

# **Power and Conflict**

## AQA Poetry Revision



Name:

Teacher:

## War Photographer

In his dark room he is finally alone  
with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.

'finally' suggests the dark room allows him to escape

The only light is red and softly glows,

'red' suggests the blood and violence that conflict brings.

as though this were a church and he

'church', 'priest' and 'mass' - an extended metaphor.

a priest preparing to intone a Mass.

Contrasts the idea of church with the warzones he has seen. Highlights the horror.

Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

He has a job to do. Solutions slop in trays

Ironic that he has a steady in the warzone but in his 'safe' home he trembles. Hint of PTSD.

beneath his hands, which did not tremble then

though seem to now. Rural England. Home again

to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel,

Stereotyping the typical British highlight of weather, contrasting with the events in warzone.

to fields which don't explode beneath the feet

Couplet places emphasises on the vulnerability and danger.

of running children in a nightmare heat.

Something is happening. A stranger's features

Caesura changes tone and builds tension.

faintly start to twist before his eyes,

Double meaning the photo itself is taking form, however the subject themselves may have been in pain, twisting.

a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries

Metaphor shows the still faint origins of the photo but also implies that the subject may be dead.

of this man's wife, how he sought approval

without words to do what someone must

Personal Pronoun 'he' emphasises a namelessness, that he is one of many.

and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

Adjective emphasis on the fact it is far away.

A hundred agonies in black and white

Pun dark humour, bitter. Black and white in the newspapers.

from which his editor will pick out five or six

for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyeballs prick

with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers.

Juxtaposes 'tears' with the very comfortable images of 'bath' and 'pre lunch beers'. Can be read almost angrily, their tears are meaningless and this is a small pause in their life, not of worth to them.

From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where

he earns his living and they do not care.

'Impassive' without emotion.

Collective pronoun: accusation-like tone. Final lines emphasise his resentment.

## Context/Main Ideas

Duffy was inspired to write this poem by her friendship with a war photographer. She was especially intrigued by the challenge faced by these people whose job requires them to record horrific events without being able to directly help their subjects.

Throughout the poem, Duffy provokes us to consider our own response when confronted with the photographs that we regularly see in our newspaper supplements and how we react to them.

By viewing this issue from the perspective of the photographer, she also reveals the difficulties of such an occupation.

War Photographer Carol Ann Duffy

## Structure/Shape of poem

The poem is laid out in four regular six-line stanzas, with each stanza ending in a rhyming couplet. This structure is interesting since its very rigid order contrasts with the chaotic, images described in the poem.

This organisation mirrors the actions of the photographer, who lays out his films in "ordered rows", as though in doing so he can in some way help to restore order to this chaotic world.

Unsurprisingly, in a poem that is so focused on images of human suffering, Duffy concentrates on the sense of sight throughout the poem. The final image is almost like a photograph itself, depicting the journalist surveying the landscape and its inhabitants below without emotion.

## Feelings/Attitudes

The poem focuses on two main themes:

- the horror of war
- our increasing indifference to the victims of conflict
- 

While the imagery of war is more widespread than at any other time in history, its impact upon those of us exposed to it is rapidly declining.

Duffy's imagery helps to convey the terrible personal stories that lie behind every conflict.

By focusing on just one image rather than the countless others that were taken, Duffy forces us to confront the personal cost of war. Duffy implies that we have lost the capacity to view the subjects of war as real human beings.

Throughout the poem, Duffy shows the increasing isolation the photographer feels both towards his own country and the newspaper he works for.

His anger for his editor is revealed in the careless, thoughtless way he notes how he chooses photographs for the paper, picking out five or six/for Sunday's supplement.

## Poetic Devices

Emotive language used to convey the photographer's troubled memories: "a hundred agonies"

Imagery: "a half-formed ghost" - evidence that the photographer continues to be 'haunted' by the memory of what he photographed.

Plosive sounds "Belfast. Beirut. Phnom. Penh". Could reflect click of camera / could reflect explosions

Monosyllabic in places - emotionless?

Irony "which did not tremble then". Does he suggest the memory is worse than the moment in time?

## Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land

← 'antique' suggests the place is old and steeped in history.

Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

← 'trunkless' suggests the statue is barely standing. The rest is ruined and missing. Suggests it is being eaten away by time and the desert.

Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

← 'shattered visage'- broken face, it is unrecognisable so it has no purpose anymore.

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

← 'sneer', 'cold command'- suggest Ozymandias was powerful and arrogant. Ironic as now nothing left.

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:

← 'Mock' as in to make a model of, but also to make fun of. This is a pun because of the double meaning.

And on the pedestal these words appear:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

← Exclamation makes the tone strong and authoritative. Irony is that nobody is listening.

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

← 'colossal'- meaning vast or huge. A metaphor for his ego rather than the statue.

The lone and level sands stretch far away."

← 'lone and level sands' outlast the statue. Juxtaposed to the power and ego of the statue. Sands are also iconic of time.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

## Context/Main Ideas

Percy Bysshe Shelley is one of the most famous poets in all of English literature. Shelley was well known as a 'radical' during his lifetime and some people think Ozymandias reflects this side of his character.

Although it is about the remains of a statue of Ozymandias it can be read as a criticism of people or systems that become huge and believe themselves to be invincible.

It was inspired by the recent unearthing of part of a large statue of an Egyptian Pharaoh. The Pharaohs believed themselves to be gods in mortal form and that their legacy would last forever. The reference to the stone statue is likely a direct reference to the statues and sculptures which the ancient Egyptians made.

The narrator of Shelley's poem says he met a traveller from an "antique" land and then tells us the story the traveller told him. The man had seen the remains of a huge statue in the desert. There were two enormous legs without a trunk and next to them lay a damaged "visage". At the foot of the statue were words which reflected the arrogance and pride of Ozymandias. Those words seem very hollow now as the magnificent statue is destroyed and none of the pharaoh's works have lasted.

## Feelings/Attitudes

Looking at power and conflict we can imagine Ozymandias as a powerful ruler who sees himself as a 'king of kings' and very powerful.

It points out that all that remains is an arrogant boast on a ruined statue. Perhaps the poet feels sorry for him or is laughing at his expense. It looks about the inevitable downfall of all rulers, and how nothing, not even power, lasts forever.

The statue in the poem, broken and falling apart in the desert with nobody to care is an allegory of Ozymandias and of every powerful man or woman, the idea that they will also drift away until they are just another grain of sand.

Ozymandias Percy Bysshe Shelley

## Structure/Shape of poem

**Sonnets** were generally popular romantic or love poems, perhaps this being a love poem about Ozymandias, a joke about the rulers ego.

The Rhyme scheme is irregular, perhaps symbolic of the broken statue itself, no longer perfect.

The first line and a half up to the colon are the narrator's words, the rest are those of the traveller he meets.

There are no clear stanzas as such. Instead, it is one, 14-line block of text that is split up with lots of punctuation throughout.

## Poetic Devices

**Imagery:** Shelley creates a memorable image of this "vast" and once great statue, now in ruins. He also places it in the middle of a huge desert with nothing else around it, which highlights its fall from grace. What was once so magnificent is now "sunk... shattered... lifeless". We have no sympathy whatsoever with the statue or the king though, due to some of Shelley's descriptions: "sneer of cold command... hand that mocked them" and the arrogance of the words displayed at the bottom

**Sound:** Although it doesn't have an easy, memorable rhyme scheme, the poem is **powerful when read aloud**. The end of lines one and three rhyme ("land / sand") but so do the first and last words of line three ("stand / sand") which gives it extra power. Lines 12 and 14 also rhyme and words such as ("decay / away") mean that the poem ends with a feeling of mystery and emptiness.

## London

I wander through each chartered street

← 'chartered' is something listed and regulated. The streets are clearly controlled but it suggests the Thames is also controlled. Nature is controlled by man.

Near where the chartered Thames does flow,

And mark in every face I meet

← Blake is suggesting that everyone is without power and in misery. 'mark' is a metaphor for a brand, to show their place in society.

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,

In every Infants cry of fear,

In every voice: in every ban,

← Repetition of 'in every' used to show scale of suffering.

The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the Chimney-sweepers cry

Every black'ning Church appalls,

← Juxtaposition of cries of children made to sweep chimneys and church bells. Blake saw religion as a tool to keep the people down and therefore was wrong—'black'ning'. This contrasts the cries of the innocent dirty children with the supposedly clean but corrupt church.

And the hapless Soldiers sigh

Runs in blood down Palace walls .

← Link to war at this time. The 'blood' running down palace walls signifies their sacrifice to protect the power of those who live in palaces.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear

How the youthful Harlots curse

← 'Harlots' is slang for prostitutes or low class women. The new born baby is born into a broken world.

Blasts the new-born Infants tear,

And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

← Oxymoron which contrasts the joy of marriage with the misery of death. Blake is suggesting that society has destroyed all the good things in life.

*William Blake*

## Context/Main Ideas

William Wordsworth wrote poems about the world we live in which challenged people and the way they thought at the time. This extract is from a much larger poem, it looks at the spiritual and moral development of a man growing up.

In 1789, the French people revolted against the monarchy, using violence and murder to overthrow those in power. Many saw the French Revolution as inspirational - a model for how ordinary people could seize power. Blake suggests that the experience of living in London could encourage a revolution.

## London by William Blake

## Structure/Shape of poem

London is presented in a very regular way, much like a song. There is a strict abab rhyme scheme in each of the four stanzas.

The poem offers a glimpse of different aspects of the city, almost like snapshots seen by the speaker during his "wander thro'" the streets.

As the poem progresses the journey the poet is on becomes rougher and words like 'and' are repeated to give it a breathless pace and feel.

## Feelings/Attitudes

There is conflict between man and nature where nature is eventually shown to be more powerful in the end.

Blake's speaker has a very negative view of the city. For Blake, the conditions faced by people caused them to decay physically, morally and spiritually.

For Blake, buildings, especially church buildings, often symbolised restriction and failure. Money is spent on church buildings while children live in poverty, forced to clean chimneys - the soot from which blackens the church walls. This makes a mockery of the love and care that should characterise the church.

The speaker is perhaps arguing that, unless conditions change, the people will be forced to revolt.

The poem as a whole suggests Blake sees the rapid urbanisation in Britain at the time as a dangerous force. Children are no longer free to enjoy childhood; instead working in dangerous conditions. Charters restrict freedoms, ultimately resulting in the restriction of thinking.

## Poetic Devices

The tone of the poem is at times biblical, reflecting Blake's strong interest in religion.

In the first stanza, Blake uses repetition twice, firstly using the word "charter'd". This is a reference to the charters that allocated ownership and rights to specific people. Blake saw this as robbing ordinary people of their rights and freedoms.

The second use of repetition is with the word "marks": it refers to the physical marks carried by people as a result of the conditions they endure.

"Manacles" are like handcuffs. The speaker is suggesting that the city has robbed them of the ability to think.

The poem is full of negative words: "weakness", "woe", "cry", "fear", "appals", "blood", "blights", "plagues" and "hearse".

The poem ends with a contrast in the language chosen: "marriage hearse". Marriage should be a celebration of love and the beginning of new life but it is combined with the word "hearse". To the speaker of the poem, the future brings nothing but death and decay.

## MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said

"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not

Her husband's presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps

Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps

Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint

Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had

A heart—how shall I say?— too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

'my' is a possessive pronoun. The speaker is laying claim to her as a possession, she is used to show off his control and power.

He is referring to a famous artist of the time. The suggestion is that he values the name of the artist more than the Duchess it is a painting of.

He is showing his power in the bracketed aside by suggesting that he is giving the messenger a rare privilege to see the Duchess in this way, exercising his control. In fact the irony is that he needs to show off.

If they 'durst': If they dare, he is showing off his power again and how others fear him.

He implies that people believed it was not only him who could make her happy (though he couldn't) Hints he was jealous.

Sinister tone, 'dies along her throat' the words are also semantically linked to murder 'die' and 'throat'.

He is trying to be polite, using a rhetorical question to indicate a lighter tone to the conversation, in fact he is trying to avoid showing his jealousy and rage, at conflict with himself.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
 The bough of cherries some officious fool  
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked  
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
 In speech—which I have not—to make your will  
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—  
 E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count your master's known munificence  
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning

He is angry that she would find the same level of joy in the expensive gifts he bought her and the cheap or simple gifts of the poor or nature. Angry at his lack of control. He juxtaposes the two things though the irony is that his are without sincerity.

Exclamation and change of structure, the verse is broken with caesuras to show his rising anger. He is losing control, his personality now angry.

The poet is ironically mocking how vain the Duke is, he cares more about his heritage and cannot understand that she did not see that as important.

Here he clearly states how even if he was good with words and could ask her to stop giving everyone else so much attention, he would choose never to stoop so low. He is showing his believed power as above asking for things from women. Ironically she is in control.

The use of semicolons gives a sense of finality to the statements. It is suggesting she was killed on his request.

Her in a painting satisfies him as much as she did in real life, as a possession. The question shows a change to a polite tone.

'munificence' means generosity. He is counting on being given the money.

'dowry', money paid by the bride's parents. Suggests he is more interested in the money than his planned future bride. It is sinister as it again suggests a repeat in his actions.

'Taming' suggests he likes to control things such as his wives. As with the start he uses an allusion to another famous artist in order to show off his wealth and power. It is used to show how he quickly forgets about his dead wife who he was previously claimed to be so devoted to.

## Context/Main Ideas

Robert Browning was a poet in the 19th century and he didn't fit in as much in London society. He married fellow poet Elizabeth Barrett because of her over protective father. As a result they were both familiar with over controlling fathers.

The poem is loosely based on the Duke of Ferrara who was an Italian Duke from the sixteenth century. It is written from his perspective, talking to a messenger about arranging his next marriage. His first wife, Lucrezia de' Medici who died aged 17, only two years after he married her. She died in suspicious circumstances and might have been poisoned.

A messenger has been sent to see the Duke from the father of his next wife. The Duke shows him a picture of his late wife and remarks on her character, suggesting that she was unfaithful to him - and hinting that he might have killed her because of it.

## My Last Duchess Robert Browning

### Structure/Shape of poem

The poem is an example of dramatic monologue (a speech given by one character).

It uses a large number of pauses (caesuras) in the poem along with lines that flow into one another (enjambment) in order to try and capture the tone of the speaker talking away to the messenger and adding in tangents (small opinions and asides).

The poem uses rhyming couplets and iambic pentameter this reflects the style of romantic poets at the time, despite how this poem is much more sinister and dark. It is another façade for the Duke of Ferrara's character. He is the only character that speaks despite the fact he is talking to someone, he never lets them speak.

## Feelings/Attitudes

The idea of Power and Conflict is shown in the way the speaker (the Duke of Ferrara) is showing off his power and also suggesting the control he had over the Duchess's life.

The Duke's arrogance comes across quite clearly when talking about himself and his things.

Being upper class and having good morals don't necessarily go together: people of great wealth and class often considered themselves to be morally superior to others - the Duke shows that isn't true.

Money and possessions aren't everything: he might have a wonderful house, paintings and statues but he is insecure about his wife.

The Duke spends a lot of time criticising his late wife but the reader finishes the poem feeling sorry for her and disliking the Duke a great deal.

### Poetic Devices

There are lots of personal pronouns in this poem, as one might expect in this situation but in this case they are significant as one of the themes is the narrator's high opinion of himself and his selfishness. Many of the words also relate to his love of possessions - including his former wife ("My last Duchess").

The narrator, in a rare moment of humility, says he is not very good with words "Even had you skill/In speech - (which I have not)" and, in a sense, he's right.

This is not a poem full of wonderful imagery and it would reflect a capable, intelligent and sensitive soul if it was; this certainly does not describe the Duke.