GCSE English Literature Paper 2
Power and Conflict Poetry

Kamikaze Beatrice Garland (2013)

Interpretation (A01)
Garland explores the tragic conflict between national duty and personal survival, depicting how a pilot's decision to choose life over a suicide mission results in a devastating, lifelong social execution by his own family.

.**Social Context (A03)**

- Based on the historical context of WWII Japanese Kamikaze pilots, who were expected to fly military suicide missions to protect national honour.
- In Japanese culture at the time, surrender or failure to carry out a mission brought immense dishonour and "social death" to the entire family, forcing them to shun the returned pilot.

Language (AO2):

- **Language** The pilot's journey is framed by "history" and "patriotism", contrasting the idealised language of propaganda with the reality of survival.
- **Imagery of Nature**—like the "green-blue translucent sea" and the "swivel of fish**"**—creates a vivid image of physical beauty that outweighs patriotic duty.
- **Contrast**: A shift to cold, silent vocabulary—*"silent," "shunned*," and "*no longer existed*"—highlights his emotional exile from his family.

Structure (AO2):

- **Narrative Perspective:** The poem shifts between third-person narration and first-person reported speech from the daughter. Whilst the pilot remains silent in his own poem.
- **7, six-line stanzas**. A rigid, controlled visual structure on the page contrasts ironically with the **free-verse form:** symbolising the inescapable control that military and cultural expectations held over the pilot's life.
- **Enjambment:** creates a continuous rhythm reflecting the pilot's thoughts from war back to his childhood memories.

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Adjectives for this poem: patriotic, oppressive, disillusioned, humiliation, figurative death

War Photographer Carol Ann Duffy (1985)

Interpretation (A01)
Duffy exposes the profound psychological trauma of a conflict photographer documenting human suffering, contrasting his heavy, haunting memories with the numb, short-lived apathy of the Western public.

Social Context (A03)

- Inspired by Duffy's friendships with real war photographers, and explore the unique, lonely burden of those who must record atrocities while remaining strictly detached
- Explores late-20th-century media consumption, where horrifying images of global conflicts are briefly read about alongside Sunday newspapers and quickly forgotten about in the routine of life.

Language (AO2):

- **Religious Imagery & Metaphor**: *"as though this were a church and he / a priest preparing to intone a Mass."* The darkroom becomes a sacred sanctuary where the photographer translates horrific deaths into quiet, respectful memorials.
- **Sensory & Visual Contrast**: *"solutions slop in trays," "half-formed ghost."* The chemical process of photo development mirrors the slow, haunting return of a dying soldier's memory into his conscious mind.
- **Juxtaposition**: *"Rural England"* with its *"ordinary pain"* and weather is sharply contrasted with *"a hundred agonies in black and white"* in warzones. This emphasizes the safe distance and ignorance of the Western world.

Structure (AO2):

- **Rigid Structure (4 Stanzas of 6 lines, ordered AABBCD rhyme scheme)**: The neat, orderly structure reflects the photographer's desperate attempt to impose order, control, and neatness onto the chaotic, messy horrors of war.
- **Volta**: The transition from developing the film to the raw emotional impact of the memories rushing back.
- **Cyclical Structure**: He starts by returning from war, develops the photos, sees them printed, and by the end, is already on a plane flying back to another conflict. War and apathy are a continuous, unbroken loop.

Adjectives for this poem: maternal, domestic, poignant, melancholic, tender.

Remains
Simon Armitage (2008)

Interpretation (A01)
Armitage illustrates that the true devastation of modern conflict is not the physical battle itself, but the permanent mental impact of guilt and PTSD that follows a soldier home.

Social Context (A03)

- Published in 2008, written to coincide with a TV documentary using real life interviews from The Gulf War/Iraq veterans of modern conflict. He illustrates how mental suffering can persist long after physical conflict is over.

Language (AO2)

- **Allusion** to Macbeth: "*His bloody life in my bloody hands"* inescapable guilt
- **Pronouns:** The shift from "we" (shared responsibility) to "I" (isolated guilt).
- **Colloquial language:** *"legs it up the road", "mates"* is contrasted with graphic violence.

Structure (A02)

- Begins **in media res**, colloquial, conversational tone
- **Stanza** 1-4 action with **Stanza** 5-7 aftermath
- **Enjambment** between lines and stanzas conveys conversational tone/pace and inescapable memory
- **Volta:** *"Probably armed, possibly not"* turning point of guilt and uncertainty).

Adjectives for this poem:, anecdotal, colloquial, remorseful, plagued.

Revision Knowledge Check Questions

Kamikaze Beatrice Garland (2013)

Interpretation (A01)

1. What tragic conflict does Garland explore in this poem?
2. Based on the historical context of WWII Japanese Kamikaze pilots, what were they expected to do, and why?
3. What was the consequence for a pilot and their family in Japanese culture if they surrendered or failed to carry out a mission?

Language and structure (A02)

1. How is the pilot's journey framed, and what does this contrast with?
2. What does the imagery of nature (e.g., *"green-blue translucent sea"* and the *"swivel of fish"*) create, and what does it outweigh?
3. What vocabulary shift is used to highlight the pilot's emotional exile from his family?
4. Describe how the narrative perspective shifts in this poem. What is unusual about the pilot's own voice?
5. How does the rigid layout on the page (7, six-line stanzas) contrast ironically with the poem's form, and what does this represent?
6. What is the structural purpose of enjambment in *Kamikaze*?

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Adjectives for this poem:
List 3 adjectives you could use as you are describing the poem / writing about the soldiers.

War Photographer Carol Ann Duffy (1985)

Interpretation (A01)

1. What contrast does Duffy expose in this poem?
2. What real-life connections and what aspects of late-20th-century media consumption inspired this poem?

Language and structure (A02)

1. Explain the religious imagery/metaphor: *"as though this were a church and he / a priest preparing to intone a Mass."* What does the darkroom become?
2. How does the chemical process of photo development (the sensory and visual contrast) mirror the photographer's mental state?
3. What sharp juxtaposition is used to highlight the safe distance and ignorance of the Western world?
4. Describe the rigid structure of the poem. What does this neat, orderly layout reflect?
5. What transition occurs at the *volta*?
6. How does the poem use a cyclical structure to show that war and apathy form an unbroken loop?

Adjectives for this poem:
List 3 adjectives you could use as you are describing the poem / writing about the soldiers.

Remains Simon Armitage (2008)

Interpretation (A01)

1. According to Armitage, what is the *true* devastation of modern conflict?
2. What real-life sources and TV documentary context inspired Armitage to write this poem in 2008?

Language and structure (A02)

1. Which Shakespearean play does the line *"His bloody life in my bloody hands"* allude to, and what does it represent?
2. Explain the significance of the pronoun shift from "we" to "I" in the poem.
3. Contrast the colloquial language used in the poem (e.g., "mates", "legs it up the road") with another linguistic feature mentioned in the guide.
4. How does the poem begin, and how does the structure shift between stanzas 1–4 and stanzas 5–7?
5. What role does the *volta* play in the line *"Probably armed, possibly not"*?

Adjectives for this poem:
List 3 adjectives you could use as you are describing the poem / writing about the soldiers.