

Eduqas Anthology



Poem Guide

(from 2027)

Poem: <i>The Schoolboy</i>	Poet: William Blake
<p>What it's about:</p> <p>A schoolboy daydreams of waking up in the freedom of nature on a summer morning while he sits in a classroom. He feels like his natural joy and potential is being wasted by formal education.</p> <p>The speaker is the schoolboy and he directly addresses his parents in the final two stanzas.</p>	<p>Context:</p> <p>Blake had little formal education and left school at the age of 10.</p> <p>He was very critical of authority.</p> <p>The poem was included in 'Songs of Innocence' in 1789 but Blake later moved it to 'Songs of Experience' in 1794, perhaps reflecting that he felt school destroyed his childish innocence.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Nature Memory Childhood Personal emotions Power Freedom</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'I love to rise in a summer morn'</p> <p>'and the sky-lark sings with me'</p> <p>'drives all joy away'</p> <p>'under a cruel eye'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Blackberry Picking</i>: nature; childhood; memory; personal emotions</p> <p><i>Drummer Hodge</i>: nature; childhood; lack of power</p> <p><i>I Shall Return</i>: nature; childhood; personal emotions; memory</p> <p><i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i>: nature; personal emotions; freedom</p>	<p>'sighing and dismay'</p> <p>'how can a boy that is born for joy sit in a cage and sing'</p> <p>'droop his tender wing'</p> <p>'buds and nipped...plants are stripped'</p> <p>'how shall the summer rise in joy...when the blasts of winter appear'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i></p>	<p>Poet: William Wordsworth</p>
<p>What it's about:</p> <p>The speaker remembers seeing a field of daffodils by a lake. They appeared to dance joyfully in the breeze.</p> <p>When he is feeling lonely or thoughtful, the memory of the scene brings him comfort, suggesting nature has a healing quality.</p>	<p>Context:</p> <p>Wordsworth was a key poet in the Romantic movement, which emphasised the importance of nature, emotion and individual experience. It was a reaction against the spread of industrialisation.</p> <p>The poem was inspired by a walk Wordsworth took with his sister in 1802 near Ullswater.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Nature Memory Personal emotions</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'I wandered lonely as a cloud'</p> <p>'a host of golden daffodils'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>The Schoolboy</i>: nature; memories' personal emotions</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: memory; personal emotions</p> <p><i>Sonnet 29</i>: positivity; personal emotions</p> <p><i>Blackberry Picking</i>: nature</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: memory</p> <p><i>Disabled</i>: memory, past experiences</p> <p><i>I Shall Return</i>: nature</p>	<p>'fluttering and dancing'</p> <p>'tossing their heads in sprightly dance'</p> <p>'outdid the sparkling waves in glee'</p> <p>'I gazed – and gazed – but little thought what wealth the show to me had brought'</p> <p>'they flash upon the inward eye'</p> <p>'the bliss of solitude'</p> <p>'My heart...dances with the daffodils'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Cousin Kate</i></p>	<p>Poet: Christina Rossetti</p>
<p>What it's about: An innocent young girl is taken advantage of by a wealthy lord. She becomes pregnant but he abandons her and marries her cousin, Kate. The speaker is shunned by society for having sex outside marriage.</p> <p>However, by the end, the speaker feels triumphant because Kate and the lord cannot have children so there is no heir for his wealth.</p>	<p>Context: The poem was written in 1862 when women suffered the injustice of gender inequality and were held to higher moral standards than men.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Love Relationships Resilience and strength Conflict</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'why did a great lord find me out to fill my heart with care?'</p> <p>'He lured me to his palace home'</p> <p>'His plaything'</p> <p>'Changed me like a glove'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Sonnet 29</i>: love; relationships; resilience and strength</p> <p><i>Catrin</i>: love; family; relationships; strength; conflict</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: love; family; relationships; individual strength; societal expectations</p> <p><i>Dusting the Phone</i>: love; relationships</p>	<p>'chose you, and cast me by'</p> <p>'the neighbours call you good and pure, call me an outcast thing'</p> <p>'if he had fooled not me but you...he'd not have won me'</p> <p>'I would have spit into his face'</p> <p>'I've a gift you have not got'</p> <p>'my fair-haired son, my shame, my pride'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Sonnet 29</i></p>	<p>Poet: Elizabeth Barrett Browning</p>
<p>What it's about: The speaker writes to their lover, longing for him to return to her. She describes her thoughts about him as like vines wrapping around a tree until it is covered. She says her memories of him aren't as good as if he were there in person and wishes he would return. At the end, there is an image of them together again.</p>	<p>Context: Barret Browning and her husband courted in secret and eloped to be married. The sonnet is part of a series published in 1850 and written as private love letters before they were married. The poem was seen as controversial in the Victorian period as it acknowledged women's passion.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Love Relationships Nature Personal emotions</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'I think of thee!'</p> <p>'My thoughts do twine and bud about thee, as wild vines, about a tree'</p> <p>'soon there's nought to see except the straggling green which hides the wood'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>The Schoolboy</i>: personal emotions</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: love; relationships</p> <p><i>I Wandered...:</i> nature; personal emotions</p> <p><i>Blackberry Picking</i>: nature; personal emotions</p> <p><i>I Shall Return</i>: sonnet; longing</p> <p><i>Dusting the Phone</i>: love; relationships; longing</p>	<p>'I will not have my thoughts instead of thee'</p> <p>'renew thy presence'</p> <p>'let these bands of greenery...drop heavily down, - burst, shattered, everywhere!'</p> <p>'deep joy'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Drummer Hodge</i></p>	<p>Poet: Thomas Hardy</p>
<p>What it's about:</p> <p>A military drummer called Hodge is hastily buried where he died in South Africa, during the Boer War.</p> <p>The landscape was totally unfamiliar to the young man but he will now forever be a part of it.</p>	<p>Context:</p> <p>The poem was written in 1899, the year the Boer War broke out. It was a war without great popular support and Hardy wrote a number of poems which explored the pointlessness or cruelty of the war.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>War Death Identity Nature</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'they throw in Drummer Hodge'</p> <p>'foreign constellations'</p> <p>'strange stars'</p> <p>'portion of that unknown plain will Hodge forever be'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Disabled</i>: war; death; sacrifice</p> <p><i>Decomposition</i>: isolation; identity</p> <p><i>War Photographer</i>: war; death; trauma; identity</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: war; identity; nature</p>	<p>'homely Northern breast and brain grow up some Southern tree'</p> <p>'strange-eyed constellations reign his stars eternally'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Disabled</i></p>	<p>Poet: Wilfred Owen</p>
<p>What it's about: A soldier who lost his arms and legs in the war reflects on all that he has lost. He regrets signing up to fight without thinking it through or knowing what war was really like.</p> <p>He feels isolated and neglected in an institution and expects the rest of his life will be like this.</p>	<p>Context: The poem was written in 1917, during WWI. Owen was a soldier poet who was traumatised by war and wrote many poems depicting the horrors of war. He felt young men were manipulated by propaganda into joining up. He spent time in military hospital, diagnosed with 'shell-shock'.</p> <p>Owen died in 1918, shortly before the war ended.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>War Power Isolation Personal emotions Regret</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'shivered in his ghastly suit of grey'</p> <p>'the old times, before he threw away his knees'</p> <p>'his youth, last year. Now he is old'</p> <p>'poured it down shell-holes'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: powerlessness; personal emotions; isolation</p> <p><i>Drummer Hodge</i>: war; regret; powerlessness</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: war; regret; isolation</p> <p><i>War Photographer</i>: war; trauma; personal emotion</p> <p><i>Remains</i>: war; trauma; regret</p>	<p>'he'd drunk a peg, he thought he'd better join. He wonders why...'</p> <p>'smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen'</p> <p>'no fears of Fear came yet'</p> <p>'take whatever pity they may dole'</p> <p>'why don't they come?'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>I Shall Return</i></p>	<p>Poet: Claude McKay</p>
<p>What it's about: The speaker describes their deep longing to go back to a place filled with positive memories. They describe the nature and people they wish to see once more.</p> <p>They end by suggesting that going back to this place will help them to recover from suffering that has taken place in the years since they left.</p>	<p>Context: McKay was born in Jamaica in 1889 and became a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, an arts movement celebrating black culture and identity in the US. This poem was published in 1922.</p> <p>When he initially left his predominantly black hometown at 17, he experienced racism for the first time and returned home after a year.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Identity Nature Personal emotions Resilience</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'I shall return; I shall return'</p> <p>'to laugh and love'</p> <p>'realise once more my thousand dreams'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>The Schoolboy</i>: nature; longing</p> <p><i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i>: nature; memory</p> <p><i>Sonnet 29</i>: nature; longing</p> <p><i>Catrin</i>: memories</p> <p><i>Dusting the Phone</i>; longing</p> <p><i>Origin Story</i>: memories</p>	<p>'hear the fiddle and fife of village dances, dear delicious tunes.</p> <p>'dim remembered runes'</p> <p>'to ease my mind of long, long years of pain'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Decomposition</i></p>	<p>Poet: Zulfikar Ghose</p>
<p>What it's about:</p> <p>The speaker describes a photograph taken in Bombay of a homeless person asleep in the street. The person seems very old and ill but people passing by ignore him.</p> <p>The photographer reflects on his guilt at having exploited someone's misery for his art.</p>	<p>Context:</p> <p>Ghose's family moved to India in 1942 just before Partition and then left for England. This period was one of crisis in India, with a huge increase in poverty and homelessness.</p> <p>The poem was written in 1967.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Poverty Personal emotions Memory Conflict</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'his shadow thrown aside like a blanket'</p> <p>'brain-washed by the sun into exhaustion'</p> <p>'a fossil man'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i>: memory</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: injustice</p> <p><i>Drummer Hodge</i>: injustice</p> <p><i>Disabled</i>: memory; injustice</p> <p><i>War Photographer</i>: memory; trauma; guilt</p> <p><i>Remains</i>: guilt; memory</p>	<p>'crowd...quite indifferent to this very common sight'</p> <p>'I thought it then a good composition'</p> <p>'attempting to compose art of his hunger and solitude'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Catrin</i></p>	<p>Poet: Gillian Clarke</p>
<p>What it's about: The poet describes the birth of her daughter and the struggles of labour as mother and baby tried to break free of each other.</p> <p>In the second stanza, Catrin is older and there is confrontation as she pushes the boundaries, such as wanting to stay out late.</p>	<p>Context: The poem is autobiographical and was written in 1978.</p> <p>Clarke is a Welsh poet who often writes about the complexity of women's relationships.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Love Family relationships Childhood and growing up Personal emotions</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'I can remember you, child'</p> <p>'our first fierce confrontation'</p> <p>'the tight red rope of love'</p> <p>'fought over'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: motherhood; love; family relationships; conflict</p> <p><i>Sonnet 29</i>: love; relationships</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: love; family relationships; conflict</p> <p><i>Dusting the Phone</i>: love; relationships</p> <p><i>Blackberry Picking</i>: growing up; memories</p> <p><i>Origin Story</i>: identity; change</p>	<p>'our struggle to become separate'</p> <p>'to be two, to be ourselves'</p> <p>'neither won nor lost the struggle'</p> <p>'still I am fighting you off'</p> <p>'defiant glare'</p> <p>'bringing up...that old rope'</p> <p>'trailing love and conflict'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Blackberry Picking</i></p>	<p>Poet: Seamus Heaney</p>
<p>What it's about: The speaker remembers collecting blackberries in summer as a child. They collected huge quantities but the berries would only be ripe for a week. They recall the once-fresh berries turning mouldy and rotten quickly every year, as if good things in childhood cannot last.</p>	<p>Context: Heaney grew up on a farm in the countryside so we assume the poem is autobiographical and was published in 1966. Although his father wanted him to become a farmer, Heaney rejected that life to be a writer. He wrote many poems about losing his connection to nature and the countryside as he grew up.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Childhood Nature Growing up Personal emotions Time Regret</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'for a full week'</p> <p>'its flesh was sweet like thickened wine'</p> <p>'lust for picking'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>The Schoolboy</i>: nature; childhood; change</p> <p><i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i>: nature; memories</p> <p><i>I Shall Return</i>: nature; memories; change</p> <p><i>Catrin</i>: childhood; growing up</p>	<p>'we trekked and picked until the cans were full'</p> <p>'we hoarded the fresh berries'</p> <p>'a fur, a rat-grey fungus'</p> <p>'the sweet flesh would turn sour'</p> <p>'it wasn't fair'</p> <p>'each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Kamikaze</i></p>	<p>Poet: Beatrice Garland</p>
<p>What it's about: The speaker describes a WWII kamikaze pilot who saw the beauty of nature, thought of his family and decided to abort his mission.</p> <p>On his return, he is rejected by his family and is seen as cowardly for breaking the Japanese code of honour. He wonders if it would have been better to have died.</p>	<p>Context: The poet was told this story by a Japanese person and wrote the poem in 2013.</p> <p>Kamikaze pilots flew missions to crash their planes into enemy ships or bases (such as Pearl Harbour). They were seen as honourable for dying for their country and over 3000 died in WWII.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>War Family Honour Conflict Death The power of nature</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'her father embarked at sunrise' 'a shaven head full of powerful incantations' 'a one-way journey into history' 'little fishing boats strung out like bunting'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: family relationships and expectations; honour</p> <p><i>Catrin</i>: family relationships; conflict</p> <p><i>The Schoolboy</i>: the power of nature</p> <p><i>Drummer Hodge</i>: war; death</p> <p><i>Disabled</i>: war; death; sacrifice; power of memories</p> <p><i>Decomposition</i>: isolation; identity</p> <p><i>War Photographer</i>: war; death; trauma; identity</p>	<p>'dark shoals of fishes flashing silver' 'bringing his father's boat safe...to the shore' 'my mother never spoke again in his presence' 'treated him as though he no longer existed' 'we too learned to be silent' 'he must have wondered which had been the better way to die'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>War Photographer</i></p>	<p>Poet: Carol Ann Duffy</p>
<p>What it's about: A war photographer is developing photos of conflicts in a darkroom back in England. He reflects on the suffering of the subjects of his photos and feels lucky to be away from the warzone. He feels that the public who see his photos are indifferent to the suffering he has witnessed and will quickly forget it, as if his job is pointless.</p>	<p>Context: The poet is friends with war photographers and may have used their experiences. The poem was published in 1985, ten years after the end of the Vietnam War. There is a reference to a famous photo of children in a napalm attack which sparked public protests against that war.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>War Conflict Powerlessness Personal emotions Death</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'spools of suffering'</p> <p>'all flesh is grass'</p> <p>'he has a job to do'</p> <p>'running children in a nightmare heat'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Drummer Hodge</i>: war; death; powerlessness</p> <p><i>Disabled</i>: war; powerlessness; indifference</p> <p><i>Decomposition</i>: suffering; art; indifference; powerlessness</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: war</p> <p><i>Remains</i>: war; trauma; powerlessness</p>	<p>'half-formed ghost'</p> <p>'he remembers the cries'</p> <p>'blood stained into foreign dust'</p> <p>'a hundred agonies in black and white'</p> <p>'they do not care'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Dusting the Phone</i></p>	<p>Poet: Jackie Kay</p>
<p>What it's about:</p> <p>The speaker describes the anxiety of waiting for a phone call from a lover.</p> <p>They fixate on the phone and obsess over their relationship, suggesting that the lover doesn't feel as strongly as they do.</p>	<p>Context:</p> <p>Kay explores how relationships are affected by modern ways of communicating. The poem was published in 1993 so the phone was a fixed, landline phone.</p> <p>She is a Scottish lesbian poet who often writes about love and heartbreak.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Love Relationships Personal emotions Powerlessness</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'I am spending my time imagining the worst'</p> <p>'disaster' 'sirens'</p> <p>'forget tomorrow, you say, don't mention love'</p> <p>'I go over and over our times together'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: relationships; powerlessness</p> <p><i>Sonnet 29</i>: love; longing</p> <p><i>Decomposition</i>: powerlessness</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: memory; personal emotions</p> <p><i>I Shall Return</i>: longing</p>	<p>'I'll give it extra in return for your call'</p> <p>'infuriatingly, it sends me hoaxes'</p> <p>'your voice disappears into my lonely cotton sheets'</p> <p>'I am trapped in it. I can't move'</p> <p>'This is awful – only a photo'</p> <p>'I don't know what.'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Remains</i></p>	<p>Poet: Simon Armitage</p>
<p>What it's about:</p> <p>A soldier is haunted by his involvement in shooting a looter. The man died in terrible pain and that image keeps coming back to haunt the soldier, even when he is back home on leave.</p>	<p>Context:</p> <p>The poem was written for a documentary called 'The Not Dead' in 2007. Armitage wrote poems in the voices of soldiers to highlight how they suffered from PTSD on returning home. Armitage used to work as a probation officer and it was Guardsman Tromans' probation officer who first identified that he needed help after fighting in the Iraq war.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>War Death Trauma Powerlessness</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'probably armed, possibly not'</p> <p>'I swear I see every round as it rips through his life'</p> <p>'he's there on the ground, sort of inside out'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>Drummer Hodge</i>: war; death; regret</p> <p><i>Disabled</i>: war; trauma; regret; powerlessness</p> <p><i>Decomposition</i>: suffering; regret</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: war; trauma</p> <p><i>War Photographer</i>: war; trauma; death</p>	<p>'pain itself, the image of agony'</p> <p>'tosses his guts back into his body'</p> <p>'end of story, except not really'</p> <p>'I blink and he bursts again through the doors of the bank'</p> <p>'the drink and the drugs won't flush him out'</p> <p>'he's here in my head when I close my eyes'</p> <p>'his bloody life in my bloody hands'</p>

<p>Poem: <i>Origin Story</i></p>	<p>Poet: Eve L Ewing</p>
<p>What it's about: The poet reflects on how her parents met. She recounts moments from their lives as young adults and how they met.</p> <p>She then discusses love itself, comparing her parents' relationship to a well-read comic book which falls apart and isn't meant to last forever.</p>	<p>Context: The poet is an American writer and academic. She has written a number of Marvel comic books and an 'origin story' in comics is a story which tells how a superhero gained their powers.</p> <p>The poem was written in 2017, when there was a growing call for black people to celebrate their experiences and their heritage.</p>
<p>Key themes:</p> <p>Love Relationships Personal emotions Change</p>	<p>Key quotes:</p> <p>'This is true'</p> <p>'met at the Greyhound bus station in the mid-eighties in Chicago'</p> <p>'my mother, all thick glasses and afro puff'</p> <p>'my father, all sleeveless and soft eye'</p>
<p>Some Comparisons:</p> <p><i>The Schoolboy</i>: personal emotions; youth</p> <p><i>Cousin Kate</i>: strong female voice; love; relationships that don't last</p> <p><i>Remains</i>: the past; specific times and places</p> <p><i>Kamikaze</i>: parents; relationships; the past</p> <p><i>Dusting the Phone</i>: love; relationships</p>	<p>'love is like a comic book'</p> <p>'the best we can do is protect it'</p> <p>'never meant to last'</p> <p>'memorized, mishandled, worn thin'</p> <p>'a love like that doesn't last but it has a good ending.'</p>