Your notes

GCSE English Literature: revision notes

# Poetry anthology

## Contents

1. The exam question (AQA)
2. Power and Conflict: the poems (AQA)
3. Love and Relationships: the poems (AQA)
4. Grouping poems for comparison (AQA)
5. Comparing well
6. Worlds and Lives, AQA's third cluster (AQA)
7. On your exam board (Edexcel and OCR)
8. How to get top marks
9. Key terms
10. Quick questions
11. What to do next

## The exam question (AQA)

- One poem from your **cluster** is printed. You compare it with one other poem of your choice from the same **cluster** (30 marks). The poems themselves aren't printed here: use your anthology alongside these notes.

## Power and Conflict: the poems (AQA)

- Ozymandias (Shelley): a ruined statue of a boastful king in the desert shows that human power doesn't last. London (Blake): a walk through a city full of suffering, blaming those in power. Extract from The Prelude (Wordsworth): a boy's night-time boat trip, where a huge mountain seems to rise and follow him, showing nature's power.
- My Last Duchess (Browning): a Duke's **dramatic monologue** suggesting he had his wife killed. The Charge of the Light Brigade (Tennyson): cavalry ride to their deaths in the Crimean War after a mistaken order. Exposure (Owen): First World War soldiers suffer and die in freezing weather.
- Storm on the Island (Heaney): islanders face a powerful storm. Bayonet Charge (Hughes): a soldier's terrified charge. Remains (Armitage): a soldier haunted by killing a looter. Poppies (Weir): a mother's grief as her son leaves for war. War Photographer (Duffy): a photographer's anger at people's indifference to suffering.
- Tissue (Dharker): paper as fragile but powerful, like human life. The Emigrée (Rumens): memories of a city the **speaker** left as a child. Checking Out Me History (Agard): an attack on the one-sided history taught at school. Kamikaze (Garland): a Japanese pilot turns back and is shunned by his family.

## Love and Relationships: the poems (AQA)

- When We Two Parted (Byron): bitterness after a secret affair ends. Love's Philosophy (Shelley): a **speaker** uses nature to persuade someone to love him. Porphyria's Lover (Browning): a disturbing **dramatic monologue** in which the **speaker** kills his lover. Sonnet 29, 'I think of thee!' (Barrett Browning): longing for a lover. Neutral Tones (Hardy): a bleak memory of love ending.
- Letters from Yorkshire (Dooley): a long-distance relationship kept alive by letters. The Farmer's Bride (Mew): a farmer's young wife fears him. Walking Away (Day-Lewis): a father watching his son grow independent. Eden Rock (Causley): a memory or vision of parents waiting.
- Follower (Heaney): a son following his farming father, and how their roles reverse. Mother, any distance (Armitage): a son leaving home. Before You Were Mine (Duffy): a daughter imagines her mother's life before she was born. Winter Swans (Sheers): a couple reconciling. Singh Song! (Nagra): a newlywed shopkeeper's joyful love. Climbing My Grandfather (Waterhouse): a grandchild's love, imagining climbing him like a mountain.

## Grouping poems for comparison (AQA)

- Power of humans: Ozymandias, My Last Duchess, London. Power of nature: The Prelude, Storm on the Island, Exposure. The reality of war: Bayonet Charge, Remains, Exposure, The Charge of the Light Brigade. Memory and loss: Poppies, The Emigrée, Kamikaze, War Photographer.
- Parents and children: Walking Away, Follower, Mother, any distance, Before You Were Mine, Climbing My Grandfather, Eden Rock. Bitter or lost love: When We Two Parted, Neutral Tones. Controlling love: Porphyria's Lover, The Farmer's Bride.

## Comparing well

- Compare throughout, not one poem then the other. Compare ideas and methods: language, structure and form. Use short quotations, and use context where it helps explain the poets' ideas.

## Worlds and Lives, AQA's third cluster (AQA)

- Some schools study AQA's newer Worlds and Lives **cluster** instead. Its older poems are Lines Written in Early Spring (Wordsworth), England in 1819 (Shelley), Shall earth no more inspire thee (Emily Brontë) and In a London Drawingroom (George Eliot).
- The modern poems are On an Afternoon Train from Purley to Victoria, 1955 (James Berry), Name Journeys (Raman Mundair), pot (Shamshad Khan), A Wider View (Seni Seneviratne), Homing (Liz Berry), A Century Later (Imtiaz Dharker), The Jewellery Maker (Louisa Adjoa Parker), With Birds You're Never Lonely (Raymond Antrobus), A Portable Paradise (Roger Robinson), Like an Heiress (Grace Nichols) and Thirteen (Caleb Femi).

Your notes

- The exam question works in the same way, so the **comparison** skills above apply.

## On your exam board (Edexcel and OCR)

- (Edexcel) Edexcel has its own anthology, with four collections: Relationships, Conflict, Time and Place, and Belonging. One poem is printed, and you compare it with another from the same collection.
- (OCR) OCR's anthology has three **clusters**: Love and Relationships, Conflict, and Youth and Age. You compare a poem from your **cluster** with an unseen poem, then write about another poem from the **cluster**.
- (Edexcel and OCR) The poems are different from AQA's, so check your board's list, but the **comparison** skills here apply to every board.

### How to get top marks

- Compare in every paragraph: one idea about both poems, with a quotation and a method from each.
- Learn pairs of poems before the exam, so that you have a ready **comparison** for any theme.
- Write about form as well as words: a **dramatic monologue**, a **sonnet** or a broken rhythm all mean something.

## Key terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cluster** | A group of poems in the anthology, such as Power and Conflict. |
| **Dramatic monologue** | A poem spoken by one character to a silent listener. |
| **Sonnet** | A fourteen-line poem, traditionally about love. |
| **Speaker** | The voice in a poem, which may not be the poet. |
| **Refrain** | A line or phrase repeated through a poem. |
| **Imagery** | Language that creates pictures in the reader's mind. |
| **Comparison** | Explaining the similarities and differences between texts. |

## Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Which poem describes the ruined statue of a once-powerful king? (AQA)
2. What is a dramatic monologue?
3. In 'My Last Duchess', what does the Duke suggest about his first wife? (AQA)
4. Which war is 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' about? (AQA)
5. In 'Exposure', what is the soldiers' main enemy? (AQA)

Your notes

6. Which poem is about a soldier haunted by shooting a looter? (AQA)
7. Which Power and Conflict poems focus on the power of nature? (AQA)
8. In 'Kamikaze', what does the pilot do? (AQA)

### Answers

1. Ozymandias
2. A poem spoken by one character to a silent listener
3. He had her killed
4. The Crimean War
5. The freezing weather
6. Remains
7. Storm on the Island and the extract from The Prelude
8. Turns back from his mission

## What to do next

**Practise 14 questions on this topic**

**Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes**

**Read the lesson, one step at a time**

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