



# A POISON TREE KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *A Poison Tree* was written by William Blake and was published in *Songs of Experience* in 1794.

**William Blake** – William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet and painter. He is known as being one of the leading figures of the Romantic Movement. Blake rejected established religious and political orders for their failures– some of the many things that he viewed as being a part of the ‘fallen human nature.’ He had a complex relationship with religion, believing the imagination to be the most important element of human existence. This ran contrary to Enlightenment ideas.



**The Garden of Eden** – Also known as ‘Paradise’ the biblical garden of God is referred to in the books of Genesis and Ezekiel. The bible states that Adam and Eve (the first humans) were placed into the garden (naked, showing their innocence) before being tempted by a serpent to eat forbidden fruit from the Tree of Life. They were thus expelled from the garden. In *A Poison Tree*, the tree, apple, and garden represent the speaker’s anger, alluding to the biblical story.



**Songs of Innocence and Experience** – Published in 1794, these two sets of poems were created by Blake with the aim of showing the ‘Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.’ The Songs of Innocence collection contains poems that are uplifting, celebrating childhood, nature, and love in a positive tone. The Songs of Experience section (of which *A Poison Tree* was one of the poems) offered a contrasting tone towards these ideas. Some of the topics covered in these poems were indignation, revenge, and the fallen state of mankind.



**Romanticism** – Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, cultural and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the latter half of the 18th Century, peaking in the mid-19th Century. Romanticism is characterised by its emphasis on emotions – glorifying nature and past events – memories and settings are often imaginatively described using vivid imagery. Although Blake struggled to make a living during his lifetime, his ideas and influence were later considered amongst the most important of all the Romantic Poets.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Metaphors** – An extended metaphor runs throughout the poem, which compares anger to the eponymous tree of the title. The negative emotions begin as a seed, and are cultivated into a plant, then a tree (as read in the line ‘I waterd it in fears’) is compared to cultivating a plant. The emotion is followed through an entire growth cycle until it results in death. The second metaphor ties the poem into the biblical story of Adam and Eve. In doing so, the suppression of anger is presented as an original sin.

**Imagery** – Blake uses a range of vocabulary choices to create vivid images in the mind of the reader. Rather than presenting anger as an abstract emotion for example, it is brought to life in the form of the poison tree. The physical ideas of watering and sunning the plant offer a visual image of the anger growing. Other vivid images presented to the reader include the ‘shine’ of the apple, the pole star being ‘veild’ and the foe laying ‘outstretched’ at the foot of the tree. Abstract ideas are visually depicted through Blake’s imagery.

**Quote:** “*And it grew both day and night,  
Till it bore an apple bright.*”

**Quote:** “*And I waterd it in fears,  
Night & morning with my tears:”*

**Alliteration** – Alliteration is used throughout the poem to echo the sounds of the anger developing. For example, there is a repeated ‘s’ sound throughout quatrain 2, which resembles the sound of the speaker hissing with anger, whilst presenting smiles to the face of his foe. Furthermore, in quatrain 3, the repetition of the harsh ‘b’ sound shows the hidden danger of the apple, cultivated to tempt the foe.

**Simple Language** – Blake uses straightforward language throughout the poem, which is easy to follow. Such simplicity may be seen to represent how anger is often perceived as a simple, instinctive emotion. On the contrary, Blake demonstrates how it is complex and destructive. The simple language also gives the poem a nursery rhyme feel, which the reader associates with learning a moral lesson.

**Quote:** “*And I sunned it with smiles,  
And with soft deceitful wiles.”*

**Quote:** “*I was angry with my friend;  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.”*

**Form** – The poem is written in four equal stanzas of four lines. Rhyme is used throughout in the scheme of AABB. The rhyme creates deliberate emphasis on words that underline the tone of the poem, e.g. ‘fears’, ‘tears’, ‘smiles’ and ‘wiles.’ The poem is told from the viewpoint of a first person narrator – we are only exposed to their point of view.

**Structure** – Each stanza details a different stage of the development of the anger. In the first stanza, the wrath is initially hidden. In the second stanza, the anger begins to grow, rather like a small plant that feeds on resentment. In stanza 3, the anger is used to deceive the foe, and in stanza 4, the violent product of the anger is revealed.

**Quote:** “*And into my garden stole,  
When the night had veild the pole;”*

**Quote:** “*In the morning glad I see;  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.”*

## Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Suppression of Anger** – The main theme of *A Poison Tree* is not anger itself, but rather the destructive effects of the cultivation of anger. The poem emphasises that when a person hides or denies their emotions, the feelings are enabled to grow. Blake expresses this through the metaphor of the poison tree, which is fed by continued resentment.



**Lies and Deceit** – The speaker hides his anger through ‘soft deceitful wiles’, and his cultivation of this anger eventually produces an apple, which is deceptively bright and shiny. This is designed to lure the foe to his demise. The foe is also revealed to be partaking in deceitful acts, as he ‘steals’ into the speaker’s garden.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	I was angry with my friend;	The reader immediately notes the <u>simplicity of the language</u> – it mirrors the <u>nursery rhymes and children’s verses</u> popular at the time, and (like the poem) were intended to teach moral lessons. The lesson provided in the <u>opening quatrain</u> is therefore seemingly simple to decode: do not suppress feelings of anger, or they will grow; the best way to rid oneself of anger is to express it. The complexity arises from the use of the terms ‘friend’ and ‘foe.’ The poem seeks to explore how people classify one another with these labels and alter their course of behaviour as a result. The <u>trochee lines</u> (e.g. line 1) force the line on, reflecting how <u>pushy</u> the speaker is. In contrast the <u>iambic lines</u> slow the poem down.
	2	I told my wrath, my wrath did end.	
	3	I was angry with my foe:	
	4	I told it not, my wrath did grow.	
2	5	And I waterd it in fears,	The <u>second quatrain</u> describes how the speaker tends to and cultivates his anger, which has made it grow. The <u>metaphor</u> begins that runs throughout the poem, as the wrath is compared to a small plant. He explains how he ‘waterd’ his anger with ‘tears’ and ‘sunned’ it with ‘soft deceitful wiles.’ ‘Wiles’ implies that the speaker is in some way laying a trap for his foe – he pretends to be friendly to his foe, his false smiles acting like sunshine in enabling his anger to develop. The speaker thus represents the <u>duplicity of his behaviour</u> , and the innocence is gone. Line 7, in which this occurs, contains <u>two trochees and iamb</u> , to wrong-foot the reader.
	6	Night & morning with my tears:	
	7	And I sunned it with smiles,	
	8	And with soft deceitful wiles.	
3	9	And it grew both day and night.	In the <u>third quatrain</u> , the small plant has developed into an actual tree – revealing the extent to which his anger has been cultivated. Furthermore, the <u>metaphor is extended</u> through the introduction of the apple. The apple represents the ‘fruits’ of his resentment. It has been chosen because it is commonly seen as the fruit of hatred and revenge in many cultures. It also refers to the apple in the <u>biblical story of The Garden of Eden</u> , in which the apple is used by the serpent to tempt Eve. The tree and apple promise a world of good (hence the shine), but actually brings woe to the world (it was mine). In this light, the speaker could be seen as the serpent. The poem now adopts a larger meaning, as the <u>biblical connection</u> introduces the idea of God’s indignation at humankind’s perceived failures. The repetition of ‘And’ shows the <u>persistent, ceaseless development of the anger</u> throughout the poem.
	10	Till it bore an apple bright.	
	11	And my foe beheld it shine,	
	12	And he knew that it was mine.	
4	13	And into my garden stole,	The <u>climax of the poem</u> is thrust upon the reader in the final quatrain. Once again the use of the word ‘and’ is used to start the quatrain. This shows the methodical, deliberate process that the speaker follows in order to develop his anger. The manner in which the foe ‘stole’ into the garden shows the two-way nature of the treachery. The ‘ <u>veild pole</u> ’ gives the impression that the visibility of the pole star, an aid to navigation, has been in some way impaired. The speaker’s sense of moral direction has thus been veiled. The final couplet reveals the result of the speaker’s treachery – ‘ <u>outstretched</u> ’ may mean dead, meaning that the foe has <u>succumbed</u> to the poison. The idea that the speaker is ‘glad’ about this reinforces the poem’s meaning – that despite the damage caused, the problems of human anger remain.
	14	When the night had veild the pole;	
	15	In the morning glad I see;	
	16	My foe outstretched beneath the tree.	

## Poems for Comparison Wider Reading

Exposure	No Problem	Wider Reading
<i>A Poison Tree</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the themes of <u>futility and suffering</u>	<i>A Poison Tree</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>anger and forgiveness</u> .	Although it can be read by itself, “ <i>A Poison Tree</i> ” benefits significantly from being read as a further expression of the poems immediately preceding it in <i>Songs of Experience</i> , especially “ <i>The Garden of Love</i> ” and “ <i>The Human Abstract</i> .” In the three poems, Blake criticizes the imposition of religious and social morality on the human sensibility, suggesting that it stifles the goodness and love inherent in a spirit not fettered by such rules. In Blake’s Notebook, the original title of “ <i>A Poison Tree</i> ” is “ <i>Christian Forbearance</i> ,” which the poem criticizes as the cause of hypocrisy.– <a href="http://www.encyclopedia.com">www.encyclopedia.com</a>





# BELFAST CONFETTI

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *Belfast Confetti* was written by Ciaran Carson and was published in 1989.

**Ciaran Carson** – Cieran Carson (born 1948) is a Belfast-born Northern-Irish poet and novelist. He was born into an Irish speaking family, and only picked up the English language from playing with local friends. His work is personal and political in its coverage of events from the past – particularly The Troubles and violence in Northern Ireland. In 1969, Carson narrowly avoided death in The Troubles, when a bullet tore through a taxi that he was sitting in. His poetry has won many awards.



**The Troubles** – The Troubles is the name given to the conflict in Northern Ireland during the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Over 3,600 people were killed and thousands more were injured. Two separate factions fought over the constitutional status of the country, with the goal of the unionist side to remain part of the UK, and the nationalist side to become part of Ireland. As a result, the violence also spilled into Great Britain and Ireland. It was settled in the Good Friday agreement of 1998.



**Ireland** – Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic, separated from Great Britain by the North Channel, the Irish Sea, and St. George's Channel. The island is made up of the Republic of Ireland (often shortened to 'Ireland'), which makes up about five-sixths of the island, and Northern Ireland, which is a part of the UK (see 'The Troubles'). The Irish climate is heavily influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, which borders it to the east. Ireland is the second-most populous island in Europe, with about 6.6 million inhabitants.



**The Good Friday Agreement** – The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 is largely viewed as the settlement of The Troubles, which enabled relative peace in Northern Ireland. The present devolved system of government in Northern Ireland stems from the agreement. It included a multi-party agreement between Northern Ireland's political parties and the agreement between the British and Irish governments. Both had to be approved by the public through referendums (which they were) before they became valid.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Metaphors** – An extended metaphor runs throughout the poem, which compares Belfast to a sentence that has been broken and blocked up by punctuation marks. The punctuation marks themselves are used to represent different features of the troubles. For example, exclamation marks and hyphenated marks represent weapons and debris, whilst full stops and colons depict the city 'blocked with stops and colons.' The whole poem can be seen as a metaphor for the way that violent conflict destroys language.

**Enjambment and Caesura** – Enjambment and caesura serve to speed up slow down, link and break up different sections of the poem. The heavy use of enjambment and caesura throughout creates a sense of unease – the unsteady flow of the poem makes the reader more insecure and apprehensive, mirroring the feelings of those caught in the conflict. Caesura and enjambment also combine to create a sense of being cut off as communication systems fall. A prime example of this is in lines 13 and 14.

**Quote:** "Suddenly as the riot squad moved in it was raining exclamation/ marks."

**Quote:** "Why can't I escape? Every move is punctuated. Crimea Street/ Dead end again."

**Questions** – The sense of chaos and confusion is emphasised through the use of interspersed questions throughout. The speaker is seen to be constantly questioning what is going on, for example 'why can't I escape?' 'Where am I coming from?' Many of these questions are appear to be echoes of questions being asked of the speaker by others – e.g. 'My name?' and 'Where am I going?' – which adds to the sense of mistrust.

**Everyday Objects** – Carson reveals how, in this environment, everyday objects are turned into dangerous weapons. For example, in the first stanza, Carson details how 'nuts', 'bolts', and 'car keys' are used in bombs. The title itself mirrors this idea; 'Confetti' is ordinarily used for celebration, but here it is used to describe the shrapnel originating from bombs, which rains down on the city.

**Quote:** "My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I going? A fusillade of question-marks."

**Quote:** "Nuts, bolts, nails, car-keys. A fount of broken type. And/ the explosion"

**Form** – The poem is written in two stanzas, perhaps to represent how Belfast/ Northern Ireland has become divided between the two factions. The varying line lengths, alongside the lack of rhyme or consistent rhythm, reflect the chaos of the riots. The different line lengths also mirror how different streets have been cut off by the factions and riot squads.

**Structure** – The poem opens as the chaos commences, as signalled by the opening adverbial 'Suddenly.' What follows is a rapid deterioration of any sort of order. In stanza 1, the speaker is just about able to offer details regarding the riot, but by the end of stanza 2, their sense of clarity has reduced to such an extent that they question themselves.

**Quote:** "All the alleyways and side-streets blocked with stops and/ colons."

**Quote:** "I was trying to complete a sentence in my head, but it kept/ stuttering."

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Disorder** – A number of devices combine to make the city appear fragmented and confusing. Everyday objects are utilised as weapons, those who should be neighbours are fighting one another, and at every turn there are blockages and chaos. Carson takes the reader to a place in which all rules regarding order and structure have perished.



**Divided Society** – Carson presents a place in which factions have developed in society – representative of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The divisions are shown through the structure of the poem (e.g. the two stanzas, the differing line lengths) and also its content (e.g. the barricades and blockages at every turn, cutting streets off).



### Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	Suddenly as the riot squad moved in it was raining exclamation	'Suddenly' throws the reader directly into the action, just as the speaker was. The <u>extended metaphor</u> utilising punctuation to emphasise the breaks in society begins with 'exclamation marks raining down.' The violent conflict is <u>breaking down language</u> between the factions. The <u>listing</u> in line 3 conveys a sense of panic – full sentences can no longer be articulated in the chaos. The fact that these are <u>everyday objects</u> demonstrates how the ordinary has become deadly. The sound of gunshots are echoed in the use of terms such as 'rapid fire' and 'stuttering' and are visually depicted through the use of the <u>ellipsis</u> . The continual references to punctuation show the <u>divides and blockages</u> across the city.
	2	marks,	
	3	Nuts, bolts, nails, car-keys. A fount of broken type. And	
	4	the explosion	
	5	Itself – an asterisk on the map. This hyphenated line, a burst	
	6	of rapid fire . . .	
	7	I was trying to complete a sentence in my head, but it kept	
	8	stuttering,	
	9	All the alleyways and side-streets blocked with stops and	
	10	colons.	
2	11	I know this labyrinth so well – Balaklava, Raglan, Inkerman,	The term ' <u>labyrinth</u> ' gives the impression of an inescapable maze, and yet these are <u>streets that the speaker knows well</u> – showing how the conflict has inverted <u>normality</u> . The speaker's own hesitation is implied in the <u>questions</u> that they ask themselves, as well the fact that their moves are ' <u>punctuated</u> .' 'Dead end' is deliberately <u>ambiguous</u> – further reinforcing the undercurrent of <u>division and violence</u> . Upon being questioned by the soldiers, the speaker now fails to answer the simplest of questions (line 17) showing how <u>disorientated</u> they have become. The poem does not end definitively, but rather with <u>unanswered questions</u> .
	12	Odessa Street –	
	13	Why can't I escape? Every move is punctuated. Crimea Street.	
	14	Dead end again.	
	15	A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon fae-shield. Walkie-	
	16	talkies. What is	
	17	My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I going?	
	18	A fusillade of question-marks.	

### Poems for Comparison

### Wider Reading

**What Were They Like?**

*Belfast Confetti* can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the themes of disorder

**The Class Game/ No Problem**

*Belfast Confetti* can be compared and contrasted with these poems in the approach to the theme divided society.

"I write in English, but the ghost of Irish hovers behind it; and English itself is full of ghostly presences," he suggests two influences on his poetry: his bilingual upbringing, and an unusual alertness to language. He shows language being used to enforce, to spy, and - broken into its almost meaningless constituent parts - to commit physical violence, when the bomb in 'Belfast Confetti' is loaded with not only ironmongery but "a fount of broken type." - [www.essalanglit.com](http://www.essalanglit.com)



# CATRIN KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

**Context** – *Catrin* was written by Gillian Clarke and was first published in 1978.

**Gillian Clarke** – Gillian Clarke (born 1937) is a Welsh poet, who was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry in 2010. She graduated in English at Cardiff University, before spending a year working for the BBC in London. She then returned to Cardiff, giving birth to her daughter (*Catrin*: hence this poem) and two sons. She learnt to speak Welsh as an adult and often translates Welsh literature into English. She was the National Poet of Wales between 2008 and 2016. She continues to live and work in Wales.



**Realism** – Realism in literature is a part of the realist art movement (seen in all forms of art and literature) that began in the mid-twentieth century. Realism attempts to represent familiar things as they are. Authors of realist texts choose to describe everyday or banal activities, as opposed to romanticising or colourfully elaborating ideas. Realistic poems often describe subjects from contemporary, conventional life, often focusing more on the individual characters and their feelings than on dramatic or sensational events.



**Clarke's Welsh Background** – Clarke was born into an English speaking family in Wales, and only learnt to speak Welsh as an adult 'partially as a form of rebellion.' She is proud of her Welsh heritage and makes efforts to ensure that the Welsh language is shared worldwide – translating Welsh texts into English. She often weaves characteristics of Welsh-language poetry into her work, e.g. strict metres. She also contrasts rural life in Wales with notable international events.



**Parental Bond** – A parental bond is the bond between a parent and child, often referred to as either the maternal bond (mother/child) or the paternal bond (father/child). Research suggests that both bonds have a biological basis, with changes taking place in the brains and hormones of mothers and fathers before and after the birth of their child. Further studies have shown that children who grow up to happy and stable often develop strong bonds as infants with their parents.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Metaphors** – An extended metaphor runs throughout the poem, which compares the bond between mother and daughter to red rope. This red rope may literally symbolise the umbilical cord throughout the earliest stages of their relationship, but comes to represent the link that ties mother and daughter together. Another metaphor exists in the idea of the square/tank which their relationship inhabits. It is 'blank' and 'disinfected' at the start, but becomes 'clouded with feelings' as their emotions towards each other build.

**Quote:** "Red rope of love which we both Fought over"

**Enjambment and Caesura** – Enjambment and caesura serve to speed up slow down, link and break up different sections of the poem. The heavy use of enjambment and caesura throughout creates a sense of unease – the unsteady flow of the poem makes the reader more insecure and apprehensive, mirroring the nature of the mother/daughter relationship. Caesura and enjambment also combine to create a sense of being cut off – as the two long for isolation from one another – a sense of individual identity.

**Quote:** "Which changed us both. Still I am fighting You off, as you stand there"

**Alliteration** – Alliteration is used frequently throughout the poem, for a range of effects. At the beginning of the first stanza, for example, the repetition of 'w' and 't' sounds in lines 3 and 5 creates a sense of repetition and monotony at the dull scene outside. On the other hand, the repetition of 'f' at the beginning of stanza 2 echoes the expletives that the two use towards each other as they partake in full-blown arguments, throughout *Catrin's* adolescence.

**Quote:** "In the glass tank clouded with feelings Which changed us both. Still I am fighting"

**Oxymoron** – Contradictory ideas are juxtaposed beside one another in order to show the differing personalities of the mother and daughter, who are still tied together by the maternal bond. 'Hot' and 'white' in stanza 1 shows the conflicted nature of their relationship, which is new, neutral and sterile, and yet already tainted by love and passion. 'Wild, tender circles' is another example, showing the inclination of the individuals towards adventure and safety.

**Quote:** "With the wild, tender circles Of our struggle to become"

**Form** – The poem is written in two stanzas, which deal with separate stages of life, but with the same themes – perhaps representing their will to be independent despite the bond that keeps them together. There is little rhyme in the poem, and a frequently interrupted rhythm, which goes to show the conflicted and unsteady nature of their relationship.

**Quote:** "Neither won nor lost the struggle In the glass tank clouded with feelings"

**Structure** – The first stanza is written about the time of *Catrin's* birth, and deals with the early relationship between the two. In the climax, it is recalled how this is difficult, as they fought to be separate beings. The second stanza shows *Catrin* as an adolescent, fighting to be adventurous and struggling for independence. The climax reveals more struggles to come.

**Quote:** "As you ask may you skate In the dark, for one more hour."

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Maternal Love** – The poem explores the persisting strength and durability of the maternal love, in the face of ceaseless conflict. This conflict seems to be unavoidable, and has a notable effect on both the parent and the offspring. In any case, they remain attached by the 'red rope' of their bond, creating a deeper love than any other.



**Togetherness and Individuality** – From the gruelling first obstacle together of childbirth, both *Catrin* and her mother are locked together by an eternal bond. Whilst this brings them deep togetherness, they also struggle to establish themselves as individuals. *Catrin* longs to seek adventure, whilst the speaker tires of the responsibility.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS	
1	1	I can remember you, child,	<b>Lines 1-5:</b> In line 1, the speaker immediately mentions <u>memory</u> , a key feature of parenthood – reflecting their love for their child. The parent can remember events that the child can't. 'You, child' highlights the mother-daughter relationship. The speaker then begins to discuss childbirth – 'hot' and 'white' are <u>oxymoronic</u> – suggesting passion but also neutrality and sterility. The fact she is stood demonstrates her preparedness for the struggles ahead. The <u>mundane image</u> outside (emphasised by alliterative w's and t's) contrasts with events about to take place.	
	2	As I stood in a hot, white		
	3	Room at the window watching		
	4	The people and cars taking		
	5	Turn at the traffic lights.		
	6	I can remember you, our first	<b>Lines 6-11:</b> The <u>fricative</u> use of 'f' in lines 6/7 suggests expletives between the two – their explosive relationship revealed. Childbirth is seen as their first conflict: a precursor to <u>future battles</u> . The 'red rope' describes literally the umbilical cord, but <u>metaphorically</u> the bond of passion and love between them. It becomes a metaphor for the dual forces at play as the child grows up, as they both <u>struggle</u> against one another. The 'square environmental blank, disinfected' describes the hospital ward, but also the feeling of being 'boxed-in' by <u>responsibility</u> .	
	7	Fierce confrontation, the tight		
	8	Red rope of love which we both		
	9	Fought over. It was a square		
	10	Environmental blank, disinfected		
	11	Of paintings or toys. I wrote		
	12	All over the walls with my		
	13	Words, coloured the clean squares	<b>Lines 12-17:</b> The writing on the walls demonstrates how the mother <u>discovers</u> for herself how to meet the physical and emotional needs of her baby. Literally, it could represent decorating a child's room with paint and belongings. Wild, tender circles is another <u>oxymoron</u> , depicting the constant cycle of love, adventurousness, and protectiveness. At times, they both struggle to break free of the <u>maternal bond</u> , the daughter to find herself as an individual, and the mother to break free of responsibility. The <u>alliteration</u> of the 'w' demonstrates the repetitive, enduring nature of their struggles. The last two lines bring about a climax to their struggles – shouting and longing to be individuals.	
	14	With the wild, tender circles		
	15	Of our struggle to become		
	16	Separate. We want, we shouted,		
	17	To be two, to be ourselves.		
2	18	Neither won nor lost the struggle	<b>Lines 18-24:</b> The speaker uses almost <u>nursery-rhyme rhythm</u> to express the equal forces of their binary opposition to one another. The once 'disinfected blank square' is now 'clouded' with <u>complex feelings</u> that they hold – confused about their emotions. 'Changed us both' implies neither is the same because of their relationship. 'Still' brings the <u>conflict</u> into more recent times, through both childhood and adolescence. The description of the daughter's hair highlights how she has grown into a strong adult. Her 'rosy, defiant glare' is suggestive of the <u>passion</u> that lies beneath. The elongated vowels in this section emphasise the enduring nature of their struggles, but also the <u>assertiveness</u> and strength of the force that her daughter has developed into.	
	19	In the glass tank clouded with feelings		
	20	Which changed us both. Still I am fighting		
	21	You off, as you stand there		
	22	With your straight, strong, long		
	23	Brown hair and your rosy,		
	24	Defiant glare, bringing up		
	25	From the heart's pool that old rope,		<b>Lines 25-29:</b> In the second climax, the speaker declares her <u>love</u> for her daughter, beginning with the idea of the 'heart's pool' – the memories between them lay deep in her heart, as does the bond that cannot be broken. 'Tightening about my life' suggests that the relationship has <u>dominated</u> her life ever since her daughter's birth. Line 27 <u>juxtaposes</u> the contradictory ideas of love and conflict, reflecting the nature of their relationship, a battle which is never lost or won. The final two lines exemplify the daughter's continued longing for <u>adventurousness</u> , even into the 'darkness' of the future, countered by her mother's perception of <u>danger</u> .
	26	Tightening about my life,		
	27	Trailing love and conflict,		
	28	As you ask may you skate		
	29	In the dark, for one more hour.		

## Poems for Comparison

<b>Poppies</b>	<i>Catrin</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>maternal love</u> .	<p><b>Wider Reading</b></p> <p>"People are sweet, they come to a poetry reading and say, 'I really enjoyed that and I haven't read a poem since I was a child, but when I was a child I loved poetry', and I think, of course you did, we must stay as children. We loved nursery rhymes, and we still love those things. I just hope that person who comes up to me and says that will come again. 'There are such wonderful poets from the 19th century. I studied them at university and they are the great romantic poets – Wordsworths, Shelleys, Keats, they're fantastic, but that's then, we must write for now'" <a href="http://www.esolanglit.com">www.esolanglit.com</a></p> 
<b>No Problem</b>	<i>Catrin</i> can be compared and contrasted with these poems in the approach to the theme <u>togetherness and individuality</u> .	



# COUSIN KATE

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

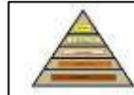


**Context** – *Cousin Kate* was written by Christina Rossetti in 1859, and was first published in 1862.

**Christina Rossetti** – Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) was an English poet who mainly wrote romantic and children’s poems. She was born into a gifted family – the youngest child of the renowned Italian-exile poet Gabriele Rossetti and Frances Polidori, the sister of Lord Byron’s best friend: John Polidori. In her lifetime, opinion was divided over whether she or Elizabeth Barrett Browning was the best female poet of all time. Rossetti’s poetry is famed for having an exceptional lyrical quality, diction and tone, using simple forms.



**The Class System** – Although the class system was less fixed than in earlier history, class divisions still separated different people in society from one another. Society was made up of aristocrats and noble families, middle classes, and working classes, and social mobility was difficult. For example, it was integral for both the man and the woman to marry someone of a suitable class and reputation. It would bring shame on a family for someone to marry too much out of lust and below the family class/reputation.



**The Victorian Era** – The Victorian era describes the period in which Queen Victoria sat on the English throne – between 1837 and 1901 (most of Rossetti’s life). Whilst this was a time of industrial revolution, it was also an extremely harsh time to live, and the differences between the lives of the richest and the poorest were exacerbated. The Victorian era was a period of great change. In this time, the population of England doubled – from 16.8 million 1851 to over 30 million in 1901.



**Love and Courtship Rules** – Although some laws had changed since the Georgian/ Regency eras, much of the power in love and courtship remained with men. Men were largely free to act as they liked outside of marriage, whilst women were expected to exhibit chaste behaviour. Women with children who were unmarried were regarded as ‘fallen.’ It is interesting to note in that Rossetti volunteered for a charity for fallen women from 1859, which likely influenced the subject matter of the poem.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Similes and Metaphors** – A number of similes and metaphors run throughout the poem, figuratively representing the complex behaviours and emotions at play. For example, in stanza 2, the speaker compares herself to different clothing garments when in the presence of the lord (like a silken knot, like a glove), showing that he viewed her merely as a garment – an accessory that could be changed at his pleasure. The speaker also uses the ring to jealously symbolise the lord’s entrapment of Kate, in stanza 4.

**Quote:** “Because you were so good and pure  
He bound you with his ring.”

**Repetition and Contrast** – Repeated phrases are used to highlight the differences between the speaker and Cousin Kate. For example, ‘good and pure’ is repeated to describe Kate in stanza 4, juxtaposed with the idea of the speaker being an ‘outcast.’ Whilst Kate is able to ‘sit in gold’, the speaker is forced to ‘sit in dust.’ However, whilst the speaker professes that her ‘love was true’, she believes that Kate’s was ‘writ in sand.’ The differences between the two are more emphasised through the use of the repetition.

**Quote:** “O cousin Kate, my love was true,  
Your love was writ in sand.”

**Alliteration** – Alliteration is used frequently throughout the poem, for a range of effects. In stanza 1 for example, the repetition of the soft ‘m’ sound (maiden, mates, mindful) is used to reflect the beauty and innocence of the girls at work. In detailing the affair in stanza 2, the sibilance in ‘shameless, shameful’ echoes the hushed manner of the affair. Furthermore, the speaker’s anger comes through the harsh consonants in ‘O Lady Kate, my cousin Kate.’

**Quote:** “To lead a shameless shameful life,  
His plaything and his love.”

**Oxymoron** – Contradictory ideas are juxtaposed beside one another in order to mirror the conflicting nature of the speaker’s ideas: she wants to create the sense that she is happy, and better off without the lord, when in fact we infer that she is deeply jealous. For example, she refers to her son as ‘my shame, my pride’, demonstrating that whilst she appears to be proud of him on the surface, she in fact knows the ignominy that his existence brings upon her.

**Quote:** “My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,  
Cling closer, closer yet.”

**Form** – The poem is written as a dramatic monologue, from the viewpoint of the rejected former lover of the lord. She directs the poem directly to Cousin Kate. There are six stanzas, each of which rhyme A-B-C-B-D-E-D-F. It is written in 3 and 4 foot iambic trimeters and tetrameters, which gives the poem a pronounced rhythm.

**Quote:** “If you stood where I stand...  
Nor bought me with his land;”

**Structure** – The narrative is revealed almost chronologically. In the opening stanza, the speaker recalls the lord picking her out, whilst the second details their relationship. The third stanza is the point at which the lord first sees Kate, and in the fourth he weds her. In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the speaker reveals her feelings, and hers and Kate’s differing lives now.

**Quote:** “Yet I’ve a gift you have not got,  
And seem not like to get.”

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Class** – The Victorian class system, and its effects on love and marriage, is evident through the behaviour and attitudes of the characters in the poem. The lord, being from an esteemed class, is able to pick and choose whichever of the working women he wants (this is partially a result of gender attitudes as well).



**Alienation** – The pain felt by the speaker at being shunned in favour of Cousin Kate is compounded by the fact that she is outcast by society for indulging in a pre-marital relationship. Despite being no more guilty than the lord, his position as a man allows him to carry on his life as he likes, whilst she is forever tainted as a ‘fallen’ woman.



### Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	I was a cottage maiden	The poem is set out as a <u>dramatic monologue</u> , addressed directly to the <u>onymous</u> Cousin Kate, referred to as ‘you’ throughout the poem. The opening lines present a <u>rural</u> setting, generating an image of the speaker that is innocent and pure. ‘Cottage mates’ suggests a <u>low status</u> , perhaps working the fields. Line 4 implies that she was not aware of her own beauty – she questions why the lord would choose her over the other girls. <u>Repetition</u> of the same line (5 and 7) shows her confusion. ‘Flaxen’ means blonde; the reader is given an image of a pretty country girl.
	2	Hardened by sun and air,	
	3	Contented with my cottage mates,	
	4	Not mindful I was fair.	
	5	Why did a great lord find me out,	
	6	And praise my flaxen hair?	
	7	Why did a great lord find me out	
	8	To fill my heart with care?	
2	9	He lured me to his palace home—	The verb ‘lured’ portrays the lord as some kind of <u>predator</u> , who traps her. His palatial home is <u>juxtaposed</u> with her humble cottage dwelling, to highlight his status. The <u>oxymoron</u> in line 11 demonstrates her confusion at the time: bedazzled by him and so blind to the social dangers. ‘Plaything’ suggests he never wanted her for marriage – his ‘love’ is in fact lust. The <u>metaphors and similes</u> with clothes suggests that she is nothing more than accessory to him; something that he can use and discard. Doves mate for life – she explains how she could have been this to him.
	10	Woe’s me for joy thereof—	
	11	To lead a shameless shameful life,	
	12	His plaything and his love.	
	13	He wore me like a silken knot,	
	14	He changed me like a glove;	
	15	So now I moan, an unclean thing,	
	16	Who might have been a dove.	
3	17	O Lady Kate, my cousin Kate,	At this point, she addresses Kate directly for the first time. The fact that she is ‘Lady’ tells the reader that the Lord has <u>married her</u> . The speaker admits that Kate is more fair than her, and the idea that she ‘grew’ this way reveals that she is perhaps younger – the speaker has been cast aside for a newer, younger girl. The speaker seems to know the exact moment he fell for Kate – suggestive of her <u>jealousy and pain</u> . The latter part of the stanza shows the power of the man – he can select his woman at whim, who is elevated to his level. The women are passive: no choice in the matter.
	18	You grew more fair than I:	
	19	He saw you at your father’s gate,	
	20	Chose you, and cast me by.	
	21	He watched your steps along the lane,	
	22	Your work among the rye;	
	23	He lifted you from mean estate	
	24	To sit with him on high.	
4	25	Because you were so good and pure	The opening four lines may be the lord’s and neighbours’ perception of Kate, and not the reality. In any case, the views of those around seem to have <u>influenced him</u> . The speaker herself is instead perceived as an ‘outcast thing.’ ‘Howl’ suggests her pain, whilst ‘dust’ shows that she remains in the country, work setting. This is contrasted with Kate’s ‘gold’ and ‘sing.’ A further <u>contrast</u> is used to describe the speaker’s ‘tender heart’ against Kate’s ‘stronger wing’ implying she was <u>pushed aside by Kate</u> .
	26	He bound you with his ring:	
	27	The neighbors call you good and pure,	
	28	Call me an outcast thing.	
	29	Even so I sit and howl in dust,	
	30	You sit in gold and sing:	
	31	Now which of us has tenderer heart?	
	32	You had the stronger wing.	
5	33	O cousin Kate, my love was true,	The speaker goes on to question the <u>validity</u> of Kate’s feelings. Sand can be washed away, and so the <u>metaphor</u> in line 34 insinuates that her love is fleeting and not deep, as the speaker says hers is. In the next lines, the jealousy of the narrator can be inferred – she states that she would not have ‘won’ in the same way, but with the alternative being social ruin, it is unlikely she would have rejected him. She claims <u>moral superiority</u> by suggesting Kate was ‘bought.’ The tone of line 39 shows her disrespect for the lord now.
	34	Your love was writ in sand:	
	35	If he had fooled not me but you,	
	36	If you stood where I stand,	
	37	He’d not have won me with his love	
	38	Nor bought me with his land;	
	39	I would have spit into his face	
	40	And not have taken his hand.	
6	41	Yet I’ve a gift you have not got,	In the <u>final stanza</u> , the speaker reveals her revenge: she has a son with the lord, which Kate does not. She <u>juxtaposes</u> the son with the material things that Kate owns, in an attempt to demonstrate that they are relatively worthless. The <u>oxymoron</u> used in 45 (‘shame’ and ‘pride’) gives the impression that she is able to rise above <u>social perceptions</u> in her view of her son – but this is not entirely believable; she refers a few times throughout the poem to the views of society, suggesting that she is affected by them.
	42	And seem not like to get:	
	43	For all your clothes and wedding-ring	
	44	I’ve little doubt you fret.	
	45	My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,	
	46	Cling closer, closer yet:	
	47	Your father would give lands for one	
	48	To wear his coronet.	

### Poems for Comparison

The Class Game	No Problem	Wider Reading
<i>Cousin Kate</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>class</u> .	<i>Cousin Kate</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>alienation</u> .	“In early 1859 Rossetti began volunteering at the St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary in Highgate, a charitable institution for the reclamation of “fallen” women. As an “associate” at Highgate, Rossetti was known as “Sister Christina” and wore a habitlike black uniform with a veil. By the summer of 1859 Rossetti was devoting a good deal of time to her work at Highgate, and its influence can be seen in her poems about illicit love, betrayal, and illegitimacy, such as “Cousin Kate,” <a href="http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/christina-rossetti">www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/christina-rossetti</a>





# EXPOSURE

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

**Context** – *Exposure* was written by Wilfred Owen in 1917.

**Wilfred Owen** – Wilfred Edward Salter Owen (1893-1918) was a British poet and soldier. He was one of the predominant World War I poets, detailing the horrors of trench warfare in a similar style to his mentor: Siegfried Sassoon. His poetry brought a sense of realism to public perceptions of war, in stark contrast to the earlier works of poets such as Rupert Brooke at the time. Owen was killed one week before the end of the war.



**World War I** – World War I, also known as the 'Great War', was a global war originating in Europe that took place from July 1914 to November 1918. It involved all of the world's major powers, opposing the Allies (including Russia, France, UK, and USA) against the Alliance (Germany, Austro-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire) Over 9 millions armed forces and 7 million civilians were killed in the war.



**Trench Warfare** – The use of trench warfare significantly influenced the high death toll. Attacks involved going across No Man's Land (in the middle) where attackers were open to machine gun fire, mines, and shells. Even if successful, casualties were huge. Life in the trenches were awful, with diseases like trench foot rife. Men would often spend weeks at a time on the front line, where they would need to sleep, eat, and defecate in close proximity in the trenches.



**Exposure to the Weather** – The majority of the fighting took place in Europe, where the soldiers faced extremities in temperature and weather over the years. Rain would quickly accumulate in the trenches (sometimes to waist height) whilst in the winter months soldiers would often be battered by snow, hail, and sub-zero temperatures. The winter of 1916-17 was so cold that many lost fingers and toes to frostbite. Trenches offered little to no protection. Even clothes and blankets froze solid.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Personification/Pathetic Fallacy** – Owen persistently personifies the weather to create the impression that the weather is as much of danger to the soldiers as the enemy itself. The weather is constantly referred to as an enemy, for example through suggesting it 'knives' the men, gathers a 'melancholy army' against them, and uses 'stealth' to attack them. The use of pathetic fallacy (e.g. the 'mad gusts') even add emotions and malice to the forces of nature.

**Sibilance/Alliteration/Assonance** – These language techniques are used to echo/mimic the sounds (or in some cases silence) that the men are exposed to. For example, repetitive use of the 'w' and 's' sounds are representative of the whistling of the wind around them, and even the muffled whispering of the men. Furthermore, awkward 'o' sounds emphasise words, and represents the difficulty the men have in taking their minds off the cold misery that they face.

**Quote:** "Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us"

**Quote:** "Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed"

**Similes/Metaphors** – Similes and metaphors are used to figuratively describe the physical and psychological pain that the men are enduring. For example, the dawn of a new day is compared to a 'melancholy army' being amassed – a new day signals a repeat of the cycle of misery and despair.

**Varied Verbs** – Owen uses some interesting and original verbs to present the discomfort of movement and actions by the exposed soldiers. For example, the frost makes their hands 'shrivel' and their foreheads 'pucker', whilst they are 'shaking.' These are young men in their prime and yet the description of their actions makes them resemble the old and infirm.

**Quote:** "Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army."

**Quote:** "We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed"

**Form/Structure** – The poem is conventional in the sense that each stanza is five lines long, with eight stanzas in total. Half-rhyme is used throughout to create a A-B-B-A-C rhyme scheme. The fifth line adds a little more to what would normally be expected – this could be seen as representative of the war dragging on for longer than anyone thought.

**Versification** – Each of the eight stanzas ends with a short half line. At the end of the first, third, fourth, and eighth lines the refrain 'but nothing happens' is added. This hammers home the message that despite all of the pain and suffering being described, little changes. The last lines, when read alone one after the other, tell their own melancholy story.

**Quote:** "Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp/The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp."

**Quote:** "What are we doing here? Is it that we are dying?"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Suffering** – In order to get across his message across, it was essential that Owen presented the barbaric, appalling nature of war in a realistic manner and tone. In this poem, Owen portrays the quieter moments of war, the painful periods in between the battle and bloodshed. Here, physical pain and psychological trauma can both be taken in more fully, and are described vividly and frankly.



**The Futility of War** – In contrast to many poems at the time that glorified war and fighting for one's country, Owen's poems typically depict war in a harsh light, in order to demonstrate how horrific and futile it is. 'Exposure', in this sense, is no different. His bleak and shockingly realistic portrayal of the soldier's experiences (in this case caused by both the opposition and the forces of nature) forms a stark contrast to general public opinions at the time.



**Line-by-Line Analysis** – Remember that this is an extract from the poem, not the whole poem.

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us . . .	The reader is delivered to the bleak French landscape, and the use of personification (winds...knive) brings the conditions to life. This is a hostile environment; even nature is against them. Alliteration w/s sounds mimic whispers. 'We' is used to demonstrate that the narrator is among the soldiers. The soldiers fear the silence.
	2	Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent . . .	
	3	Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient . . .	
	4	Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,	
	5	But nothing happens.	
2	6	Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,	Pathetic fallacy is used to attribute anger to the wind – again making the place seem inhospitable. The simile used over the top two lines creates connotations of pain. Even though the action of the war is in the distance, it is still at the forefront of their minds. The soldiers question what they are doing – the reason for fighting is long lost.
	7	Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.	
	8	Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,	
	9	Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.	
3	10	What are we doing here?	Dawn is typically associated with freshness, happiness, but here it brings 'poignant misery'; they are trapped in an endless cycle of war. Dawn itself is then personified as an enemy, and a metaphor is used to describe an attack by a 'melancholy army.' The repeated last line shows the anxiety of waiting for death – 'nothing happens.'
	11	The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow . . .	
	12	We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.	
	13	Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army	
	14	Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,	
4	15	But nothing happens.	Sibilance (repeating 's' sound) is used at the beginning of the stanza to add emphasis to the sounds being described. More personification is used – even the snowflakes seem to be conscious in deciding who to attack/ where they will fall. The wind is personified in its apathy in the face of the untold suffering and hardship.
	16	Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.	
	17	Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,	
	18	With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,	
	19	We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,	
5	20	But nothing happens.	The icy flakes are compared to assassins that stalk out the soldiers. Varied verb in 'cringed' creates a vivid image of the soldiers weakly covering from the weather. The juxtaposition of the 'blossoms' and 'sun-dozed' dream enhances the extremity of the misery of the lines before. The last line answers the question at the end of stanza 2.
	21	Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces—	
	22	We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed,	
	23	Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,	
	24	Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.	
6	25	—Is it that we are dying?	Assonance of the awkward 'o' sound opening the stanza is representative of the effort that it takes to think of anywhere but their ghastly present environment. Use of the word 'ghost' creates the sense that these men are already dead – effective when considering later in the stanza: the men have been forgotten already.
	26	Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed	
	27	With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;	
	28	For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;	
	29	Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed,—	
7	30	We turn back to our dying.	The speaker questions the existence of warming stimuli, as it has been so long since they have experienced such comforts. The spring that will follow the current winter makes them feel afraid, as they fear that they will not be alive to see it. Due to the agony of their predicament, God's love of the men is itself questioned.
	31	Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;	
	32	Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.	
	33	For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;	
	34	Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,	
8	35	For love of God seems dying.	The last stanza is perhaps the most haunting. The effects of frost are described using varied verbs and adjectives (shrivelling, crisp). The soldiers (half frozen themselves) attempt to bury those killed from exposure. Metaphor – eyes are physically frozen/ numb to the horror of what they are doing. Last line shows nothing is being achieved.
	36	Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,	
	37	Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp.	
	38	The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,	
	39	Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,	
	40	But nothing happens.	

### Poems for Comparison

	Poems for Comparison	Thoughts of the Poet
<b>Remains</b>	<i>Exposure</i> can be contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>Suffering</u> and the <u>Horrors of War</u> .	<p>Dear Mother, Immediately after I sent my last letter, more than a fortnight ago, we were rushed up into the Line. Our A Company led the Attack, and of course lost a certain number of men. I had some extraordinary escapes from shells &amp; bullets...I think the worst incident was one wet night when we lay up against a railway embankment. A big shell lit on the top of the bank, just 2 yards from my head. Before I awoke, I was blown in the air right away from the bank! My brother officer of B Coy., 2/Lt. Gaukroger lay opposite in a similar hole. But he was covered with earth, and no relief will ever relieve him, nor will his Rest be a 9 days' Rest. I think that the terribly long time we stayed unrelieved was unavoidable; yet it makes us feel bitterly towards those in England who might relieve us, and will not. WEO</p> 
<b>Charge of the Light Brigade</b>	<i>Exposure</i> can be compared with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>suffering</u> and can be contrasted with this poem in their approach to the <u>futility of war</u> .	



# HALF-CASTE

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *Half Caste* was written by John Agard, and was published in 2005.

**John Agard** – John Agard (born 1949) is an Afro-Guyanese poet and playwright who now lives in the UK. When he moved to the UK in the 1970s, he began teaching people about Caribbean culture and worked in a library. He often conveys his Caribbean voice in his poems, using non-standard spelling to represent his accent. His poems are often rebellious in nature, challenging common ways of thinking and confronting discriminatory behaviour.



**Racism in the UK** – The United Kingdom is a multi-cultural society, largely owing to its imperialist past, and more recent waves of immigration. Racism is also fueled by attitudes linked to the entrenched historical class system. The UK has never implemented any laws that officially discriminate against or segregate people of minorities – however, it is only as recently as the 1960s that the first laws were introduced to actively oppose racist attitudes and behaviour



**Guyana** – Guyana is a country on the northern mainland of South America. However, it is often considered as a Caribbean region because of its strong cultural and historical links to Anglo Caribbean nations. It was governed by Britain from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and known as British Guiana until the 1950s. It gained independence in 1966. Many Guyanese families have since emigrated to the UK – in 2009 there were 24,000 Guyanese-born people living in the UK.



**The Term 'Half-Caste'** – Half-caste is a term used to describe people of mixed race or ethnicity. In a number of countries across the world, including Australia and New Zealand, it is seen as a deeply offensive term, whilst in countries like the UK, it is seen increasingly as an offensive term, due to the fact that it implies that someone is 'half-pure' (with the white half being the 'pure' half). The National Union of Journalists have stated that the term is considered offensive today.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Alliteration, Sibilance and 'Beat'** – Alliteration is used in several places across the poem, particularly of heavy 'p', 'b' and 'd' sounds. This helps to add a beat throughout the poem, creating a more pronounced rhythm and flow – this helps the poem to mirror music popular in the Caribbean. These heavier sounds, blended with sibilance (for example in line 21: 'So spiteful dem don't want de sun pass') presents a personality of toughness and defiance and echoes the speaker's seething inner frustration.

**Quote:** "Sit down at dah piano  
And mix a black key"

**Colloquial Language, Accent and Slang** – Agard utilises his own 'voice' – that of a black man of Caribbean heritage raised in the UK. This includes features of his accent and rhythms of his speech patterns. One example is in replacing 'the' with 'de.' He also replaces the pronoun 'you' with the sharper 'yu' or 'u'. The heavier 'd' and 'u' sounds add more of a stress to the beat throughout the poem. The inclusion of these features also helps to bring the speaker's voice to life, giving the poem its power and authenticity.

**Quote:** "Yu mean when light an shadow  
Mix in de sky"

**Refrain** – The speaker repeats the phrase 'Explain yusef/wha yu mean/When you say half caste' at several points throughout the poem. This assertive demand (using an imperative verb) forces the reader to reflect on the meaning of the term that they use so flippantly towards the speaker. In the final refrain, the speaker drops the final line – suggesting an increase in his aggression – his patience towards those who use the term appears to be wearing thin.

**Quote:** "Explain yusef  
Wha yu mean"

**Puns** – Agard uses several puns throughout the poem to show his wit and intelligence – thus offering the perfect reprisal to those who imply (through their use of the term) that he is in some way 'half.' One example is between lines 12 and 21, in which the speaker plays with the word 'caste' to mock the 'overcast' British weather. Later in the poem, the speaker uses the word 'cast' once more to describe how the shadows are projected by a 'half-caste human being.'

**Quote:** "I half-caste human being  
Cast half-a-shadow"

**Form** – The poem is a monologue read by a single character – it appears to be the voice of Agard himself. There are four stanzas, with a refrain that breaks the poem up into sections. The poem does not adopt a strict rhyme scheme, but occasional rhymes add to the Caribbean-style rhythm, which is emphasised by a heavily-stressed rhythm throughout.

**Quote:** "An mix a black key  
Wid a white key"

**Structure** – The poem appears to be split into two main halves. In the opening half of the poem, Agard uses a range of humorous analogies to show that the word 'half-caste' has no meaning. In the second half of the poem, the speaker sarcastically discusses being half a person. He ends by asking the reader to use their 'whole mind' before addressing him.

**Quote:** "An de whole of yu ear  
And de whole of yu mind"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Racism** – The poem is about the racist attitudes that held by people in the British society in which the speaker lives. It is demonstrated that many of these stereotypes and prejudices are so deeply engrained in people's minds that they do not even realise their racism. The speaker reveals how he longs to be recognised as a whole person – not 'half caste.'



**Divisions** – The speaker presents a society that is divided, and in which there is animosity towards one another from two opposing sides. By juxtaposing white and black language and ideas together throughout the entirety of the poem, the poet is able to highlight the gulf that people create between themselves and others in society.



### Line-by-Line Analysis

POEM (OPENING)	ANALYSIS	POEM (ENDING)	ANALYSIS
Excuse me Standing on one leg I'm half-caste	<b>Lines 1-3:</b> The speaker begins his satirical attack on those that label him 'half-caste' by suggesting that he is half a person. By standing on one leg, he is using only half of his body, suggesting that he is only half of a man.	Explain yusef Wha yu mean Ah listening to yu wid de keen Half of mih ear Ah looking at u wid de keen Half of mih eye And when I'm introduced to yu I'm sure you'll understand Why I offer yu half-a-hand An when I sleep at night I close half-a-eye Consequently when I dream I dream half-a-dream An when moon begin to glow I half-caste human being Cast half-a-shadow But yu come back tomorrow	<b>Lines 33-41:</b> The stanza break adds extra emphasis to the refrain, which once again use the imperative verb 'explain' to show the challenging, assertive nature of the speaker. The next part of the poem labels several body parts as 'half' on the half-caste man. When people ask him why he only gives them part of his attention, it is actually because of their use of the derogatory term towards him. He doesn't want to give them his 'full' recognition. 'Yu' and 'u' again involve the reader directly.
Explain yusef Wha yu mean When yu say half-caste Yu mean when picasso Mix red an green Is a half-caste canvas? Explain yusef Wha u mean When yu say half-caste Yu mean when light an shadow Mix in de sky Is a half-caste weather?? Well in dat case England weather Nearly always half-caste In fact some o dem cloud Half-caste till dem overcast	<b>Lines 4-10:</b> The speaker is assertive in lines 3-6, using the personal pronoun 'yu' (authenticating his dialect) to challenge the reader directly. Agard begins to show how two colours mixed together can create something beautiful – such as a Picasso painting. The rhetorical question forces the reader to think about the offence that the name can cause people.	Wid de whole of yu eye An de whole of yu ear And de whole of yu mind  An I will tell yu De other half Of my story	<b>Lines 42-45:</b> The idea of the speaker sleeping with 'half-a-eye' open is a commonly use metaphor for being nervous and wary – feeling insecure. The speaker here has given the reader a small glimpse of the inner hurt and divisions that the term creates. The adverb 'consequently' reminds the reader that words and actions have consequences: the speaker is unable to fully 'dream' because of the prejudiced nature of the society around him.
So spiteful dem dont want de sun pass Ah rass Explain yusef Wha yu mean When yu say half-caste? Yu mean tchailkovsky Sit down at dah piano An mix a black key Wid a white key Is a half-caste symphony?	<b>Lines 11-22:</b> Agard shows that describing weather as half-caste would seem bizarre, so questions why people say something so derogatory about people. He juxtaposes the words 'half-caste' and 'over-caste' – when the weather is overcast, the clouds block out the sun & in labelling someone 'half-caste', people block out their humanity.		<b>Lines 46-48:</b> 'Cast' a shadow is another pun (play on words) – again experimenting with the multiple meanings of 'caste.' These lines again return to the idea that he is seen as half a man – an idea at odds with this wonderfully lyrical section of the poem. 'h' and 'm' sounds soften his tone.
	<b>Lines 23-27:</b> The speaker begins to show his frustration towards the situation in the next few lines ('ah rass' is West Indian slang to communicate anger). He again asks the same questions of the listener/reader, creating a refrain – this repetition reinforces Agard's key message.		<b>Lines 49-55:</b> The last 7 lines of the poem are hard-hitting – a complete message in themselves. The idea of being 'whole' is subverted onto the reader: only when they commit to using all of their senses to perceive him will he tell them his full story.
	<b>Lines 28-32:</b> 'Tchailkovsky' is not capitalised, perhaps as a mark of dissent towards iconic white males. Once again, an example of something beautiful (a symphony) made from mixing colours is used to show how strange the term is.		

### Poems for Comparison

No Problem	The Class Game	Further Reading/ Watching
<i>Half Caste</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>racism</u> .	<i>No Problem</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>divisions</u> .	Click the link below to hear John Agard read <i>Half Caste</i> before talking about race, prejudices in society, and how his Guyanese upbringing helped him to become the poet that he is today. <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/audio/2014/oct/13/john-agard-poetry-podcast-half-caste-diversity-race">https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/audio/2014/oct/13/john-agard-poetry-podcast-half-caste-diversity-race</a>





# NO PROBLEM

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *No Problem* was written by Benjamin Zephaniah in 1996.

**Benjamin Zephaniah** – Benjamin Zephaniah (born 1958) is a British writer and dub poet. He was born and raised in Birmingham, which he has called 'The Jamaican capital of Europe.' His father was Barbadian, and his mother Jamaican. Zephaniah is dyslexic, and left an 'approved school' (a boarding school for unruly children) unable to read or write. His poetry largely focuses on social and racial issues, and is inspired by the music and poetry of Jamaica.



**Racism in the UK** – The United Kingdom is a multi-cultural society, largely owing to its imperialist past, and more recent waves of immigration. As a result of preconceived attitudes linked to these historical circumstances, the extent and targets of racism in the country have altered over time. Racism is also fueled by attitudes linked to the entrenched historical class system. The UK has never implemented any laws that officially discriminate against or segregate people of minorities – however, it is only as recently as the 1960s that the first laws were introduced to actively oppose racism. Racist incidences appear to have a correlation with economic and political developments, for example in times of high unemployment or recession. Some recent studies have shown that racism is again on the rise in the UK, with nearly a third of those polled admitting that they are racially prejudiced. Events such as Brexit and the rise in populism have been noted as possible influences for these trends. In the past, racism in the UK has resulted in riots and even murders.



**Dub Poetry** – Most of Zephaniah's work is described as dub poetry, a form of oral performance poetry that is sometimes recited alongside music. This type of poetry typically draws on the rhythms and rhetoric of reggae music. Often, these poems are used to highlight social or political causes. Zephaniah's poems often deal with ideas of institutionalized racism. Despite their often serious message, many of Zephaniah's dub poems contain hope or humour.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Alliteration, Sibilance and 'Beat'** – Alliteration is used in several places across the poem, particularly of heavy 'p', 'b' and 'd' sounds. This helps to add a beat throughout the poem, creating a more pronounced rhythm and flow – this helps the poem to mirror music popular in the Caribbean. These heavier sounds (for example in line 2: 'But I bear de brunt') also presents a personality of toughness and defiance. Furthermore, the repetition of 's' in 'silly playground taunts/ an racist stunts' creates sibilance implying inner frustration.

**Colloquial Language, Accent and Slang** – Perhaps the most striking aspect of the poem is that Zephaniah utilises his own 'voice' – that of a black man of Jamaican heritage raised in the UK. This includes features of his accent and rhythms of his speech patterns. One example is in replacing 'the' with 'de.' He also replaces the pronouns 'they' and 'you' with 'dey' and 'yu' – the heavier 'd' and 'u' sounds this creates adds more emphasis to the beat. The inclusion of these features helps to give the poem its power and authenticity.

**Quote:** "But I bear de brunt  
Of the silly playground taunts"

**Quote:** "I am not de problem  
But I bear de brunt"

**Refrain** – The speaker repeats the opening phrase 'I am not de problem' at several points throughout the poem. This assertive declaration forces the reader to reflect on the prejudices that exist in society, in which minority groups may be identified as 'the problem.' The speaker's true message is revealed in the final utterance of the refrain, marginally altered to state 'black is not de problem' – highlighting how skin colour is not a fair indicator of a person's character.

**Idioms** – The speaker utilises several commonplace British idioms throughout the poem. Idioms are terms in which the meaning is not deducible from the individual word meanings. They are often old terms, from a time in which word meanings different. The speaker employs several of these, for example 'pigeon hole' and 'chip on my shoulder' to demonstrate how unfathomable some of the prejudicial, long outdated views towards black people are.

**Quote:** "I am not de problem  
If yu give I a chance"

**Quote:** "An I am positively sure  
I have no chips on my shoulders"

**Form** – The poem is a monologue read by a single character – it appears to be the voice of Zephaniah himself. There are only two stanzas, but the refrain breaks the poem up into further sections. The poem generally employs A-B-C-B rhyme scheme, which is occasionally held by half-rhymes. The rhyme and line length creates a rhythm consistent with dub poetry.

**Structure** – Each section of the poem is led by the refrain 'I am not de problem?' (or in the final case, 'Black is not de problem'). The first stanza is largely jovial, mockingly referring to some of the stereotypical attitudes that he has had to contend with. The second stanza is slightly more serious, and reveals the key message about British society.

**Quote:** "If you give I a chance...  
...I can do more than dance."

**Quote:** "Black is not de problem  
Mother country get it right."

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Racism** – The poem is about the racist attitudes that held by people in the British society in which the speaker lives. It is demonstrated that many of these stereotypes and prejudices are so deeply engrained in people's minds that they do not even realise their racism. The speaker reveals how he longs to be recognised as an individual, not a skin colour.



**Divisions** – The speaker presents a society that is divided, and in which there is animosity towards one another from two opposing sides. By juxtaposing white and black language and ideas together throughout the entirety of the poem, the poet is able to highlight the gulf that people create between themselves and others in society.



### Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	I am not de problem	<b>Lines 1-4:</b> The first line is a <u>refrain</u> that is repeated throughout the poem, emphasising the core message. The identity of the speaker is made clear by the use of 'de.' The <u>alliteration</u> of the heavy 'b' sound in line 2 gives a statement of toughness and defiance. Lines 3 and 4 suggest that racism begins at a young age. The speaker shrugs these off as 'silly...stunts' but the hissing <u>sibilance</u> that these words create show his inner contempt.
	2	But I bear de brunt	
	3	Of the silly playground taunts	
	4	An racist stunts,	
	5	I am not de problem	<b>Lines 5-8:</b> After the second <u>refrain</u> , the speaker injects humour into the poem to make another point about <u>racial stereotyping</u> . The speaker explains that he was born as academically intelligent as everyone else, but the attitudes of others towards him have metaphorically and literally had him 'on the run' (a reference to discrimination from the police). As a result, he is now 'athletic' – again this is a <u>stereotype</u> implying that all black people are seen as fast runners.
	6	I am born academic	
	7	But dey got me on de run	
	8	Now im a branded athletic	
	9	I am not de problem	<b>Lines 9-11:</b> Line 10 suggests that the speaker's <u>opportunities are limited</u> by the prejudices of others. The subsequent lines demonstrate how the education system is geared towards a white, <u>imperialist history</u> . 'Timbuktu' is a <u>colloquialism</u> used by some older white people to refer to the most remote, undeveloped place possible. The speaker states that to him this is a real place with its own history, silenced by British education.
	10	If yu give I a chance	
	11	I can teach yu of Timbuktu	
	12	I can do more dan dance	
	13	I am not de problem	<b>Lines 12-16:</b> In lines 12 and 14, the speaker shares some more <u>stereotypical assumptions</u> about black people, that they are good dancers and have wide smiles. The speaker uses the <u>idiom</u> of the 'pigeon hole' to highlight that grouping all black people into these categories is detrimental to their individuality. The speaker explains that in fact he is 'versatile', meaning that he is multi-talented, with developed skills in a wide range of areas.
	14	I greet yu wid a smile	
	15	Yu put me in a pigeon hole	
	16	But i am versatile	
17	These conditions may affect me	<b>Lines 17-20:</b> The <u>break of stanza</u> accentuates the brief change in tone, as the speaker contemplates for a moment the effect that these prejudices may have upon him as he ages. The use of the <u>adverb</u> 'positively' to describe his certainty also references his <u>durability</u> – he maintains a positive outlook. A 'chip on the shoulder' is a <u>common idiom</u> for a grudge – the speaker is explaining that he bears no ill will to those that are prejudiced towards him. His ability to rise above it gives him <u>power</u> .	
18	As I get older,		
19	An I am positively sure		
20	I have no chips on my shoulders,		
21	Black is not de problem		
22	Mother country get it right		
23	An juss fe de record,		
24	Sum of me best friends are white.		

### Poems for Comparison

Half Caste	<i>No Problem</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>racism</u> .
The Class Game	<i>No Problem</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>divisions</u> .

### Further Reading/ Watching

This video resource (accessed through the link below) is useful to watch in order to enhance your understanding of the poem. Exactly 50 years after the introduction of the Race Relations Act, Benjamin Zephaniah looks at whether racism in the UK has diminished, or just evolved. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXDxMH2EUTY>





# Poppies – by Jane Weir

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *Poppies* was written by Jane Weir, and was published in *The Guardian* in 2009.

**Jane Weir** – Jane Weir was born in 1963, to a British mother and an Italian father. She spent her childhood growing up in both Italy and northern England. She also lived in Northern Ireland during the troubled 1980s, which allowed her to continue to take in different cultures and traditions. *Poppies* was written after Carol Ann Duffy asked Jane Weir (and other poets) to compose poems to raise awareness of the mistreatment and deaths of British soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq.



**Poppies** – Poppies are a type of flowering plant that have become known as a symbol of remembrance for military personnel killed serving the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in war. Small artificial poppies are traditionally worn in these countries in the lead up to Remembrance/Armistice Day. The poppy as a symbol of remembrance was first inspired by the WWI poem 'In Flanders Fields', which describes how poppies were the first flowers to grow in the fields churned up by soldiers' graves.



**Armistice Day** – Armistice Day is celebrated every year on 11<sup>th</sup> November, in order to celebrate the Armistice signed by the Allies of World War I and Germany. It took place on the '11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, in 1918. The date also coincides with Remembrance Day (UK) and Veterans Day (US). In Britain, many people attend an 11am ceremony held at the Cenotaph in London – an event that is organised by the Royal British Legion, a charity devoted to continuing the memory of those who served in WWI and all subsequent wars.



**The Iraq/ Afghanistan Conflicts** – The War in Afghanistan began in 2001 after 9/11, when USA and its allies invaded Afghanistan in order to rid the country of Al-Qaeda, through removing the Taliban from power. The Iraq war began in 2003, when a United States-led government invaded Iraq in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein. In both wars, the power vacuum that resulted from removing these powers meant that the coalition troops faced several years in battle against insurgents, in which many were killed.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Imagery** – Weir uses imagery to accentuate the contrast between the horrific manner in which the son has assumedly died, and the comforts of home. For example, the use of the term 'Sellotape Bandaged' causes the reader to consider a battlefield injury, whilst on another level gives a more comforting image of a mother cleaning cat hairs off her son's blazer. The same is true of her pinning the poppy on her son, a nurturing image which is contrasted with the words 'spasm' and 'red', presenting the idea of a horrific, violent death.

**Varied Verbs** – A wide range of verbs are used to demonstrate the manner in which actions are carried out – this helps to carry the tone and key messages of the poem. For example, the narrator reminisces about fond memories from the past, using positive verbs such as 'play' and 'smoothed.' Verbs used to describe their interactions in the present all offer connotations of pain and discomfort, e.g. 'flattened,' 'pinned', and 'graze.' The variation in these verbs helps to form the sharp contrasts that shape the poem.

**Quote:** "I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals, spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade"

**Quote:** "All my words flattened, rolled, turned into felt,"

**Metaphors** – Figurative language is highly prevalent throughout the poem, particularly from the third stanza onward. For example, the door to the house represents the door to the world. The release of the songbird symbolises the narrator letting go of something that has given her joy. Furthermore, the dove represents the symbol of peace – showing the narrator that their son is now at peace.

**Interesting Adjectives** – Weir uses few adjectives throughout the poem (largely in keeping with its simple and sombre tone) but those that are included are hugely descriptive. For example, the use of the adjective 'intoxicated' gives the reader a depth of understanding about both the son's mindset heading into war (enthusiastic) and the narrator's trepidation regarding the son's mindset.

**Quote:** "After you'd gone I went into your bedroom, released a song bird from its cage."

**Quote:** "A split second and you were away, intoxicated."

**Form/Structure** – At first glance, the poem appears to have a strong, regular form. There are four stanzas – the first and last have 6 lines, whilst the middle stanzas have 11 and 12. But, a closer look reveals that 19 of the 35 lines in the poem have breaks in the middle. This is suggestive of a narrator that is trying to keep calm, but is breaking down inside.

**Narrative Structure** – The time sequence throughout the poem changes along with the narrator's emotions. The reader is led through the time sequence from 'three days before' (line 1), 'before you left' (3), 'after you'd gone' (23), to 'this is where it has led me' (25). At the end of the poem, the narrator finds themselves caught between the past and the present.

**Quote:** "play at/being Eskimos like we did when you were little/ I resisted the impulse"

**Quote:** "and this is where it has led me, skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Remembrance** – The theme of remembrance is particularly eminent throughout the poem – as expected from the title (poppies are a symbol of remembrance) and the 1st line (Armistice Day is a day in which people lost in war are remembered. The narrator in this poem recalls with fondness memories from her son's childhood.



**Loss and Suffering** – Like many other war and conflict poems, the poem deals with the themes of loss and suffering. However, in this case, the poem is told from a unique perspective: not from those who are present or are reporting on war, but the sense of loss and suffering felt by those left behind – the secondary victims of war.



### Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	Three days before Armistice Sunday and poppies had already been placed on individual war graves. Before you left, I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals, spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade of yellow bias binding around your blazer.	The poem starts with the speaker's close relative (assumed to be a son) leaving. <u>Armistice Sunday</u> is associated with remembrance, so the mention of this in the first line sets the tone of the poem. The description of the poppy provides a <u>powerful piece of imagery</u> – the 'spasms of red' on a 'blockade' could just as easily symbolise a soldier who has been brutally shot dead in action. The speaker shows fear through using the <u>symbol of remembrance</u> as a token of goodbye.
	2		
	3		
	4		
	5		
	6		
2	7	Sellotape bandaged around my hand, I rounded up as many white cat hairs as I could, smoothed down your shirt's upturned collar, steeled the softening of my face. I wanted to graze my nose across the tip of your nose, play at being Eskimos like we did when you were little. I resisted the impulse to run my fingers through the gelled blackthorns of your hair. All my words flattened, rolled, turned into felt,	The behaviours that the narrator speaks of are typical of those exhibited between a <u>parent and their child</u> (in this case likely a mother and son). The speaker describes partaking in some nurturing tasks (e.g. cleaning his blazer of fluff, smartening up his shirt) but appears to feel sorrow at not being able to do the other things that he has outgrown (e.g. Eskimo kiss, rub fingers through hair, etc.). To substantiate this idea, the use of the <u>interesting verb 'steemed'</u> is used to show how the narrator retains a stiff upper lip in the face of an emotional time. The use of the <u>metaphor 'blackthorns of your hair'</u> makes reference to both the visual appearance of the son's hair and the fact that it is now something that the speaker cannot touch, since the son is no longer a child.
	8		
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	11		
	12		
	13		
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	16		
	17		
3	18	slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked with you, to the front door, threw it open, the world overflowing like a treasure chest. A split second and you were away, intoxicated. After you'd gone I went into your bedroom, released a song bird from its cage. Later a single dove flew from the pear tree, and this is where it has led me, skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.	Another <u>metaphor</u> is used to describe the narrator as 'melting', referencing the fact that they feel as though they are falling apart inside through the despair of the parting moment. The <u>verb 'threw'</u> suggests that the narrator wants this desperate moment to be over hastily. The <u>simile 'world overflowing like a treasure chest'</u> describes the idea that the narrator is full of 'overflowing' emotions. The interesting <u>adjective 'intoxicated'</u> is used to describe the son as he leaves – possibly an indication that he is enthusiastic about going away to war, not fully aware of the atrocities that take place there. The mention of releasing the songbird is unlikely to be literal – rather a <u>metaphor</u> regarding the narrator 'letting go' of something that has brought them joy. Doves are often seen as <u>symbolic of peace</u> , leading the narrator to follow it – giving the idea of them hoping for peace, but also representing the idea that they have little to do with their son gone.
	19		
	20		
	21		
	22		
	23		
	24		
	25		
	26		
	27		
	28		
	29		
4	30	On reaching the top of the hill I traced the inscriptions on the war memorial, leaned against it like a wishbone. The dove pulled freely against the sky, an ornamental stitch, I listened, hoping to hear your playground voice catching on the wind.	The speaker is led by the dove to a war memorial. Here the bird departs – thus suggesting that its sole purpose was to lead the speaker there. We can imply from this that the son has died in the war – the memory of him leaving is the last moment the narrator will ever have with him. Even in the final stanza, <u>language relating to textiles/ clothing (stitch)</u> as there is earlier in the poem (blazer, scarf, gloves) is representative of domestic comfort, in contrast to language showing the <u>violence and horror of war</u> (red, spasms). Ending the poem, the narrator reaches for memories but only hears silence.
	31		
	32		
	33		
	34		
	35		

### Poems for Comparison

Poem	Comparison	The Poet's Influences
Ozymandias	<i>Poppies</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>remembrance</u>	The poem came out of sadness and anger, the two emotions combined, and it was written quickly, which is fairly unusual...At the time the news was full of conflict: Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, and of course we'd had the Balkans, and various 'tribal wars' in Africa... We very rarely hear the women speak. I have two sons myself and I'd read in the newspapers, seen on TV the verdicts from the inquests on soldiers killed in Iraq. Who could forget the harrowing testimonies of the soldiers families, and in particular their Mothers...and I was angry and frustrated at the apathy, or what I perceived as 'voicelessness' and ability to be heard or get any kind of justice. 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...
Exposure	<i>Poppies</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>loss and suffering</u> .	





# The Charge of the Light Brigade KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

**Context** – *The Charge of the Light Brigade* was written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in 1854

**Alfred, Lord Tennyson** – Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was a poet, whose work remains popular today. Many phrases from his work have become commonplace in English today. He was one of 11 children, and received a good literary education. He began publishing poems whilst still a student at Cambridge. In 1850, he became Poet Laureate, writing poems on matters of national importance until his death in 1892.



**The Crimean War** – The Crimean War was a military conflict fought between 1853 and 1856, in which the Russian Empire lost to an alliance of France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Sardinia. The causes for the war are notoriously blurry, however relate to a reluctance to allow Russia to gain land during the Ottoman decline. Despite these unclear intentions, it has become known for its bloodiness and catastrophic mismanagement.



**Attitudes to War** – Public perceptions of war have significantly altered since Lord Tennyson's era, owing largely to the horrendous impact of WWI, WWII and the Vietnam War. Many at the time felt that war was worthwhile and glorious, and that there was no honour greater than dying for one's country. Whilst Tennyson was predominantly against the idea of war (the poem shows disgust for the treatment of soldiers), he presents that taking orders and dying for one's country is honourable.



**The Battle of Balaklava** – The Battle of Balaklava was fought on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1854 as a part of the Crimean War. During this battle, 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' took place. The cavalry were intended to be sent to prevent Russians from removing captured guns, however a miscommunication resulted in them charging directly at an artillery battery, surrounded, and under withering direct fire. They reached the battery, but high casualties forced them to quickly retreat.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Rhetorical Questions/ Imperative Verbs** – Tennyson makes smart use of rhetorical questions and imperative verbs to both encourage the reader to think deeply about the situation, and to gain exert authority over how the reader should react to the poem. For example, the rhetorical question 'was there a man dismayed?' manipulates the reader into considering that there was a good cause to be upset about the order. Furthermore, the imperative verb 'honour' tells the reader exactly how they should think of the soldiers.

**Quote:** "Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade."

**Alliteration** – A range of alliteration is used throughout the poem to recreate the sounds that the soldiers hear in the battlefield environment. There is a visceral effect, for example, that is created when the reader traverses the line 'stormed at with shot and shell.' The repeated 's' sound replicating the violence of the moment. Alliteration is also utilised to capture the reactions of the world to the event – the repeated 'wo' sound in 'All the world wondered' depicting the astonishment of those reading about the battle.

**Quote:** "Charging an army, while  
All the world wondered."

**Metaphors** – The predominant metaphor used throughout the poem compares the battleground to the 'valley of death', and an extension of this (as the soldiers reach the opposition battery) is the jaws of death. This creates a sense of ominous certainty that the men will perish when they enter. This makes the return of a number of them seem all the more remarkable.

**Quote:** "Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred."

**Varied Verbs** – Tennyson uses some interesting and original verbs to portray the actions, sights, and sounds on the battlefield. For example, the artillery is described using the words 'volleyed', 'thundered', and 'stormed.' Such powerful verbs make the artillery seem like an almighty force of nature (note the connotations of violent weather), something far bigger and stronger than the Light Brigade.

**Quote:** "Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell"

**Form/Structure** – The poem is composed of six stanzas which vary in length from six to twelve lines. Each of the stanzas shares similarities, for example ending with the refrain 'six hundred', thus emphasising the most important message in the poem. The poem also makes use of anaphora (the same words repeated at the beginning of lines).

**Quote:** "Cannon to right of them / Cannon to left of them / Cannon in front of them."

**Rhythm/Rhyme** – The poem is written in dimeter – meaning that there are two stressed syllables per line. These are usually followed by at least two unstressed syllables, creating the sound of Light Brigade riding into battle on horseback. The use of sporadic rhyme further strengthens this rhythm, creating a flow to the poem as it is read aloud.

**Quote:** "Flashed all their sabres bare / Flashed as they  
turned in air / Sab'ring the gunners there."

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Remembrance** – Tennyson's predominant aim in the poem is to create a lasting memory of the bravery of the anonymous men in the Light Brigade. Clear respect is shown for the men throughout the entirety of the poem, but the clear attempts to cement their legacy come in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, through vocabulary such as 'hero' and 'glory.'



**The Futility of War** – Whilst Tennyson's poem conforms to the idea that death for one's country in war is deemed 'honourable', it also shows thinly veiled disgust at the treatment of the men in the Light Brigade. This is most evident in the lines 'though the soldier knew/ Someone had blundered.'



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	Half a league, half a league,	A 'league' is an old way to measure distance, equating to around 3 miles. The <u>repetition</u> of this commences a rolling rhythm that continues through the poem, resembling the sound of horses' <u>hooves galloping</u> . Tennyson uses a <u>metaphor</u> in describing the opposition-dominated battlefield as 'the valley of death.' This has <u>religious connotations</u> (Psalm 23). 'Light' brigade is in opposition to the 'heavy' artillery, and yet they are being asked to 'Charge for the guns!' It is assumed 'he' refers to the commander.
	2	Half a league onward,	
	3	All in the valley of Death	
	4	Rode the six hundred.	
	5	"Forward, the Light Brigade!	
	6	Charge for the guns!" he said.	
	7	Into the valley of Death	
	8	Rode the six hundred.	
2	9	"Forward, the Light Brigade!"	Once more the order is repeated to charge forward. The poet uses a <u>rhetorical question</u> to question the sense of the order – yet affirms that the soldiers carried out the order even though they knew there had been a mistake ( <u>someone had blundered</u> ). The <u>anaphora</u> involving the lines beginning 'theirs' is representative of some form of <u>chant or recitation</u> , thus adopting the voice of the soldiers – it is not their place to answer back or question, just to 'do and die' (follow orders knowing that they will likely die). The last two lines are repeated (a refrain) to emphasise the main action of the poem – the 600 men charging in.
	10	Was there a man dismayed?	
	11	Not though the soldier knew	
	12	Someone had blundered.	
	13	Theirs not to make reply,	
	14	Theirs not to reason why,	
	15	Theirs but to do and die.	
	16	Into the valley of Death	
	17	Rode the six hundred.	
3	18	Cannon to right of them,	The <u>anaphora</u> of cannon creates the sense that the cannons are everywhere – the soldiers are hugely outnumbered and facing enemy fire from all angles. The use of <u>varied verbs</u> (volleyed and thundered) creates the reverberating sound of the cannons firing, whilst the <u>alliterative</u> use of the 's' sound in 'stormed at with shot and shell' reflects the viciousness of the attack that they face. The adverb 'boldly' reflects their undeterred demeanour, even though the <u>extension of the metaphor</u> (becoming the 'jaws of death') makes this appear more and more like a suicide mission.
	19	Cannon to left of them,	
	20	Cannon in front of them	
	21	Volleyed and thundered;	
	22	Stormed at with shot and shell,	
	23	Boldly they rode and well,	
	24	Into the jaws of Death,	
	25	Into the mouth of hell	
	26	Rode the six hundred.	
	4	27	
28		Flashed as they turned in air	
29		Sabring the gunners there,	
30		Charging an army, while	
31		All the world wondered.	
32		Plunged in the battery-smoke	
33		Right through the line they broke;	
34		Cossack and Russian	
35		Reeled from the sabre stroke	
36		Shattered and sundered.	
37		Then they rode back, but not	
38		Not the six hundred.	
5	39	Cannon to right of them,	In a near repeat of the beginning of stanza 3, the Light Brigade are surrounded by cannons, however the use of the <u>preposition</u> 'behind' shows us that they have now turned around and are riding back. Note the use of <u>rhyme in this stanza</u> , stressing 'shell', 'fell', 'hell' and 'well.' These four words alone emphasise how horrific and dangerous the battle was, yet how the Light Brigade fought strongly and were prepared to die for their country in the face of it. The 'jaws of death' metaphor had suggested certain death, and yet 'what was left of them' rode back out – thus demonstrating their achievement against the odds. The main difference, as the last line expresses, is there are far fewer of them.
	40	Cannon to left of them,	
	41	Cannon behind them	
	42	Volleyed and thundered;	
	43	Stormed at with shot and shell,	
	44	While horse and hero fell.	
	45	They that had fought so well	
	46	Came through the jaws of Death,	
	47	Back from the mouth of hell,	
	48	All that was left of them,	
	49	Left of six hundred.	
	6	50	
51		O the wild charge they made!	
52		All the world wondered.	
53		Honour the charge they made!	
54		Honour the Light Brigade,	
55		Noble six hundred!	

## Poems for Comparison

Poem	Comparison	The Poet's Influences
Mametz Wood	<i>Exposure</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>remembrance</u>	<b>FROM THE TIMES, OCTOBER 25<sup>th</sup>, 1854:</b> If the exhibition of the most brilliant valour, of the excess of courage... I shall proceed to describe, to the best of my power, what occurred under my own eyes, and to state the facts which I have heard from men whose veracity is unimpeachable, reserving to myself the right of private judgement in making public and in suppressing the details of what occurred on this memorable day... At 11:00 our Light Cavalry Brigade rushed to the front... The Russians opened on them with guns from the redoubts on the right, with volleys of musketry and rifles. They swept proudly past, glittering in the morning sun in all the pride and splendor of war. We could hardly believe the evidence of our senses. Surely that handful of men were not going to charge an army in position? Alas! It was but too true -- their desperate valour knew no bounds, and far indeed was it removed from its so-called better part -- discretion. They advanced in two lines, quickening the pace as they closed towards the enemy.
Exposure	<i>The Charge of the Light Brigade</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the <u>futility of war</u> .	



# THE CLASS GAME KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *The Class Game* was written by Mary Casey, and was first published in *Voices* in 1979.

**Mary Casey** – Little is known about Mary Casey, except that she was a housewife from Liverpool. Casey contributed to a magazine called *Voices*, which existed between 1972 and 1984. In *Voices*, poets from working class backgrounds, who had no literary background or published works. They were just ordinary working-class people, writing about everyday experiences. 'The Class Game' was one of four of Casey's poems that appeared in the magazine.



**Liverpool in the 1970s and 1980s** – Liverpool was a working class city that suffered particularly badly throughout the recession of the 1970s and 1980s. There were high levels of unemployment (later exacerbated by the policies of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government). There was a vast gulf between the lives enjoyed by the rich and the existence suffered by the poor. Such disparities caused anger, which led to anger on the streets of the city throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s.



**Voices Magazine** – *Voices* magazine was initiated in 1972 in order to give those from working classes a literary voice. Based in Manchester, the journal ran for around 12 years. However, there was a rather snobby critical response to the poems in the journal. Even the academic who started the magazine, Ben Ainsley, wrote in the introduction that he 'could make no great claims for these pieces' insinuating that he held doubts regarding the literary value of the work.



**The U.K.'s historical class system** – Although the class system was less formalised than in earlier history, class divisions still separated different people in society from one another. Society was made up of wealthy, noble families, middle classes, and working classes, and social mobility (particularly in the recession). Large social and cultural divides still existed, alienating people from one another, and creating a dangerous environment in which anger was able to breed.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Metaphor and Simile** – In the quest for a simple, 'down-to-earth' tone, Casey uses figurative language sparingly. However, a metaphor is used when the speaker accuses posh people of speaking with an 'Olly (plum) in their mouths. Such a metaphor is used to represent the deliberate, mannered speech used by people perceived as being posh. Towards the end of the poem, Casey inverts this metaphor with the simile 'stick in your gullet like a sour plum' showing the discomfort of the middle classes in the presence of the working classes.

**Quote:** "Why do you care what class I'm from? Does it stick in your gullet like a sour plum?"

**Refrain** – The speaker repeats the opening question 'How can you tell what class I'm from?' at several points throughout the poem. This challenging question addresses the reader directly through the use of the personal pronoun 'you', forcing them to reflect on their prejudice through its rhetorical nature. The speaker's true message is revealed in the final utterance of the refrain, as it is marginally altered to ask 'why do you care what class I'm from?'

**Quote:** "How can you tell what class I'm from? I can talk posh like some"

**Form** – The poem is a monologue read by a single character – it is ambiguous as to whether this is the voice of Casey herself. There is only one stanza, but the refrain breaks the poem up into sections. The poem generally employs rhyming couplets, (A-A-B-B) but this is often held by half-rhymes, and at times (particularly the beginning) the rhythm is uncertain.

**Quote:** "Or did I drop my unemployment card Sitting on your patio (We have a yard)?"

**Colloquial Language and Slang** – Informal language is utilised across the poem to mirror the dialect of the working class speaker. For example, Liverpool terms such as 'corpy' (council housing) and 'wet nelly' (a type of pudding) show the speaker's pride in their distinct regional dialect. Non-standard grammatical forms – e.g. 'tara' and 'me tea' are also used throughout. Some colloquialisms, for example 'bog', 'pee', and 'bum' seem to be used in attempt to shock or offend the middle class reader.

**Quote:** "So why do you always wince when you hear Me say 'Tara' to me 'Ma' instead of 'Bye Mummy dear?'"

**Imagery** – The imagery in the poem serves to compare life for the working and middle classes. One key image is given presenting two types of hands. The working class hands are portrayed as rough and weathered - 'stained with toil', whilst the middle class hands are described as being far more cared-for - 'soft lily white from perfume and oil.' Another vivid image is given of the council housing in Liverpool, in comparison to the 'pretty little semi' out in the Wirral.

**Quote:** "Or is it because my hands are stained with toil? Instead of soft lily-white with perfume and oil?"

**Structure** – Each section of the poem is led by the refrain 'How can you tell what class I'm from?' (or in the final case, a variant of this). There is a question/ answer structure used throughout – likely to encourage the reader to reflect on why they play the class game themselves. The final line reveals the poet's true message – they are proud of being working class.

**Quote:** "And me stomach is me belly And I'm proud of the class that I come from."

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Class** – The poem is about the class divisions that exist in society, and the games that we play when we make judgements about others, or present ourselves in ways that we wish others to see us. The speaker lists several means by which her class is judged, including her accent, her vocabulary, and her father's employment position.



**Divisions** – The speaker presents a society that is divided, and in which there is animosity towards one another from two opposing sides. By juxtaposing working class and middle class ideas together throughout the entirety of the poem, the poet is able to vividly highlight the differences between the two classes.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	How can you tell what class I'm from?	<b>Lines 1-4:</b> The poem opens with confidence, addressing the reader directly with the personal pronoun 'you' and a challenging rhetorical question. She asserts that despite what others think, she chooses to be the way that she is. The speaker then uses colloquial language to introduce some 'posh' identifiers, e.g. talking with a plummy accent and looking down your nose on other people (being snobby).
	2	I can talk posh like some	
	3	With an 'Olly in me mouth	
	4	Down me nose, wear an 'at not a scarf	
	5	With me second-hand clothes.	<b>Lines 5-10:</b> The speaker then sets about drawing comparisons between the classes, for example in clothes (stating that the working class wear a hat and not a scarf) in dialect ('Tara' instead of 'bye dear') and in locations ('corpy' and not 'Wirral'). By juxtaposing these ideas next to one another, the differences between the classes is accentuated. 'Wince' shows the scorn of snobs towards her accent. The question from line 1 is repeated in line 8 – this is a challenge to snobbish attitudes.
	6	So why do you always wince when you hear	
	7	Me say 'Tara' to me 'Ma' instead of 'Bye Mummy dear'?	<b>Lines 11-14:</b> The Wirral is seen as a peaceful, suburban area outside Liverpool – the speaker observes that the 'posh' people only commute into Liverpool for work. The speaker then plays with the stereotypes middle-class people make about working classes being lazy and unemployed. Note at this. Once more, the speaker contrasts the language used by different classes to describe the same thing ('patio' and 'yard').
	8	How can you tell what class I'm from?	
	9	'Cos we live in a corpy, not like some	<b>Lines 15-19:</b> Once more, the section starts with the refrain of 'How can you tell what class I'm from?' The sarcasm continues, with the speaker becoming more outrageous with the aim of shocking the middle-class listener – for example the reference to 'bum', 'bog', and 'pee.' She becomes more accusatory, referring to the things people do to present that they are middle class – e.g. 'crooking' their little finger when drinking.
	10	In a pretty little semi, out Wirral way	
	11	And commute into Liverpool by train each day?	<b>Lines 20-22:</b> Suddenly, the speaker alters the refrain slightly – now asking 'why do you care what class I'm from?' This is the key intention of the poem: to make the reader consider why they care about people's class. Line 21 uses the metaphor of talking with a plum in your mouth (talking 'posh') to demonstrate how unappealing working class people appear to those from snobby middle class backgrounds.
	12	Or did I drop my unemployment card	
	13	Sitting on your patio (We have a yard)?	<b>Lines 23-26:</b> The speaker lists the remainder of her working class checklist – revealing the occupations of her family members, and some more of the slang terminology used to describe foods (wet nelly) and body parts (belly). In the final line, the speaker overtly states what can be inferred throughout the preceding sections of the poem – that she is proud of her class, and has no interest in pretending to be anything else.
	14	How can you tell what class I'm from?	
	15	Have I a label on me head, and another on me bum?	
	16	Or is it because my hands are stained with toil?	
	17	Instead of soft lily-white with perfume and oil?	
	18	Don't I crook me little finger when I drink me tea	
	19	Say toilet instead of bog when I want to pee?	
	20	Why do you care what class I'm from?	
	21	Does it stick in your gullet like a sour plum?	
	22	Well, mate! A cleaner is me mother	
	23	A docker is me brother	
	24	Bread pudding is wet nelly	
	25	And me stomach is me belly	
	26	And I'm proud of the class that I come from.	

## Poems for Comparison

<b>Cousin Kate</b>	<i>The Class Game</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>class</u> .
<b>Belfast Confetti</b>	<i>The Class Game</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>divisions</u> .

## Wider Reading

"Following the post-war boom of the 1950s and 1960s, unemployment rose over the 1970s and 1980s. In some areas, 1991 unemployment was higher than in the inter-war slump: Knowsley, on the edge of Liverpool, had 15% unemployment in 1931 but 31% in 1991." <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10105821/rate/>



# THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

**Context** – *The Destruction of Sennacherib* was written by Lord Byron and published in 1815.

**Lord Byron** – George Gordon Byron, 6<sup>th</sup> Baron Byron (1788-1824) was a leading poet in the romantic movement, in addition to being a politician, nobleman and peer. Byron is amongst the most popular and wide-read British poets. He is known as one of the most flamboyant and notorious of the major Romantic poets. Throughout his life, Byron travelled extensively, particularly throughout Italy. He was good friends with Percy Bysshe Shelley. In later life, Byron fought for the Ottoman Empire in the Greek War of Independence.



**The Biblical Story** – *The Destruction of Sennacherib* is based on a short biblical story. In the story, the powerful, wealthy Assyrian leader Sennacherib brings a vast army to conquer the holy city of Jerusalem. Despite commanding around 185,000 fierce Assyrian soldiers, the army was annihilated, seemingly by God himself, who went forth and 'smote' the camp of the Assyrians in the night. Whilst Sennacherib survived the attack, he lost respect. He never dared to attack Jerusalem again and was later murdered by two of his own sons.



**Byron's Personal Life** – Byron was both celebrated and condemned in his life for his aristocratic excesses, which included numerous love affairs (with men and women), amassing huge debts, and being involved in scandalous rumours. It is not difficult to imagine that his many love interests influenced both the content and the style of his poetry. He was described by one contemporary as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know.' In addition to a number of illegitimate children, Byron had one legitimate child: Ada Lovelace (pictured).



**Romanticism** – Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, cultural and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (peaking in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century). Romanticism is characterised by its emphasis on emotions, glorifying nature and past events – memories and settings are often colourfully described. It was partially in response to the scientific rationalisation of nature of the era. Aside from Lord Byron, amongst the most famous romantic poets were William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Similes** – Byron also employs a number of similes throughout the poem, often comparing the subjects within the poem to natural elements. For example, in the opening line, the Assyrian is compared to the 'wolf', no doubt a reference to the invaders' aggression, wiliness and ferocity. This forms a significant contrast with the later simile used to describe the Assyrians after death – 'cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.' Life and warmth has been drained from the soldiers. Similes are also utilised to compare the changing status of the soldiers to the changing of the seasons – moving like the leaves of the forest when 'Summer is green' at sunset, and like the leaves of the forest when 'Autumn hath blown' by the morning.

**Quote:** "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold/ And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;"

**Quote:** "Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green, That host with their banners at sunset were seen:"

**Interesting Verbs** – Varied, interesting verbs show the contrast between the actions of the Assyrians on the way to battle, and their inactivity once dead. Verbs such as 'gleaming' and 'roll' depict the army's wealth and huge numbers, making it seem formidable. However verbs such as 'unlifted' and 'unblown' later accentuate their stillness and silence after being killed by the Angel of Death.

**Archaic Language** – Some of the vocabulary and syntax choices are deliberately old-fashioned, in order to echo the language and sentence style of the bible. For example, word choices such as 'strown' and 'wax'd' would have been old-fashioned even in Byron's time. 'Their hearts heaved once' would have been more standard than 'Their hearts but once heaved.' This helps to create a sense of the time and place.

**Quote:** "And the tents were all silent, the banners alone, The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown."

**Quote:** "And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill/ And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!"

**Form** – The poem is written in quatrains using a distinctive rhythm, which creates an upbeat, vibrant poem, quite at odds with its deathly content. This helps to underline the contrast between the might of the army and the tragedy of its death. There are six stanzas, each of which contain two pairs of rhyming couplets, creating an AABB rhyme scheme – this could be to echo the horses marching into battle.

**Alliteration** – The subtle use of alliteration adds to the sound imagery in some of the poem's descriptions. For example, the repetition of the 's' sound in the "sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea" creates a hissing sound that brings a suggestion of evil. Furthermore, the repeated 'h' sound in 'their hearts but once heaved' slows down the reading at the moment in which the soldiers' lives are ended.

**Quote:** "And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword, Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

**Quote:** "And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea/ When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Good vs. Evil** – The poem presents good and evil as two different sides. Evil is represented as early as the first line, as the Assyrians are described as being 'the wolf on the fold.' The Assyrians' lavish luxuries and idols are presented in a negative light, whilst the actions of God against them are presented as being pure and natural.



**The Power of Nature/ God** – God is shown to have the power to protect his people in times of need. His power is shown through the forces of nature. The might of the Assyrian army is shown to be nothing in the face of God – he merely has to 'glance' at them in order to allow nature to take its course on their bodies, rendering them lifeless.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,	Byron opens the poem by utilising a <u>simile</u> , comparing the Assyrians to a wolf to highlight their cruel and cunning nature. It also demonstrates the danger of the Assyrians – they are looking to destroy their victims. Their characterisation is further depicted through the description of bold uniforms – the <u>extravagant purple and gold colours</u> emphasising their wealth. Verbs and adjectives such as 'gleaming' and 'sheen' further emphasise this. The quality/condition of the Assyrian weaponry is shown through the simile in lines 3-4.
	2	And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;	
	3	And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,	
	4	When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.	
2	5	Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,	The <u>second stanza</u> outlines how the condition of the soldiers miraculously alters overnight. In keeping with the <u>romantic tradition</u> , Byron utilises a metaphor involving nature to depict this, likely referencing that the slayings were not man-made, but seemingly natural. In life, preparing to attack, the army are sprightly, compared to 'the leaves of the forest when summer is green.' However, in death they are described as ' <u>withered</u> ' and ' <u>strown</u> ' like 'the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown.' The reader is given a clear image of the depth of the transformation, which influences them in attributing the events to the divine.
	6	That host with their banners at sunset were seen:	
	7	Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,	
	8	That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.	
3	9	For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,	The <u>Angel of Death</u> makes his first appearance in stanza 3. Whilst deadly, the angel is described as being graceful, rather than violent. The effortless manner of the killings ('breathed...as he passed') serves to demonstrate the <u>power in the will of God</u> . As opposed to being gradual, death takes place instantly, highlighting the ability of God to give and remove life.
	10	And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;	
	11	And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,	
	12	And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!	
4	13	And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,	On the contrary, there appears to have been more of a <u>struggle</u> in the slaying of the horses. Their 'nostril...wide' and the 'foam of...gaspings' insinuates that there has been a struggle – demonstrating that the beasts were more aware of their fate than their masters. Once again, <u>figurative language</u> (in the form of a simile) is used to depict death in comparison with nature – this time the cold ocean spray hitting rocks on the shore.
	14	But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;	
	15	And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,	
	16	And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.	
5	17	And there lay the rider distorted and pale,	<u>Gradual natural events</u> that normally take significant time to ensue (e.g. bodies becoming 'pale' and 'rust' developing on mail) have taken place <u>overnight</u> , demonstrating the power of God's intervention. The tents, banner, lances, and trumpets are all personified (silent, alone, unlifted, unblown) to highlight how God's power is all-encompassing, extending over everything in the environment. ' <u>Unlifted</u> ' and ' <u>unblown</u> ' highlight once more that the deaths are not as a result of battle.
	18	With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:	
	19	And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,	
	20	The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.	
6	21	And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,	Activity returns in the <u>final stanza</u> , in the form of the effect of the deaths on those left behind (e.g. the widows' 'wail'). Byron creates a sense of good prevailing over evil, as the <u>excesses of the Assyrian culture</u> have now been destroyed – 'the idols are broke' and the 'might of the Gentile' have 'melted like snow.' Once again, this <u>simile</u> compares death to a natural force. Throughout the entirety of the poem, the subtle yet substantial forces of God and nature are shown to easily <u>overpower</u> even men perceived to be powerful.
	22	And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;	
	23	And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,	
	24	Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!	

## Poems for Comparison

<b>The Man He Killed</b>	<i>The Destruction of Sennacherib</i> can be compared with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>Good vs. Evil</u>
<b>The Prelude</b>	<i>The Destruction of Sennacherib</i> can be compared with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>The Power of Nature</u>

## Wider Reading

"In the summer, Murray brought out the poetry separately as *Hebrew Melodies*. Despite the high price of one guinea for a thin folio, the work sold ten thousand copies in two editions. Despite the title of the volume, some of Byron's contributions are not at all Hebrew (or even religious) in theme. Along with verses inspired by the Old Testament are love songs and reflective pieces, some written before the book's conception, though in their expressions of sadness, longing, and desolation, they voice sentiments found in the biblical poems bewailing the lost Jewish homeland." [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)





# The Man He Killed

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *The Man He Killed* was written by Thomas Hardy in 1902.

**Thomas Hardy** – Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was a Victorian novelist and poet, who mixed elements of realism and romanticism in his writing. His works were highly critical of much in Victorian society – many of his novels and poems contain tragic characters who struggle against both their emotions and social circumstances. Like many liberals of the time, Hardy was openly against the Second Boer War, which Britain was fighting at the time the poem was written.



**The Boer Wars** – The Boer Wars were a series of wars fought between the British Empire and two Boer states (the South African Republic and Orange in Free State) in the area now known as South Africa. As with many wars fought throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the British fought in order to consolidate their empire. Initially, the Boer side fought effectively using guerilla attacks, until harsh British counter-measures forced the Boer leaders to yield.



**The Victorian Era** – The Victorian era describes the period in which Queen Victoria sat on the English throne – between 1837 and 1901 (most of Hardy's life). Whilst this was a time of industrial revolution, it was also an extremely harsh time to live, and the differences between the lives of the richest and the poorest were exacerbated. The poor lived in danger and poverty on a daily basis, and Hardy was a vocal critic of these inequalities.



**Attitudes Towards War and Empire** – Earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Britain's empirical actions and wars had generally been viewed with patriotic pride by most public figures. However, around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, many were beginning to question the morality and ethics of these policies. The Boer War was one of the first examples of a conflict in which British public opinion was not wholly supportive.



### Language/Structural Devices

**Simple Language** – The predominant feature of the language used across the poem is that it is extremely simple and matter-of-fact. This reflects the speaker's background and character: a working class, 'everyday' man. It is important that these common features of the speaker and the man he killed are understood by the reader, in order to get across the message that regular people are being placed into these horrific situations. Simple language is perhaps most evident in the short description of the killing – emotions and embellishment are left out, as the man has to do in his role.

**Colloquialisms** – Alongside the absence of colourful figurative language, the inclusion of colloquial terms further enables the reader to view the speaker and his foe as ordinary men. A prime example is in the opening stanza, where the speaker imagines that the two would 'wet/ Right many a nipperkin', implying that in a different situation they may well drink together - 'Nipperkin' was a term most used in the West Country. Another example is in stanza 4, where the speaker suggests that the man he killed may have, like he, 'sold his traps' (his belongings). These colloquialisms help to further contextualise the speaker and foe as common men, building their connection to the reading public, thus aiding Hardy's message.

**Quote:** "I shot at him as he at me,  
And killed him in his place."

**Quote:** "We should have sat us down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin!"

**Enjambment/ Caesura** – Enjambment and caesura are used to affect the rhythm and pace of the poem, and to emphasise meanings. For example, caesura and enjambment combine at the end of stanza 4 in order to slow the pace of the poem, and leave the reader paused on the idea of there being little reason for the two men to kill one another.

**Repetition and Fillers** – Words are repeated, and fillers are inserted, to show the speaker struggling to think about why he had to kill the man. For example, in stanza 3, 'because' is repeated over a line break, buying the speaker thinking time. Similarly, 'although' and 'perhaps' show his hesitancy – he is clearly unsure about why he must kill.

**Quote:** "Was out of work – had sold his traps –  
No other reason why."

**Quote:** "I shot him dead because –  
Because he was my foe,"

**Form** – The poem contains 5 stanzas each of which are 4 lines long, with alternating rhyme in an ABAB pattern. There is also a regular metre: the first, second and fourth line of every stanza are around 6 syllables long, whilst the third line is slightly longer at around 8 syllables. This rigid structure can be seen to represent the regimented lives and strict orders that the men face in their lives as soldiers at war.

**Structure** – The poem is a dramatic monologue, which moves to and from the friendly idea of two men drinking together in a public house, to one brutally killing each other on a battlefield. There appears to be a slow realization (marked by the caesura) throughout chapters 3 and 4 that the man killed was in fact not an enemy. Stanza 5 sums up the futility of war and its effect on those doing the fighting.

**Quote:** "Had he and I met/ By some old ancient inn"

**Quote:** "Yes; quaint and curious war is!  
You shoot a fellow down"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**The Futility of War** – The poem has a strong anti-war message, as the reasons for killing the man are exposed to be weak. The speaker knows that he is the man's 'foe' but he cannot fathom why. This serves to demonstrate the stupidity of war, in which men kill exterminate each other's lives merely because they are told to. The inclusion of 'everyday' ideas and colloquialisms (inn, nipperkin) show that this it is ordinary people who are affected.



**Dehumanisation** – Neither the speaker nor the man that he killed are given a name – their identity has been removed. This represents the idea that they do not matter to those in power. The fourth stanza suggests that the men are working class; they have more in common with each other than with those who command them.



### Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	"Had he and I but met	The poem follows an ABAB rhyme scheme throughout, perhaps representing the regimented orders that the men must follow. In the opening stanza, the speaker considers if the two men had met under different circumstances – perhaps they could have been friends. The speaker uses <u>simple language</u> , with <u>colloquialisms</u> (e.g. 'nipperkin' – containers for holding drinks) to demonstrate that these are ordinary, 'everyday' men.
	2	By some old ancient inn,	
	3	We should have sat us down to wet	
	4	Right many a nipperkin!	
2	5	"But ranged as infantry,	The <u>informal, hypothetical</u> setting from chapter 1 is <u>juxtaposed</u> with the men's actual position on the battlefield in stanza 2. This serves to accentuate the features of each (warm, friendly vs. harsh, violent). Instead of drinking together, they shoot at each other – the reader is 'jolted' out of their false sense of security. 'Staring face to face' suggests proximity – it could easily have been the speaker to have died. The <u>simplistic</u> description of death suggests that he has grown used to the violence.
	6	And staring face to face,	
	7	I shot at him as he at me,	
	8	And killed him in his place.	
3	9	"I shot him dead because –	The first two lines of the third stanza highlight that the speaker did not truly know why he killed the man; the <u>repetition</u> of 'because' echoes his stuttering and stalling as he struggles to establish his reason. In lines 3 and 4, he tries to convince himself that this was what he was supposed to do ('just so', 'of course.') It is clear that the speaker is uncomfortable with what he has done, and is trying to rationalise it in his mind. The <u>enjambment</u> after 'although' at the end of the stanza leads the reader hanging on the idea that he is still questioning his actions.
	10	Because he was my foe,	
	11	Just so: my foe of course he was;	
	12	That's clear enough; although	
4	13	"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,	The speaker begins to contemplate the <u>parallels</u> between the man's life and his own – he supposes that the man is somewhat like himself, enlisting 'off hand' as he was 'out of work' ('perhaps', 'just as I'). The similarities between the men reinforces the idea that they could have been acquaintances. The final line of the stanza is particularly powerful – 'no other reason why' on the <u>surface level</u> refers to their reason for joining the war (not out of personal/ political beliefs or hatred for the other). However, it also leaves the reader with the idea that the men are fighting the war for 'no reason' – war is futile.
	14	Off-hand like – just as I –	
	15	Was out of work – had sold his traps –	
	16	No other reason why.	
5	17	"Yes; quaint and curious war is!	The final stanza is consistent in that the <u>joyful, down-to-earth</u> personality of the speaker remains at the forefront, but the underlying tone is more <u>dark and ominous</u> . 'Quaint' and 'curious' are not two words that one would automatically consider to describe war, but they do allude to the unusual experience of being violent towards someone he bears no hatred towards. It also further emphasises his background – he does not have the vocabulary to adequately communicate all of the horrors that he is experiencing. The use of the vocabulary 'fellow', 'treat', and 'help' in the final three lines <u>underline the main message</u> – we are all fellow people, and should treat each other as such.
	18	You shoot a fellow down	
	19	You'd treat if met where any bar is,	
	20	Or help to half-a-crown."	

### Poems for Comparison

Exposure	Influences on the Poet
<i>The Man He Killed</i> can be compared with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>The Futility of War</u>	"He had written about war long before 1914. He was fascinated by what he called 'the Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago'. It seemed impossible that another European upheaval could ever happen, and he agreed with Tolstoy's denunciation of war, 'with all its senseless and illogical crimes'. His sympathies were not with the generals and emperors but with the victims, the sailor taken by the press-gang or the two young men in 'The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion' (1890) who are executed for desertion. <a href="http://www.warpoets.org/conflicts/great-war/thomas-hardy-1840-1928/">http://www.warpoets.org/conflicts/great-war/thomas-hardy-1840-1928/</a>
<i>Eden Rock</i> can be contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>Dehumanisation</u>	



# Extract from **The Prelude** KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *The Prelude* was originally written in 1798, but was frequently rewritten and published in 1850.

**William Wordsworth** – William Wordsworth (1812-1889) is one of the most famous poets in English Literature. He was born and raised in the Lake District, a beautiful natural area of the UK which clearly influenced the subject matter and themes in his writing. After living in France for a while, returning, and then marrying, Wordsworth was made the Poet Laureate. In 1847, after the death of his daughter, Wordsworth was said to be so upset that he could no longer write poetry. He died in 1850.



**Romanticism** – Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, cultural and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In most areas it peaked in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Romanticism is characterised by its emphasis on emotions, as well as glorifying nature and past events – memories and settings are often colourfully described. It was partially in response to the scientific rationalisation of nature of the era.



**Writing the Prelude** – Wordsworth began writing *The Prelude* in 1798, after experiencing homesickness when in Germany. It is a long autobiographical poem that is written in 14 books. It was not published until shortly after his death, in 1850. The poet uses childhood memories to share his quest for understanding in life. This extract in particular refers to a childhood memory in which he commandeers a boat before realising the magnitude and power of nature around him.



**The Title** – The full title of the poem is *The Prelude: Growth of a Poet's Mind*. The poem endeavours to do exactly as its subtitle implies, with each section roughly corresponding to a section in his poetic development. Wordsworth himself likened *The Prelude* to a Gothic cathedral, explaining (in another of his texts, *The Excursion*) that the poem was like 'an antechapel through which the reader might pass' in order to gain access to the main body of his work.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Imagery** – Wordsworth uses vivid imagery to create the night-time atmosphere throughout the opening of the extract, using vocabulary associated with peace to describe the tranquil natural phenomena. For example, words such as 'stealth', 'idly', and 'glistening' paint a quiet, peaceful scene in the mind of the reader. This is at odds with the sinister, almost gothic-like imagery that is created in the second half of the poem through vocabulary such as 'grave', 'black' and 'grim.'

**Personification** – In order to demonstrate the sheer power of nature throughout the poem, Wordsworth chooses to personify several aspects of nature at different points in the extract. For example, it is initially inferred that nature itself (she) guided him to take the boat that evening. Later on in the poem, the mountain peak that so terrifies the speaker is heavily personified, for e.g. through the terms 'voluntary power instinct' and 'upreared its head' – giving it purpose.

**Quote:** "Small circles glittering idly in the moon/ Until they melted all into one track."

**Quote:** "As if with voluntary power instinct, Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,"

**Alliteration** – The repetition of particular sounds is used effectively by Wordsworth to evoke both tone and atmosphere at different points in the poem. For example, the frequent use of soft 'l' and 'm' sounds at the beginning of the poem (leaving, glittering, light, like) create a feeling of tranquility and peacefulness. This is in contrast to the ominous 'd' sound (days, dim, darkness) that dominates later.

**Similes/Metaphors** – Wordsworth also uses a number of figurative language techniques to paint a precise image in the mind of the reader, which alters as the tone of the poem changes. For example, the boat is initially described as being like a graceful 'swan', as the speaker is content and peaceful. Later, when feeling far more vulnerable, the speaker describes their vessel as simply being 'bark.'

**Quote:** "That spectacle, for many days, my brain Worked with a dim and undetermined sense"

**Quote:** "And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat Went heaving through the water like a swan;"

**Structure** – There are no stanzas throughout the extract, yet Wordsworth opts to use lots of punctuation to clarify meanings and enable the reader to separate ideas. The extract is like a complete story in itself, in that it starts with 'one summer evening' and ends with the effect of the action 'trouble to my dreams.' The repeated use of 'and' throughout the poem gives it a spoken feel, like someone telling a story.

**Oxymoron** – An oxymoron is used in line six as the speaker states 'it was an act of stealth, and troubled pleasure.' Pleasure is usually something to be enjoyed, whilst someone that is 'troubled' is tormented to the degree that they cannot take pleasure from something. Whilst the boy does take pleasure from taking the boat, it is implied that he cannot enjoy it fully, for some kind of underlying fear.

**Quote:** "Like living men, moved slowly through the mind By day, and were a trouble to my dreams"

**Quote:** "Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Nature** – As the speaker realises in this extract from *The Prelude*, humanity is only one part of nature. The natural world can make man feel extremely small and insignificant. The speaker feels power after taking the boat and directing it as he pleases, but is soon levelled by the power of nature (in the form of a large mountain).



**Loneliness** – Throughout large sections of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth is often on his own, and he makes it clear that this is important to him. He is able to think more clearly when he is alone, and is more affected by experiences and places. In this sense, a more spiritual and mystical atmosphere is created through the idea of loneliness.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS	
1	1	One summer evening (led by her) I found	<b>Lines 1-10</b> – Wordsworth immediately personifies nature as her – stating that nature itself was guiding him. The little boat seems to symbolise a vessel for the emotional, spiritual journey that he is on. As he 'unlooses' the boat, he is setting his imagination free. The speaker then opens themselves to all that nature has to offer, with Wordsworth using vivid imagery to describe its wonders. There is alliteration of soft 'l' and 'm' sounds, reflecting the serenity. The oxymoron 'troubled pleasure' suggests conflicted emotions – nature shows pure beauty but also power.	
	2	A little boat tied to a willow tree		
	3	Within a rocky cove, its usual home.		
	4	Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in		
	5	Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth		
	6	And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice		
	7	Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;		
	8	Leaving behind her still, on either side,		
	9	Small circles glittering idly in the moon,		
	10	Until they melted all into one track		
		11	Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,	<b>Lines 11-20</b> – The speaker at this point is sure of his destination – the words 'chosen', 'fixed', and 'unswerving' demonstrate this sense of purpose and direction, whilst the 'horizon' represents the ultimate destination as a poet. The mention of the stars, with all their celestial beauty, and the use of the adjective 'elfin', however, point towards something more powerful and mystical. The simile comparing the boat to a swan signifies the beauty and elegance with which it moves through the water. This is a tranquil and beautiful image of nature.
	12	Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point		
	13	With an unswerving line, I fixed my view		
	14	Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,		
	15	The horizon's utmost boundary; far above		
	16	Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.		
	17	She was an elfin pinnacle; lustily		
	18	I dipped my oars into the silent lake,		
	19	And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat		
	20	Went heaving through the water like a swan;		
		21	When, from behind that craggy steep till then	<b>Lines 21-28</b> – There is a drastic shift in tone, when the speaker encounters a beast of nature that he can only describe as 'black' and 'huge.' There is repetition of the word 'huge' to emphasise its size, but also to mimic the boy's stumbling fear. The peak is heavily personified, for example the suggestion that it has a 'purpose', as if it is bringing some kind of message or intent towards him and that it 'upreared its head' and was 'growing.' The separation it creates between him and the stars represents the idea that nature is standing between him and the divine – it appears stronger than him.
	22	The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,		
	23	As if with voluntary power instinct,		
	24	Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,		
	25	And growing still in stature the grim shape		
	26	Towered up between me and the stars, and still,		
	27	For so it seemed, with purpose of its own		
	28	And measured motion like a living thing,		
	29	Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,		
	30	And through the silent water stole my way		
		31	Back to the covert of the willow tree;	<b>Lines 29-37</b> – The speaker turns back for the willow tree with 'trembling oars', demonstrating his pure anxiety. The boat is now described as 'bark', which makes it seem more fragile than before – a perception influenced by the speaker's fear. At the beginning of the poem man is painted as being at one with nature, but it seems as though here he has realised that nature also has a great many dangers, and should be feared. The vocabulary used e.g. 'dim' and 'grave' give a sense of foreboding.
	32	There in her mooring-place I left my bark, -		
	33	And through the meadows homeward went, in grave		
	34	And serious mood; but after I had seen		
	35	That spectacle, for many days, my brain		
	36	Worked with a dim and undetermined sense		
	37	Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts		
	38	There hung a darkness, call it solitude		
	39	Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes		
	40	Remained, no pleasant images of trees,		
		41	Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;	<b>Lines 38-44</b> – The final lines reveal the lasting effect that this experience has had on the speaker. What had used to be 'familiar' and 'pleasant' was now 'darkness' and 'solitude', as he realised that he could not control nature, and that the world around him was more dangerous than he had known. The use of the terms 'huge' and 'mighty' show that he now saw nature as a greater power; 'do not live' gives the impression that these powers are immortal. The speaker's mindset was forever altered.
	42	But huge and mighty forms, that do not live		
	43	Like living men, moved slowly through the mind		
	44	By day, and were a trouble to my dreams		

## Poems for Comparison

Exposure	Influences on the Poet
<i>The Prelude</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem through its presentation of nature.	Many of Wordsworth's poems were influenced by his sister Dorothy, whose journal he liked to read. For example: "When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the waterside. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. These beautiful descriptions of the natural surroundings were imitated in sections of Wordsworth's poems, for example 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' and 'The Prelude.'
<i>The Prelude</i> can be compared and contrasted with these poems through its presentation of loneliness.	



# WAR PHOTOGRAPHER KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *War Photographer* was written by Carole Satyamurti in 1987.

**Carole Satyamurti** – Carole Satyamurti (born 1939) is a British poet, sociologist, and translator. She is a contemporary poet who deals with painful subjects head on, for example cancer, war, and death. Indeed, many of her poems show an interest in the fragility of human life. Her poems also detail how suffering affects different people. Satyamurti has taught at both the University of East London and the Tavistock Clinic, relating psychoanalytic ideas to the stories that people tell.



**War Photographers** – War photography involves photographing armed conflict and the effect of this on people and places. War photographers often have to place themselves in harms way, and are sometimes injured or killed themselves attempting to capture the required images/ getting images out of the war arena. Photojournalistic tradition (and other factors, e.g. differing cultures, etc.) suggests that war photographers should not influence what is being captured.



**Wars at the Time** – At the time that the poem was written (in 1987) there were several major wars and conflicts going on across the world. Principal amongst these was the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, in which around 1 million people died in warfare conditions described as being similar to World War I. The Soviet-Afghan War and the 1982 Lebanon War were other events that immediately preceded the writing of the poem. With the Cold War also still running, this was a worrying time.



**Dangers for War Photographers** – In the modern day, journalists and war photographers are protected by the international conventions of armed warfare, yet are still often considered targets by opposing groups. Sometimes this is the case in order for a group to show their hatred of the other, whilst in other cases photographers are targeted to prevent the facts from being widely shared. For example, in the Iraqi War between 2003 and 2009, 36 photographers were abducted or killed.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Enjambment and Caesura** – Enjambment and caesura serve to speed up slow down, link and break up different sections of the poem. The heavy use of enjambment and caesura throughout creates a sense of unease – the unsteady flow of the poem makes the reader more insecure and apprehensive, mirroring the feelings of those caught in the conflict. Caesura and enjambment also combine to create a sense of being cut off. The caesura in line 23 after 'almost-smile' suggests that her happiness has been cut off.

**Imagery** – Satyamurti uses a clever range of vocabulary to create vivid images in the mind of the reader. These are often juxtaposed together to accentuate their effect. For example, in stanza 2, Satyamurti describes a 'pair of peach, sun-gilded girls' – the sun represents happiness and health, whilst the 'champagne' that they drink and their 'silk' clothes portray wealth. The 'grass' that they lay on is juxtaposed in the next stanza with the 'devastated street' which the small girl is 'staggering' down. The reader is jarred by the contrast.

**Quote:** "The picture showed the little mother the almost-smile. Their caption read"

**Quote:** "rolling, silk crumpled, on the grass... staggering down some devastated street"

**Extended Metaphor** – An extended metaphor runs throughout the poem which compares the photographer/reader to predators and the girl victim in the war to prey. Several language choices aid this depiction. For example, the speaker describes how they 'seek out' and 'follow' the girl, before waiting with 'finger pressed.' She is described like some fleeing animal, through vocabulary such as 'fleeing', 'scream' and 'run.' This helps to show her desperate situation.

**Sibilance** – Sibilance is used for contrasting effects throughout stanzas 2 and 3. In stanza 2, the repetition of the 's' sound in 'silk crumpled, on the grass, in champagne giggles' echoes the soft of hiss of the champagne fizzing, or even the light-hearted giggling of the girls. In stanza 3, on the other hand, it is used to show how sinister and evil war is. It may also perhaps represent the whistling of falling bombs, and sounds of objects shattering around the landscape.

**Quote:** "Instinct prevailing, she dropped her burden and, mouth too small for her dark scream,"

**Quote:** "staggering down some devastated street, she saw me seeing her; my finger pressed."

**Form** – The poem is a monologue read by a single character – the war photographer. There are five stanzas, each of which are between 4 and 8 lines long. The first and last paragraphs are longer. Some lines appear to be cut drastically short, perhaps representing the key message – that the photographer's photos only tell a part of the story.

**Structure** – The poem begins in the present tense, as if the photographer is confessing the false nature of her profession. The following stanzas are in the past tense. Stanza 2 describes happy ascot girls, which is juxtaposed in stanza 3 with the girl in a war torn country. In stanza 4, she drops the baby in her care as she flees. Stanza 5 summarises the key message.

**Quote:** "But hell' like heaven, is untidy, its boundaries"

**Quote:** "The reassurance of the frame is flexible - you can think that just outside it"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Suffering** – Satyamurti exposes the true horrors of war, which exist beyond the images seen in the media. In order to exemplify the true suffering that people experience, Satyamurti details a young girl who is forced to drop a baby and run when bombs go off nearby. This image is contrasted by the relative joy of the 'sun-gilded' ascot girls.



**Ignorance** – The speaker seeks to clarify the real nature of war and conflict to the ignorant viewing public. In the opening stanza, the speaker reveals how the reader can dismiss horrors that exist within the frame of a photo as little more than a faraway story. The war photographer, however, is acutely aware of the real horrors of war.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE		
1	1	The reassurance of the frame is flexible	Stanza 1: The speaker reveals how, to most people, disturbing images of war remain safely within the frame. The photograph is from a different place and perhaps even a different time. This is not the case for the war photographer, who experiences the place for real. Lines 2 and 3 suggest that the reader can convince themselves that the world around the image is normal, and that the 'tragic' is something that the photographer has needed to seek out 'to make a subject.' However, the use of the modal verb 'can' suggests that this is not the truth. The final lines of the stanza deal with the opposite, how people are convinced that the world is fine by poems that 'lifts the heart.' The true experience remains with the photographer.
	2	- you can think that just outside it	
	3	people eat, sleep, love normally	
	4	while I seek out the tragic, the absurd,	
	5	to make a subject.	
	6	Or if the picture's such as lifts the heart	
	7	the firmness of the edges can convince you	
	8	this is how things are	
2	9	- as when at ascot once	Stanza 2: The photographer thinks of the privilege of others away from the war – the 'sun-gilded girls' create an image of a positive world with few problems. 'Silk', 'champagne' and 'giggles' add to the sense of luxury, as does the mention of ascot (a prestigious horse racing venue).
	10	I took a pair of peach, sun-gilded girls	
	11	rolling, silk crumpled, on the grass	
	12	in champagne giggles	
3	13	-as last week, when I followed a small girl	Stanza 3: The image of the 'sun-gilded girls' is deliberately contrasted with the horrible plight of this 'small girl.' The verbs are also contrasted 'staggering' rather than 'rolling' – showing her discomfort. She is a 'small girl', but bears responsibility for a baby. 'Finger pressed' suggests the moment before an act of violence – the girl is the victim and the viewers are predators.
	14	staggering down some devastated street,	
	15	hip thrust out under a baby's weight.	
	16	she saw me seeing her; my finger pressed.	
4	17	At the corner, the first bomb of the morning	Stanza 4: 'First bomb of the morning' reveals that the violence is frequent/ every day. 'Dark scream' demonstrates the evil of war, whilst 'mouth too small' reinforces the idea that children are exposed to violence and brutality when aged far too young. Repetition of 'b' and 'd' echoes the sound of the bombing. She drops the baby – it is never revealed what happens to either of them – as though this is not important to the consumer.
	18	shattered the stones .	
	19	Instinct prevailing, she dropped her burden	
	20	and, mouth too small for her dark scream,	
	21	began to run...	
5	22	The picture showed the little mother	Stanza 5: The final stanza reveals how pictures can be deceiving. In the picture, before dropping the baby as running, the girl looked almost to have been smiling. Furthermore, the caption suggests that even in these times of war, people have the strength to be happy – the photographer has aided this deception. This appears to be the truth that the public wants to hear. Using the analogy of hell, the writer explains that the true narrative in these war-torn areas does not end at the borders of photographs –suffering extends far beyond what is seen in a photo. The simile in the final line provides further imagery for this idea.
	23	the almost-smile. Their caption read	
	24	'Even in hell the human spirit	
	25	triumphs over all.'	
	26	But hell' like heaven, is untidy,	
	27	its boundaries	
	28	arbitrary as a blood stain on a wall.	

## Poems for Comparison

	Poems for Comparison	Further Reading/ Watching
<b>Exposure</b>	<i>War Photographer</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <u>Suffering</u> .	<p>"The fact it does not reference a specific war makes it a universal criticism of modern journalistic methods. The poem deals with a photographer's internal conflict- perhaps the guilt the persona feels at taking an image of a girl in a street in a war-zone. The girl in the image is carrying a baby, which she drops upon hearing a bomb go off- regardless of this disturbing scene, the image itself is used in a newspaper to demonstrate how the goodness of humanity still exists in a war zone."</p> <p><a href="https://www.newcollege.leicester.sch.uk/newcollege/files/War-Photographer-Support-Sheet.pdf">https://www.newcollege.leicester.sch.uk/newcollege/files/War-Photographer-Support-Sheet.pdf</a></p>
<b>What Were They Like?</b>	<i>No Problem</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in the approach to the theme of <u>Ignorance</u> .	



# WHAT WERE THEY LIKE? KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



**Context** – *What Were They Like?* was written by Denise Levertov, and was published in 1971.

**Denise Levertov** – Priscilla Denise Levertov (1923-1997) was a highly-regarded American poet. Despite being born and raised in Ilford, England, many of her works deal specifically with American themes. Particularly in the 60s and 70s, Levertov delved into socio-political poetry – she founded the 'Writers and Artists Protest against the War in Vietnam' and took part in numerous rallies in order to raise awareness of these issues. She even spent some time in jail for civil disobedience.



**The Viet Cong and American Mistrust** – The Viet Cong were a communist South Vietnamese group, funded by the north. They used guerilla warfare, disguising themselves in amongst the villagers and jungle terrain. Owing partly to the difficulties that US soldiers faced in establishing the enemy, many were hostile towards innocent citizens (some committed war crimes). The Air Force burnt forests to drive out the Viet Cong, destroying homes and injuring villagers.



**Vietnam War** – The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, was a conflict that took place in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia between 1st November 1955 and 30th April 1975. It was officially fought between North Vietnam and the government of South Vietnam. North Vietnam was supported by the Soviet Union and other communist nations, whilst South Vietnam was aided by the United States and anti-communist allies. The war resulted in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia all becoming communist countries by 1975.



**American Public Opinion** – Extensive military casualties and the involvement of US soldiers in war crimes created discord amongst Americans in relation to the war effort. Images such as that of 'Napalm Girl' (shown in the box above) circulated in the US media, and demonstrated the catastrophic effect that the drawn-out war was having on innocent Vietnamese people. As protests mounted, the US signed the Paris Peace Treaty and removed all forces from Vietnam. The North Vietnam then succeeded in defeating the south, in the 'Fall of Saigon.'



## Language/Structural Devices

**Interesting Verbs and Adjectives** – Levertov creates a vivid image of the placid and idyllic lives that the citizens of Vietnam lived before the war, through a range of interesting adjectives (peaceful, illuminated, light, pleasant) and verbs (reverence, singing, delight). These are then juxtaposed with wildly more violent imagery to describe their lives in the war, for example adjectives such as burned and bitter and verbs such as scream, charred and smashed. These vocabulary choices demonstrate how horrifically life changed for them.

**Sound Imagery** – A number of different techniques are used to represent both the peaceful lives of the villagers and horrific sounds of war. For example, repetition of the soft 'l' sound in line 12 ("lanterns illuminated") underlines the villagers' tranquil lives, whilst the alliteration of the harsh 'b' sound in line 16 ("bitter to the burned mouth") echoes the dropping of bombs. Furthermore, onomatopoeic words such as 'smashed' and 'scream' allow the reader to hear the destruction and fear in the villages during wartime.

**Quote:** "When peaceful clouds were reflected in the paddies and the water buffalo stepped surely along terraces,"

**Quote:** "When bombs smashed those mirrors there was time only to scream."

**Metaphors** – Figurative language is used sparingly, but to powerful effect. For example, the reference to the children as 'buds' in line 15. Such a comparison underlines the children's beauty and innocence, but also their potential to flower and flourish. This will now never happen, as there are 'no more buds', suggesting the children have been killed – hope has been eradicated in a place where there was once promise.

**Analogy** – Levertov compares the lives of the villagers before the war to natural events, demonstrating the harmony and simplicity with which they live. For example, their singing is compared to the 'flight of moths in moonlight', reflecting its humming, chant-like nature, and also demonstrating how serene and undisturbed their culture was. The villagers were at one with their surroundings.

**Quote:** "but after their children were killed there were no more buds."

**Quote:** "It was reported that their singing resembled the flight of moths in moonlight."

**Form/Structure** – The poem is structured unusually, with two distinct stanzas. The first stanza contains six questions, which are then answered in the longer second stanza. The simpler first verse may be seen to reflect the simple life lived before the war, whereas the more complex, device-filled second stanza shows the convolutions of wartime Vietnam.

**Repetition** – Several words and phrases are repeated throughout the poem, in order to emphasise their importance. For example, throughout stanza 2, the term 'it is not remembered' is repeated, to highlight how aspects of the Vietnamese culture have been eroded from memory by the destructive, horrific events of the war.

**Quote:** "Did the people of Viet Nam/ use lanterns of stone?"

**Quote:** "It is not remembered. Remember."

## Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**War** – The harsh realities of war are exposed through vivid imagery utilised at specific points in the poem, and in particular the experiences for everyday people. For example, Levertov details the bombs smashing the mirrors and the screams as people died. Through the inclusion of these details, Levertov emphasises the horrors of war.



**Culture** – Different aspects of Vietnamese culture are enquired about through the various questions and responses – literature, art, music, religion, language and technology. The repeated phrase in the second stanza 'it is not remembered' demonstrates that many aspects of Vietnamese culture have now been obliterated.gcxwd1



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	1) Did the people of Viet Nam	Lines 1-4: The <b>unusual structure</b> is immediately evident - the speaker levies a number of questions towards an unknown listener (some have suggested possibly a child to their soldier father). The mention of 'Vietnam' in line 1 immediately sets the <b>tone</b> . The repetition of the <b>past tense</b> 'did' indicates that their culture is now a thing of the past. 'Lanterns', 'ceremonies' and 'reverence' suggest that these were a spiritual people, with a deep-rooted culture.
	2	use lanterns of stone?	
	3	2) Did they hold ceremonies	
	4	to reverence the opening of buds?	
2	5	3) Were they inclined to quiet laughter?	Lines 5-9: Vivid <b>imagery</b> referencing Vietnamese life continues to be generated. 'Quiet laughter' implies a peaceful, respectful culture. The reference to the precious materials (bone, ivory, jade, silver) for ornaments highlights their skill and craft, whilst also forcing the reader to contemplate the <b>fragility</b> of their culture. The enquiries about literature and oral traditions (poem, speech, singing) reminds the reader that these people had their own voices, their own ideas, which are not now easily identifiable. The <b>free verse</b> structure and numbering of questions fragments the reading, mirroring their culture.
	6	4) Did they use bone and ivory,	
	7	jade and silver, for ornament?	
	8	5) Had they an epic poem?	
	9	6) Did they distinguish between speech and singing?	
3	10	1) Sir, their light hearts turned to stone.	Lines 10-16: A <b>second speaker</b> responds to the first speaker's questions. The use of 'sir' suggests <b>subservience</b> , reflecting the oppression of the Vietnamese people. The <b>metaphor</b> in line 10 depicts how the pain and destruction of the war has removed all elements of warmth from their lives. 'It is not remembered', repeated in the stanza, emphasises how the culture has been lost. The <b>juxtaposition</b> of pleasantries of the past ('delight in blossom') alongside present horrors ('children were killed') emphasises the violent extent of the change. 'Buds' - a <b>metaphor</b> for children - no opportunity to flourish. <b>Alliteration</b> of 'b' - harsh sound mirroring the bombs. 'Burned' reference to napalm bombing.
	11	It is not remembered whether in gardens	
	12	stone lanterns illumined pleasant ways.	
	13	2) Perhaps they gathered once to delight in blossom,	
	14	but after their children were killed	
	15	there were no more buds.	
	16	3) Sir, laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.	
	17	4) A dream ago, perhaps. Ornament is for joy.	
18	All the bones were charred.		
4	19	5) It is not remembered. Remember,	Lines 17-24: The earlier <b>image</b> of ornamental bone is transformed into the horrific idea of burnt human skeletons. 20-24 offers further fragments of warm memories of the past. The simplicity of the villagers' lives ('in rice and bamboo') shows how far removed the victims were from the complicated political causes of the war. <b>References to nature</b> ('clouds', 'buffalo') once more shows the peace with which the people lived. The mention of 'fathers' and 'sons' <b>emphasises</b> the strong family bonds and traditions.
	20	most were peasants; their life	
	21	was in rice and bamboo.	
	22	When peaceful clouds were reflected in the paddies	
	23	and the water buffalo stepped surely along terraces,	
	24	maybe fathers told their sons old tales.	
	25	When bombs smashed those mirrors	
	26	there was time only to scream.	
	27	6) There is an echo yet	
	28	of their speech which was like a song.	
	29	It was reported that their singing resembled	
	30	the flight of moths in moonlight.	
	31	Who can say? It is silent now.	

## Poems for Comparison

Charge of the Light Brigade	Poppies	The Poet's Thoughts
<i>What Were They Like?</i> can be compared and contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <b>remembrance</b>	<i>What Were They Like?</i> can be compared with this poem in the approach to the theme of <b>loss and suffering</b> .	...of enduring importance is her relation, through poetry, to language. From early on she said that poetry is a means "to a saner state in the midst of our being." We get there through language carefully, thoughtfully and respectfully used. She said, paraphrasing the philosopher Martin Heidegger, that "to be human is to be a conversation," and that "any use of language is an action toward others." Little wonder that her words still speak so directly to us. Denise Levertov was fond of quoting the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth: "Language is not the dress but the incarnation of thought."

