?



## Exposure

**What happens in this poem?** A group of soldiers during the First World War are waiting around in the trenches before they are given orders to 'go over the top' and fight. During this time, the speaker describes the horrendous weather conditions that surround the soldiers and threaten to kill them: they are shown to be another type of enemy. Indeed, many soldiers did perish because of the appalling conditions rather than because of the fighting itself. The speaker mentions about soldiers remembering being back home, but ultimately 'nothing happens' in this poem.

**Context:** Wilfred Owen fought during the First World War and was killed just before the war ended. He used his writing abilities to create deeply cynical and angry poems about the War and the reasons why it had happened. Owen's works were very unusual at a time when most writing about the war had been deeply patriotic.

**What is this poem about?** Owen was disgusted by the war and what he perceived as the utterly futile or pointless nature of it. Thousands of young men seemed to be losing their lives in horrifying ways for no reason. In this poem, Owen turns his focus to the weather and how it too becomes an enemy to the soldiers.

**Structure:** This poem is divided up into eight stanzas of five lines each (using iambic hexameter – lines of eight syllables), with each final line being indented and shorter than the rest. These shorter lines help to provide a type of final idea to each stanza that emphasises the speaker's thoughts and feelings regarding the war. They are often framed as rhetorical questions, asking the reader question the point of these men being exposed to these conditions.

## **Language:**

- Highlight all the words which show existing in these conditions was incredibly tough.
- Find all the words which show the speaker is not the only one who is suffering in these conditions.
- Find the examples of negative imagery being used in the poem. How is the weather described? Why do you think the speaker chose to personify the weather in this way?
- Which lines in the poem do you think are the most tragic and desperate? How does Owen use language in the poem to emphasise just how awful these conditions were?

## The Charge of the Light Brigade

**What happens in this poem?** The speaker pleads with the reader to picture the six hundred soldiers that formed the Light Brigade to see them as brave and to be respected, even though their deaths were tragic and because someone 'blundered' or made a huge mistake.

**Context:** This poem is based around an infamous conflict during the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War, which took place between 1853 and 1856. Britain was at the time fighting with Russia. A miscommunication meant the soldiers in the Light Brigade were sent on the wrong mission, and ultimately many of those men were killed. The soldiers were sent into a valley that was surrounded by enemy soldiers with guns, whereas the Light Brigade only had swords on them.



Alfred, Lord Tennyson read about these events during 1854 and decided – in his position as Poet Laureate – to write his piece to praise the soldiers despite the error that led to their deaths.

Tennyson was one of the most famous and celebrated poets of the Victorian era and therefore a man of considerable influence.

**What is this poem about?** Although the soldiers were killed because of a stupid mistake, the speaker tries to refocus the outcry that this generated and instead asks the reader to remember the soldiers' bravery and nobility rather than anything else. He describes the actions of the soldiers in detail, focusing on their bravery rather than their deaths.

**Structure:** The poem is divided up into six stanzas, with the first being 8 lines long, the next two have 9 lines, the fourth stanza is 12 lines long, the fifth 11 and the final stanza only 6 lines long. The structure in this poem is driven by the refrain that appears at the end of each stanza and begins 'Rode the six hundred'. This line changes slightly depending on the message of each stanza, but the repetition of it focus the reader on the bravery of these men. They continue to ride on despite the horrors they face.

The poem also features repetition heavily, suggesting an unrelenting rhythm that mimics the fast pace of the soldiers and the horses as they rode into battle. This is further emphasised with the use of rhyming triplets and couplets throughout the poem, including at times the use of half rhyme.

### **Language:**

- Highlight all the words which show the speaker thinks the soldiers are **brave**.
- Highlight all the words which show the speaker thinks these soldiers should be **respected**.
- Look at the refrain at the end of each stanza. How does Tennyson use this in each stanza to emphasise the message of his poem?
- Look at Tennyson's use of imperative sentences within the poem. How do they help Tennyson to influence his reader?



## **Bayonet Charge**

**What happens in this poem?** A soldier during the First World War is sent 'over the top' to charge across no man's land with a bayonet or knife fixed to the end of his rifle. As he moves his thoughts and feelings begin to change.

**Context:** Ted Hughes once served in the RAF and studied Archaeology and Anthropology at university, so he was already thinking deeply about history and mythology by the time he came to his

writing.

**What is this poem about?** The speaker explains how a soldier begins the war full of patriotism and pride in fighting for his country, but halfway across on his journey his feelings change and he gets a sense of 'bewilderment' or realisation of where he is and what he is doing. The inclusion of the yellow hare could be literal or it could be metaphorical, representing the cowardly side of the soldier wanting to escape the situation he now finds himself in. By the end of the poem he is desperate to escape. This poem contrasts particularly well with 'Charge of the Light Brigade' in terms of attitudes towards war and bravery.

**Structure:** The poem begins with the soldier already running – he finds himself running across the battlefield, as if he is detached from what is happening.

The poem is broken up into three stanzas: the first explains the soldier's initial actions and the patriotism he had at the beginning: "The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye / Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest".

The second stanza shows a significant change in tone with the soldier experiencing 'bewilderment' and a level of self-awareness: "In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations / Was he the hand pointing that second?" It is a kind of existential experience for the soldier as he begins to question exactly what he is doing.

The third stanza sees the soldier 'awaken' again and find a way to keep moving, to get out of "blue crackling air", but the yellow hare is included potentially as a form of metaphor to represent cowardice.

The use of caesuras and enjambment creates lines of differing lengths which could represent the uneven running of the man through the mud.

### **Language:**

- Find all the words in the first stanza which represent bravery and patriotism.
- Find all the words in the second stanza which question those ideas of bravery.
- Find all the words in the final stanza which suggest panic and fear.
- Find three language techniques being used in this poem. For each one, explain how the technique gets across the writer's ideas to the reader.
- Choose three examples of enjambment and caesuras and evaluate how they impact on the reader.

## Remains

**What happens in this poem?** A soldier recalls the memories he has of killing a man who was running from a bank raid he was a part of. The soldier describes the memory of killing him in great detail and explains his feelings about it afterwards. It is not something he can just forget about and the images of the man keep going around and around his head – this is something called ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder’.



**Context:** Simon Armitage is a very famous British poet and wrote a collection of poems called ‘The Not Dead’ based on the experiences of soldiers in the Gulf, Bosnian and Malayan Wars – those that happened after the Second World War.

**Structure:** The poem is made up of eight stanzas, with the first seven made up of mostly unrhymed quatrains (four line stanzas). However, the last stanza is only two lines long acting as a kind of summary of the soldier’s feelings about the experience. Ultimately, he cannot get the image of the dead man out of his head.

The title has multiple meanings: It can mean ‘remains’ as in what remains of a body after a person has been killed, it can refer to what ‘remains’ in the soldier’s head after the event and finally what remains of the soldier now that his life has been turned upside down.

The first person perspective provides a kind of monologue and the use of no particular rhyme scheme and examples of enjambment make the poem sound like natural speech, as if the speaker is talking directly to us.

### **Language:**

- Find all the words which describe the killing of the man.
- Find all the words which show the soldier keeps remembering the event.
- Find all the words which show he cannot forget about what has happened.
- Find three language techniques being used in this poem. For each one, explain how the technique gets across the writer’s ideas to the reader.
- How do the perspectives of the other soldiers mentioned in the poem differ to those of the speaker? What does this tell us about war?

## Poppies

**What happens in this poem?** A mother describes her thoughts and feelings as her son is leaving home to join the army.

**Context:** Jane Weir is of English and Italian heritage, and grew up in both Manchester and Italy. As an adult she spent time living in Belfast but now resides in England. The poem 'Poppies' was commissioned as part of a collection of modern war poetry by Carol Ann Duffy in 2009.

**What is this poem about?** As a mother prepares to say goodbye to her son who is leaving to go to war, she remembers the experiences she had with her son when he was a child, how she feels now that he is going and her fears of what will happen in the future. Like some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, Weir's Poppies deals with the feelings of absence and loss.

**Structure:** The poem has four clear stanzas, the opening and closing stanzas with six lines, the second with 11 and the third 12.

The heavy use of caesuras suggests a person unsure about themselves and how they feel. Whilst the mother gives the outward appearance of confidence and certainty to her son, inside we can see through her thoughts that she is struggling to come to terms with the loss of her son as he leaves.

As the poem moves along we see it is moving across time as well: "Three days before", "Before you left", "After you'd gone", "later" and "this is where it led me". Throughout the poem the mother returns to her past with her child as she remembers their experiences together.

The memorial in the final stanza acts as a visual metaphor for the past as the speaker stands in the present looking to the future. Like some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, Poppies focuses on the idea of time and the power it has.



### **Language:**

#### **Jane Weir on Poppies:**

"I wanted to write a poem from the point of view of a mother and her relationship with her son, a child who was loved cherished and protected... and it had led to this... heightened and absolute fear that parents experience in letting their children go, the anxiety and ultimately the pain of loss... I hoped to somehow channel all this, convey it into something concise and contemporary, but also historically classic, in terms of universal experience."

**Highlight all the words in the poem that show the role of a mum or mother.**

**For each word or phrase highlighted, explain how the speaker is feeling.**

**Using the quote on the left hand side and your own interpretation of the poem, what message was Weir trying to send to her readers? Why?**

## War Photographer

What happens in this poem? This poem focuses on the experiences of someone who goes to war zones to take pictures for national newspapers back in the UK. In his darkroom (where he develops his photos) at the start of the poem, he develops the pictures he's taken. Being back at home in the UK presents a very different world to the ones he has visited in the midst of war. Like in 'Remains', the photographer remembers the experiences he went through and the 'ghosts' that are in his thoughts.

**Context:** Carol Ann Duffy was friends with a war photographer herself and was intrigued by the idea of people who go to war zones to record what is happening there without being able to get directly involved themselves.



**What is this poem about?** Duffy uses her poem to not only explain the difficult role of being a war photographer, but to ask the reader to look at themselves and ask why they have become desensitised to images of war. It also seems like the war photographer is finding it increasingly difficult to find comfort in his own world but also forget about the events he has seen – he is emotionally and mentally torn.

**Structure:** The poem is divided up into four regular six line stanzas and each one ends with a rhyming couplet. Unlike

some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, War Photographer is rigidly structured. Could this mirror the photographer's determination to find some sort of order in the chaos he finds himself in? He does put the 'spools of suffering' into 'ordered rows' after all. Moreover, a war photographer must be detached and distant from his work in order to do his job. The regular structure to the poem seems to reflect this.

The final lines "From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where / he earns his living and they do not care" suggest the people he takes photos for do not care about the people he takes photos of, and the war photographer is off to his next assignment to earn his living and feels 'impassive' or without care about having to do it once more.

### **Language:**

Highlight all the words which show the war photographer is trying to detach himself from the experiences he has been through.

Highlight all the words which show the true horrors of war.

Find the quotes which show the people back at home do not really care about the war photos they see. How does Duffy use language to emphasise this lack of feeling towards others?

How does Duffy use language to make clear to the reader how the war photographer is struggling to exist within the two worlds that he finds himself trapped between? How is this similar or different to one of the other poems in the collection?

## Kamikaze

**What happens in this poem?** A kamikaze pilot sets off on his mission but halfway on his journey he changes his mind. Kamikaze pilots were trained to go on suicide missions, or to crash their planes into enemy boats. The pilot's daughter tries to explain to the reader why she thinks he turned back: because he loved the beauty of nature around him and because he remembered the wonderful days of his childhood. It was a great honour to become a kamikaze pilot in Japanese culture at the time and to not complete your mission would be viewed as cowardice and a great dishonour to your family. The pilot's wife and family shun and isolate and slowly his children learn to do so too.

**Context:** Kamikaze pilots were used more and more during the final stages of the Second World War as the Japanese war leaders become increasingly desperate. It was seen in Japanese society as a great honour to die for your country and Kamikaze pilots were highly respected – but to refuse to complete your mission left you isolated and ostracised, as we see in this poem.

**What is this poem about?** Beatrice Garland uses this poem to question the attitudes surrounding Kamikaze pilots and how the pilot is treated when he returns. The way the fish are described in the sea emphasises how beautiful they were to the father, and the way speaker talks of her father suggests she can understand why he did what he did.

**Structure:** The poem is set out in seven, six-line stanzas and although there isn't a regular rhyming pattern to the piece, most lines have a similar length and number of syllables to them, providing a calmness, neutrality and regularity to the poem. The speaker tells the reader the story, and the reader can then make up their own minds about the events that have taken place.



There is a shift in perspective halfway through the poem. Initially, the poem is told in third person ("her father, "she thought"), but this changes to first person ("my mother never spoke again") which changes our understanding of the poem and of the pilot. Finally, we are told that the speaker's mother thinks the father probably felt about would have been the better way to die. We are provided with three perspectives throughout the poem and it is up to the reader to interpret the events.

Language:

- Find three quotes which show the speaker understands why her father did what he did.
- Find all the quotes which show the family shunned the pilot.
- How do you interpret the poem? Do you think the pilot was right to turn back? Why? Why not? Use quotes from the poem to support your interpretation.
- Choose three language techniques the writer has included in her poem. How does each one influence the reader in terms of their interpretation of the pilot's actions?

## Ozymandias

**What happens in this poem?** The speaker meets a traveller who explains to him about a broken statue he saw standing in the middle of a desert. We find out the statue was of a former pharaoh or king known as Ozymandias. The statue's base contains an inscription which shows that Ozymandias is boasting of his immense power, but around the statue is nothing but wasteland.



**Context:** Written by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1818, it focuses in on Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II who ruled from 1279 BCE to 1213 BCE (66 years!) Ozymandias was another name for Ramesses. Ramesses II had hundreds of statues and temples built in his name, which would have used slave labour to build them.

Shelley was born into a wealthy family and was set to inherit his father's fortune. However, Shelley began writing on controversial topics – including atheism (not believing in God) – which meant his father disowned him.

**What is this poem about?** Ozymandias was once the ruler of a great civilisation, but now virtually nothing exists of the city he presided over. It can be argued that the poem 'Ozymandias' is not just about Ramesses but about the abuse of power generally and how those with power can perceive themselves to be invincible or undefeatable.

### **Structure:**

How does the rhyme of 'stand' and 'sand' give the image extra power?

Why does Shelley rhyme 'decay' and 'away' and 'despair' and 'bare' at the end of the poem?

Most of the poem is written as a quote from the traveller. Why does Shelley choose to do this?

### **Language:**

Highlight all the negative ideas within the poem. Choose three and explain what they mean.

Highlight in one colour the description of the statue and in another the description of Ozymandias as a person. What do you notice about the two descriptions?

Label all the language techniques you can find being used in the poem. How do they help to emphasise the meaning or message of the poem?

## London

**What happens in this poem?** The speaker describes a walk around the city of London during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Everywhere he looks the speaker sees poverty, misery and despair. No one escapes it, except perhaps those who live behind the palace walls and the Church – who seem to do nothing about the inequality that surrounds them.

**Context:** Blake lived at time of huge change in Europe: France had gone through a revolution where the ordinary people had risen up against the wealthy ruling classes. It inspired Blake to look to his own country and see the suffering all around him.

Blake lost faith in his religion and so began to question the role of Christianity and the Church in society, something which he alludes to in the poem 'London'.

England itself was going through the Industrial Revolution which itself was bringing enormous changes to life for the people of the country.



**What is this poem about?** Blake wanted to bring change to his own country and hated seeing the suffering around him. In his poem he uses imagery to emphasise just how awful life is for most people in the city and how those with power simply ignore what is happening around them.

**Structure:** The structure is simple and regular – the poem is presented in four stanzas of four lines (quatrains) with a regular ABAB rhyme scheme. This allows Blake to create regular snapshots of all the misery taking place in London, but also may imply that such suffering is firmly established and normalised in 18<sup>th</sup> century London.

**Language:**

Find three powerful images of the suffering of ordinary people in London.

Find three powerful images of the people with power doing nothing to help those suffering.

Why does Blake speak of 'charter'd street' and 'charter'd Thames'? 'Charter'd' means privately owned. What does it suggest about life in 18<sup>th</sup> century London?

Why does Blake use the oxymoron 'marriage hearse' at the end of the poem? What does it suggest about the futures of the poor in London?

## My Last Duchess

**What happens in this poem?** The poem is a type of dramatic monologue and 'Ferrera' is the character saying it. It is believed Ferrera is based on Alfonso II d'Este, the fifth Duke of Ferrara (1533–1598), who, aged 25, married Lucrezia di Cosimo de' Medici, the 14-year-old daughter of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Eleonora di Toledo.

The Duke is presenting a painting of his ex-wife to a visitor to his home. The Duke explains that he was angered by his wife's behaviour towards him and other people: she treated him like anyone else and she seemed to enjoy simple gifts from others just as much as any he gave her. It is hinted at in the poem that the Duke may have had the Duchess murdered. By the end of the poem it is made clear he is moving on to a potential new wife. The old Duchess was simply his 'last' Duchess.



**Context:** Robert Browning was a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet and born into a wealthy family. He later moved to Italy and married his wife Elizabeth Barrett – one reason that they moved was to escape her over-protective father. These experiences meant Browning knew all too well about over-controlling patriarchs or leading male family members.

**What is this poem about?** The poem is critical of the pride and vanity of the Duke, whose jealousy and suspicious nature seems him lose his wife – potentially because he had her murdered. He is presented as a sinister and unlikeable character who judges things by its appearance rather than having any substance.

**Structure:** The poem is presented in lines of iambic pentameter (five bars of two beats = 10 syllables per line) and in rhyming couplets. However, although rhyming couplets would normally help make a poem easy to remember, the Duke employs lots of enjambment and

caesuras throughout the poem, with caesuras showing he is being very controlling in what he says, but enjambment showing he is very keen to show off his wealth and power to his visitor, or presents the anger and jealousy he feels about his wife's behaviour.

Like some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, this poem is presented as a dramatic monologue meaning we only ever hear from one perspective; in this case it is only the Duke's. He is controlling the conversation in this poem and it symbolises his over-protective nature.

### **Language:**

Highlight all the words that suggest the Duke is a proud man.

Circle all the parts of the poem that suggest the Duke was suspicious of his wife.

What is the Duke proud of? What might this suggest to us about him as a character?

In what ways does Browning portray the Duke? What message might the writer be presenting to his reader?

Although not told directly, the reader can begin to understand how the Duke and Duchess' relationship deteriorated. How do we see this?

## The Émigrée

**What happens in this poem?** The speaker is a young girl who was forced to leave her home country, but rather than be negative about she clings on to the positive memories of her home and her childhood. There is a lot of war and military imagery used in this poem, so we assume she has left home because of war. She explains she knows what her home is like now, but she refuses to accept that as a reality, rather imagining the world she remembered instead.

**Context:** Rumens bases much of her poetry on ideas of people emigrating from places like Russia or the Middle East to move elsewhere and escape corruption or tyranny (the abuse of power), or where places have been widely affected by war, such as Syria.

**Structure:** The poem is divided into three stanzas, with the first two being eight lines long and the final stanzas nine lines long. This extra line may represent the determination of the speaker not to let go of the positive image of her city.

There is no rhyme pattern used in 'The Emigrée' but most lines use five stresses – although this is not always the case. This may reflect the chaos and confusion that surrounds war zones and fleeing the place you once called home.

### **Language:**

Use four colours:

- Find all the words to do with **lightness**. Highlight them.
- Find all the words to do with **darkness**. Highlight them.
- Find all the words to do with a **positive city**, highlight them.
- Find all the words to do with a **negative city**, highlight them.
- Is the positive city linked to light or darkness?
- Why might this be? What is the writer trying to tell us?
- Why is there also a negative city? Why is this linked to darkness?



## Checking Out Me History

**What happens in this poem?** The speaker of the poem is angry at the way he has been taught only nursery rhymes and European history at school. He feels that he has to carve out his own identity through his own efforts rather than relying on schools to tell him about his own past. He goes through a number of examples of Eurocentric historical figures like Napoleon and Lord Nelson, before switching his focus to historical



figures he sees more relevant to his own background, such as Mary Seacole and Nanny de Maroon.

**Context:** John Agard was born in Guyana in 1949 and moved to Britain in 1977. Identity and ethnicity are therefore very important in many of his poems.

Creole is a mixture of different languages and is a type of **dialect**, so words that are unique to it and aren't usually found in English. John Agard writes in Creole in some parts of his poem 'Checking Out Me History' and in more formal English in others.

### **Structure:**

There are two clear structures in this poem: the Creole-influenced sections which focus on European historical figures, written mostly in rhyming couplets, triplets or quatrains. End rhyme is also used regularly in these sections. They all work together to create a bouncy,

comical sound to these descriptions.

The other type of structure is when the speaker focuses on three black historical figures: Toussaint L'Overture, Nanny de Maroon and Mary Seacole. Here there is a more irregular rhyme scheme and the lines are much shorter. These help to produce a more serious, sombre tone that perhaps imply respect.

### **Language:**

Highlight the parts written in Creole in one colour and in another the parts written in more formal English.

For which parts has Agard used Creole and for which has he used formal? Why does he do this?

How does Agard's use of language in these stanzas help to mirror Agard's message in the poem?

## Tissue

**What happens in this poem?** This poem is not narrative but rather sets out to explain the power of tissue paper as an extended metaphor for life. The speaker explains how paper has been important to us throughout our history, including through recording our history and its power in religious texts like the Quran. Moreover, the speaker talks of the power of paper through receipts, maps and architectural drawings. Paper is incredibly important to us, but the speaker also makes clear how fragile it can be as well.

The speaker goes on to suggest that human life is more significant than paper and it will go on to outlive the records we make. However, the speaker might also suggest that human life is fragile like paper and what we build and create cannot always last. It is a poem that is open to interpretation.

**Context:** Imtiaz Dharker is a poet of Pakistani origins but was raised in Glasgow in Scotland. Many of her poems focus on topics such as the power and role of religion, the issue of terrorism and finding your identity. Much of her work is metaphorical and symbolic.

**Structure:** The poem is broken up into mostly unrhymed and irregular quatrains (lines of four). This 'messy' layout can reflect the way life is both irregular and often flimsy. Moreover, the use of enjambment across the poem suggests a lack of control by human beings over their own lives and reflects the flowing and delicate nature of both humanity and paper – there are many similarities between the two.

Every stanza is of four lines, except one: the last stanza, which has only one line to it. This therefore brings attention to the last stanza: "turned into your skin".

Language:

Find all the quotes which use the symbol or metaphor of *light*. Why do you think the speaker uses this metaphor to describe paper?

Find all the quotes which show paper is powerful. Explain in what ways does the speaker show paper to have power.

Find all the quotes which show paper and humanity are similar. In your own words, evaluate what the poem says about the similarities between paper and humanity.

