

GCSE Conflict Poetry Knowledge Organisers

A Poison Tree- William Blake

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How destructive it can be to internalise anger. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'I was angry with my foe: I told it not, my wrath did grow' 2. 'bore an apple bright' 3. 'my foe outstretch'd beneath the tree' 4. 'I waterd it in fears' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballad- emphasizes that emotions should be expressed not suppressed • 4 quatrains- uniform and controlled • Alternates between trochaic and iambic meter • AABB rhyme scheme- simple structure to promote his more complicated message • Mimics a nursery rhyme which often tells a simple message through a complex story | <p>Suppression of Anger Lies and Deceit Effects of conflict Conflict in society Nature</p> |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>Half Caste- John Agard The Class Game- Mary Casey Catrin- Gillian Clarke The Destruction of Sennacherib- Lord Byron</p> | |

The Destruction of Sennacherib- Lord Byron

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| A short narrative poem retelling a Biblical story from the Old Testament in which God destroys King Sennacherib's Assyrian army as they attack Jerusalem. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast' 2. 'there lay the rider distorted and pale' 3. 'hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord' 4. 'like a wolf on the fold' 5. 'there lay the steed with his nostril all wide' |
| Key context: | |
| Lord Byron – George Gordon Byron, 6th 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 18th Century (peaking in the early 19 th 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. |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular rhyme scheme- AABB- rhyming couplets • Narrative poem • Six equal quatrains • Anapestic tetrameter | <p>Good vs Evil</p> <p>The Power of Nature/ God</p> <p>Conflict in wartime</p> <p>Loss and suffering</p> <p>Effects of conflict</p> <p>Nature</p> |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>The Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred, Lord Tennyson</p> <p>Exposure- Wilfred Owen</p> <p>A Poison Tree- William Blake</p> | |

Extract from the Prelude- William Wordsworth

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| The idea that adventure can be exciting but daunting at the same time. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'It was an act of stealth and troubled pleasure' 2. 'A huge peak, black and huge' 3. 'o'er my thoughts there hung a darkness' 4. 'through the silent water stole my way back to the covert of the willow tree' 5. 'upreared its head' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Romanticism – Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, cultural and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the latter half of the 18th Century. In most areas it peaked in the early 19th 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.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>Form and structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iambic pentameter • Epic poem • Cyclical structure | <p>Themes:</p> <p>Nature Loneliness Fear Effects of conflict Memory Individual experiences</p> |
| <p>Poems for comparison:</p> <p>Catrin- Gillian Clarke Exposure- Wilfred Owen What were they like?- Denise Levertov</p> | |

The Man He Killed- Thomas Hardy

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| The idea that men who were enemies could have been friends. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Had he and I but met by some old ancient inn' 2. 'Because he was my foe, just so: my foe of course he was' 3. 'quaint and curious war is!' 4. 'I shot at him as he at me' 5. 'I shot him dead because-' |
| Key context: | |
| 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 19th 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 19th Century, Britain's empirical actions and wars had generally been viewed with patriotic pride by most public figures. However, around the turn of the 20th 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. |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate rhyme scheme- ABAB- mimics a nursery rhyme which creates contrast between the rhythm of the poem and its violent content. • Five quatrains • Cyclical- begins and ends with reference to a pub • Dramatic monologue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Futility of war Dehumanisation Conflict in Wartime Reality of conflict Memory Individual experiences |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>Exposure- Wilfred Owen The Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred, Lord Tennyson The Destruction of Sennacherib- Lord Byron</p> | <p>The Class Game- Mary Casey What were they like?- Denise Levertov</p> |

Cousin Kate- Christina Rossetti

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How men abused their power and the consequences of love without marriage. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'why did a great lord find me out to fill my heart with care?' 2. 'I sit and howl in dust you sit in gold and sing' 3. 'My fair- haired son, my shame, my pride' 4. 'He wore me like a golden knot' 5. 'call me an outcast thing' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monologue • Ballad • Quatrains • Second person • Iambic meter • ABCB rhyme scheme- consistent to mirror her constant anger | <p>Anger Conflict in society Loss and Suffering Individual experiences Relationships</p> |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>The Class Game- Mary Casey Catrin- Gillian Clarke A Poison Tree- William Blake</p> | |

Half Caste- John Agard

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How to call a mixed race person 'half caste' is offensive | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Explain yusef wha yu mean' 2. 'mix a black key wid a white key' 3. 'I will tell yu de other half of my story' 4. 'Ah listening to yu wid de keen half of mih ear' 5. 'mix red an green is a half- caste canvas' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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 nonstandard spelling to represent his accent. His poems are often rebellious in nature, challenging common ways of thinking and confronting discriminatory behaviour.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>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 18th 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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins and ends with a three line stanza suggesting that the speaker has found some closure • Passive stream of consciousness | <p>Anger Conflict in society Identity</p> |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>No Problem- Benjamin Zephaniah The Class Game- Mary Casey A Poison Tree- William Blake</p> | |

Exposure- Wilfred Owen

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| War can be exhausting and the freezing conditions and the boredom are the real enemy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'merciless iced east winds that knife us' 2. 'sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence' 3. 'Is it that we are dying?' 4. 'slowly our ghosts drag home' 5. 'But nothing happens.' |
| Key context: | |
| 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. |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent rhyme scheme allows every fifth line to stand out which emphasises the overall message. • Consistency of the rhyme scheme and the stanza size reflects the monotony of war. • Underlying feeling of unease created by the pararhyme • Cyclical structure- 'but nothing happens' • Refrains throughout | Fear Effects of conflict Reality of conflict Nature Loss and suffering Conflict in wartime |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| The Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred Lord Tennyson What were they like?- Denise Levertov Extract from 'The Prelude'- William Wordsworth | |

The Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred, Lord Tennyson

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| Fighting for patriotism causes mass futile deaths and highlighting the effects on soldiers. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'someone had blunder'd' 2. 'Cannon to the right of them, Cannon to the left of them, Cannon in front of them' 3. 'Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred' 4. 'storm'd at with shot and shell' 5. 'valley of Death' |
| Key context: | |
| 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 Balaclava – The Battle of Balaclava was fought on 25th 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. |
| Form and structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballad • Dactylic dimeter creates the effect of a galloping horse • Unrelenting rhythm showing how the soldiers had no choice but to go to battle • Irregular rhyme scheme with some rhyming couplets which creates a sense of chaos. | Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effects of conflict Reality of conflict Conflict in wartime Identity Loss and suffering |
| Poems for comparison: Exposure- Wilfred Owen The Destruction of Sennacherib- Lord Byron Poppies- Jane Weir | |

What were they like?- Denise Levertov
 War Photographer- Carole Satyamurti

Catrin- Gillian Clarke

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How mother and daughter relationships can be difficult. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'red rope of love which we both fought over' 2. 'we want, we shouted, to be two, to be ourselves' 3. 'still I am fighting you off' 4. 'neither won nor lost the struggle' 5. 'our first fierce confrontation' |
| Key context: | |
| 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 every day 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. |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two clear stanzas. Stanza 1 is past tense and Stanza 2 is present tense. This stanza separation is known as bipartite (2 parts). It highlights the separation between mother and child. | Individual experiences Identity Conflict in society Relationships Memory |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| Poppies- Jane Weir Cousin Kate- Christina Rossetti Half Caste- John Agard No Problem- Benjamin Zephaniah | |

War Photographer- Carole Satyamurti

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How a war photograph doesn't tell the whole story. The news is manipulated to spare the reader from distress. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'the reassurance of the frame is flexible' 2. 'I seek out the tragic, the absurd' 3. 'the first bomb of the morning shattered the stones' 4. 'she saw me seeing her; my finger pressed' 5. 'mouth too small for her dark scream' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monologue • 5 stanzas which are between 4 and 8 lines long • Stanzas represent snap shots of photos being taken. • Some lines are cut short • Poem begins in the past tense | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear Effects of conflict Reality of conflict Conflict in wartime Loss and suffering Individual experiences |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>Exposure- Wilfred Owen Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred Lord Tennyson Belfast Confetti- Ciaran Carson</p> | <p>What were they like?- Denise Levertov The Destruction of Sennacherib- Lord Byron The Man He Killed- Thomas Hardy</p> |

Belfast Confetti- Ciaran Carson

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How war distorts everyday life and is inescapable. Riot squad invades city and interrogates victim. After a bomb explosion which has left debris like confetti. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'it was raining exclamation marks' 2. 'the explosion... an asterisk on the map' 3. 'Why can't I escape?' 4. 'nuts, bolts, nails, car- keys' 5. 'I know this labyrinth so well' |
| Key context: | |
| Ciaran Carson – Ciaran 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 20th 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. |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear meter or rhythm showing the confusion and disorientation • First stanza is past tense and the second stanza is in the present tense | Fear Effects of conflict Reality of conflict |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| What were they like?- Denise Levertov The Destruction of Sennacherib- Lord Byron The Man He Killed- Thomas Hardy | Half Caste- John Agard Exposure- Wilfred Owen Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred, Lord Tennyson |

The Class Game- Mary Casey

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How people are stereotyped according to their social class. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'How can you tell what class I'm from?' 2. 'cos we live in a corpy' 3. 'I'm proud of the class that I come from' 4. 'Me say 'Tara' to me 'Ma' instead of 'Bye Mummy dear?' 5. 'Have I a label on me head, and another on me bum?' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monologue- emotional and personal response • Section of rhyming couplets in the middle of the poem • Simple rhyme scheme reflects the simple way of life • Half rhyme could play on the stereotypical view that the working classes are less intelligent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anger Individual experiences Identity Conflict in society |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>Half Caste- John Agard No Problem- Benjamin Zephaniah A Poison Tree- William Blake</p> | |

Poppies- Jane Weir

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How war takes lives cruelly and the stress on those who stay anxiously at home waiting. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'play at being Eskimos' 2. 'my stomach busy making tucks, darts, pleats' 3. 'I traced the inscriptions on the war memorial' 4. 'three days before Armistice Sunday' 5. 'gelled blackthorns of your hair' |
| Key context: | |
| 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 token of goodbye every year on 11th November, in order to celebrate the Armistice signed by the Allies of World War I and Germany. It took place on the '11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th 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 WW1 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. |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free verse- stream of consciousness | Fear Effects of conflict Memory Conflict in wartime Loss and suffering Identity Individual experiences |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| Catrin- Gillian Clarke Cousin Kate- Christina Rossetti The Charge of the Light Brigade- Alfred, Lord Tennyson | |

No Problem- Benjamin Zephaniah

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| How people are stereotyped according to their race. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'I am not de problem' 2. 'I am branded athletic' 3. 'mother country get it right' 4. 'Black is not de problem' 5. 'sum of me best friends are white' |
| Key context: | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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 fuelled 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 popularity have been noted as possible influences for these trends. In the past, racism in the UK has resulted in riots and even murders.</p> |
| <p>Dub Poetry – Most of Zephaniah's work is described as dub poetry, a formal 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.</p> | |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 stanzas- creates a sense of divide (form mirrors the content) • ABCB rhyme scheme but this isn't totally consistent. Made to seem natural. • Shift in tone between the first and second stanza • Stanza 1- communicates his positivity • Stanza 2- thinks of the enduring effects of this racist abuse | <p>Conflict in society Identity Individual experiences</p> |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| <p>Half Caste- John Agard The Class Game- Mary Casey Catrin- Gillian Clarke</p> | |

What were they like?- Denise Levertov

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| What is the poem about? | Key quotes: |
| The impact of conflict on culture and traditions. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Did the people of Viet Nam use lanterns of stone?' 2. 'a dream ago, perhaps' 3. 'bombs smashed those mirrors' 4. 'It is not remembered' 5. 'It is silent now.' |
| Key context: | |
| 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.' |
| Form and structure: | Themes: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two different speakers • Question and answer format- ambiguous about how the poem should be read (questions and then answers or each question and then the answer) • Free verse | Loss and suffering Identity Conflict in wartime Nature Memory Effects of conflict |
| Poems for comparison: | |
| The Man He Killed- Thomas Hardy Exposure- Wilfred Owen War Photographer- Carole Satyamurti Belfast Confetti- Ciaran Carson | |