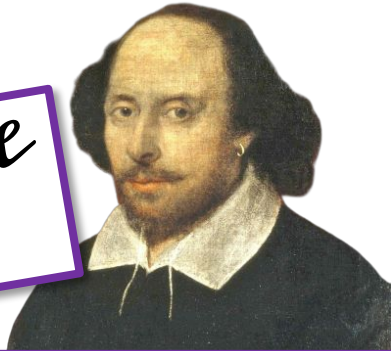


GCSE English Literature Study Guide



Macbeth



**A
CHRIST
MAS
CAROL**



Name _____



**Power
and
Conflict
Poetry**



**An
Inspector
Calls**



GCSE English Literature Paper

1

Macbeth



Key plot detail

- While returning from a battle victory, Macbeth, a powerful lord, meets three Witches who predict that he will become King of Scotland.
- Macbeth tells his wife of the Witches' predictions and she encourages him to murder the current king, Duncan, who is staying with them as a guest.
- After Macduff discovers the murder, Duncan's sons flee the country, leaving the way clear for Macbeth to become king.
- Banquo, Macbeth's best friend, becomes suspicious of what his friend has done so Macbeth has him murdered too.
- Macbeth pays a second visit to the Witches and receives more predictions.
- In England, Malcolm (Duncan's elder son) and his chief supporter, Macduff, plan to invade Scotland to win back the throne. An enraged Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed; Macduff swears revenge.
- Lady Macbeth suffers from guilt for what she has done and eventually commits suicide.
- Malcolm's invasion is successful and Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm becomes the new King of Scotland and the country counts the cost of Macbeth's short but bloody reign.



Macbeth

A general in King Duncan's army, Macbeth is originally the Thane of Glamis and a respected warrior. When he encounters the witches, the evil idea of killing his king to become king himself is implanted in his head.

Macbeth plots with his wife to kill Duncan and after the deed is done he deeply regrets his actions. Even so, he continues to plan and murder other people that could take his throne, including his best friend Banquo who was told by the witches that his own children would become kings.

He becomes obsessed with making himself safe, to the point of returning back to the witches to find out more about the future despite their connections to evil.

Macbeth sacrifices everything for ambition alone and arguably because of his ruthless and manipulative wife Lady Macbeth. How much responsibility should he take for his own actions? This is where the theme of fate vs free will comes in. He is certainly never comfortable in the role of murderer and criminal, unlike some of Shakespeare's other villains like Richard III and Iago from *Othello*.

Characters

Lady Macbeth

An utterly ruthless individual determined to see her husband rise to be a king. She 'unsexes' herself, associating herself with witchcraft and evil, and manipulates her husband into killing his king for the sake of their ambition.

Despite this ruthlessness, Lady Macbeth has a human side and when we discover she could not kill the king herself because Duncan looked like her own father.

Later in the play, Macbeth takes control of the situation and removes Lady Macbeth's responsibility. She grows isolated and has nothing but her own thoughts and her guilt.

Eventually, after suffering bouts of sleepwalking, Lady Macbeth goes mad and likely takes her own life, leading to her husband reflecting philosophically about the nature of existence and time.

King Duncan

Arguably a popular and well-respected king, Duncan does not deserve to die and his murder acts as a symbol of the dangers of over-powering ambition.

Macbeth himself admits he has no reason to kill Duncan except for his ambition, and Duncan shows nothing but kindness to Macbeth at the beginning of the play – promoting him to the Thane of Cawdor. He holds many qualities that would make up an ideal king: calmness, dignity, humility, grace and honour.

Additionally, he is the king's chosen representative on Earth – King James believed in the Divine Right of Kings, meaning he believed the king was chosen by God to rule over his people. For Macbeth to kill his king would be going against God Himself.

Macduff

A loyal member of Duncan's court and suspicious of Macbeth right from the moment he discovers Macduff is dead. He soon drifts from Macbeth's court and heads to England to ally himself with Malcolm who fled after his father was murdered. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty and Macduff shows nothing is more important to him than Scotland's future. Macduff also gains revenge over Macbeth for his brutal murder of his wife and children. A noble, honest, dedicated, heroic figure that again represents the kind of figure Macbeth could have been if he chose a different path.

Malcolm

Malcolm is Duncan's son. He is named his heir at the start of the play. Originally Malcolm seems weak and uncertain. By fleeing Scotland with Donalbain it made the pair of them look suspicious and timid. However, away from Scotland his personality changes and he shows his kingly qualities in first testing Macduff's loyalty and then leading the English army to victory at Dunsinane castle.

He goes on to represent many kingly qualities as did his father. By becoming king, justice is restored and God's chosen king is back on the throne. It would have been very important to Shakespeare's audience and his king to see Malcolm made king at the end of the play.

Banquo

He is such an important character because like Macbeth he was given a prophecy by the witches, but unlike the witches he did not act on his troubling thoughts. Instead, Banquo ignored his nightmares and his sense of ambition and represents the path Macbeth could have chosen if Macbeth had decided not to go through with the murder.

Banquo is also significant because his children are said to be part of a long line of kings. King James believed he was related to Banquo, and so Shakespeare plays a tremendous compliment to James by having Banquo be the father to a long line of kings. It is also important that Banquo's ghost haunts Macbeth as it is a reminder to him of his guilt, his misdeeds and how his life could have been so different.

Key Quotes

The Witches

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair." (*Act I, Scene I*)

"When the battle's lost and won." (*Act I, Scene I*)

"When shall we three meet again in thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurlyburly 's done, When the battle 's lost and won." (*Act I, Scene I*)

"By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes." (*Act IV, Scene I*)

"Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble." (*Act IV, Scene I*)

Macbeth

"If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me." (*Act I, Scene III*)

"I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none." (*Act I, Scene VII*)

"I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, and falls on the other." (*Act I, Scene VII*)

"Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand?" (*Act II, Scene I*)

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red" (*Act II, Scene II*)

Macbeth:

[*Looking on his hands*] This is a sorry sight.

Lady Macbeth:

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

Macbeth:

There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried,

"Murder!"

That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them;

But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

(*Act II, Scene II*)

"There's daggers in men's smiles." (*Act II, Scene III*)



Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth:

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty!
(Act I, Scene V)

"Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness." (*Act I, Scene V*)

"Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't." (*Act I, Scene V*)

"Screw your courage to the sticking-place." (*Act I, Scene VII*)

Key Quotes

Can you think of any other key quotes? Add them to your notes here. Explain why they are important in terms of the whole play, its themes and characters

Lady Macbeth:

Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood



Understanding context (AO3)

William Shakespeare wrote Macbeth in 1606 and it was performed at a time of political tension. The current monarch was James I, who inherited the throne of England after Queen Elizabeth I died. With Elizabethan having no children, her distant cousin James was the next best claimant to the crown. Many other members of the aristocracy felt they too had a good claim to the throne, which meant James' place as king was not always certain.

King James was a protestant – one of the reasons he was able to gain the crown – despite his mother being a catholic. Catholics in England had hoped that James might support them because of his family connections, but he did not. This led to a number of conspiracies and plots being developed against him, including the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, just a year before Shakespeare wrote Macbeth.

King James I was Scottish by birth and fascinated by his own family history. The play 'Macbeth' is based on real events from Scottish history and there was actually a King Macbeth in Scotland. In real life, King Macbeth reigned from 1040 to 1057 and had many successes as a king, whilst Duncan was actually a weak man who lacked respect from the people of Scotland.

King James believed himself to be a descendant of Banquo's (although we now know he wasn't), which may have affected the way Shakespeare showed Banquo on stage.

The Jacobean believed in the idea of a 'Great Chain of Being' The idea of this was that God had created a hierarchy that everyone had to live by, which God at the top and the King or Queen one place below Him. Therefore no one should want to become king because it was a position chosen by God and no one else could choose it. To want to become the monarch was therefore viewed as a sin and going against God. King James very much believed in the concept of 'divine right' to rule. When a king or queen is coronated, the ceremony makes them 'divine'.

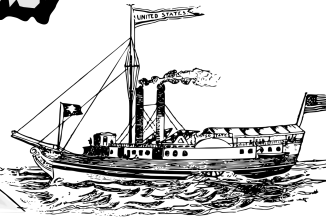
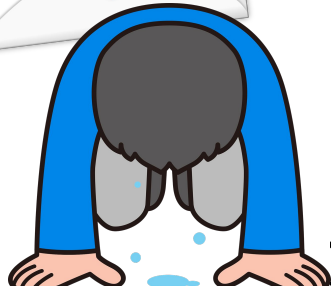
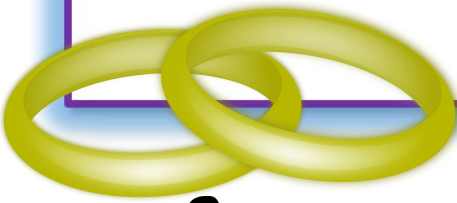
Furthermore, King James was intrigued by the supernatural, such as witches and ghosts, and wrote a book called 'Daemonologie' about this. That the play is so packed full of the supernatural is again possibly to interest the king.

GCSE English Literature Paper

1

A Christmas Carol

GCSE Revision Guide





Key plot detail

1. On Christmas Eve, Scrooge makes his clerk, Bob Cratchit, work in the cold.
2. He refuses an invitation to his nephew Fred's Christmas party and will not give money to the charity collectors.
3. At home he is visited by the ghost of his old business partner, Marley.
4. The Ghost of Christmas Past wakes Scrooge and shows him moments from his childhood, his apprenticeship and his failed engagement.
5. The Ghost of Christmas Present takes him to the Cratchit's home, where he is saddened by the ill, but kind, Tiny Tim. He is also shown how Fred celebrates Christmas with friends and how others celebrate Christmas together.
6. The final ghost is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come who terrifies Scrooge with visions of his death.
7. Scrooge awakes on Christmas Day and is delighted to find he has the chance to repent of his miserly ways. He buys a turkey for the Cratchits and attends his nephew's party.
8. Scrooge becomes like a second father to Tiny Tim and gains a reputation for knowing how to celebrate Christmas.

	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
Ebenezer Scrooge	<p>The central protagonist (main character) of the novella, Scrooge is a selfish, greedy but ultimately isolated elderly man that has spent much of his life hoarding his wealth away from others despite being surrounded by poverty and suffering. He is initially cruel and callous to everyone else before the visits of Marley's Ghost and the Three Spirits bring about his epiphany and the change in his character. Through the help of the narrator we follow Scrooge on his journey through his own past, present and potential future and celebrate his embracing of the Christmas spirit at the end.</p>	<p>"Bah! Humbug!"</p> <p>"Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry."</p> <p>"A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still." Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.</p> <p>"Another idol has displaced me" (Said to Scrooge by Belle)</p> <p>"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future."</p>	<p>Isolation Christmas Spirit Regret Sorrow Greed Choice Guilt and Blame Emotional Coldness Emotional Warmth Catharsis Transformation Memory and the Past Compassion and Forgiveness</p>

	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
Jacob Marley	Scrooge's former business associate and friend. Marley passed away seven years ago on Christmas Eve. Marley inspired Scrooge to be selfish, greedy and utterly ruthless when dealing with other people. However, it is Marley that comes back to Scrooge as a ghost to tell him to change his ways or end up with the same fate as him, cursed to forever travel the world filled with regret and sorrow.	"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world -- oh, woe is me! -- and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"	Christmas Spirit Regret Sorrow Greed Supernatural Choice Time Guilt and Blame Emotional Coldness Memory and the Past Compassion and Forgiveness

The Ghost of Christmas Past	The first of the three spirits to visit Scrooge, The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge on a journey through his memories – ones he enjoys remembering and others that bring up emotions that he has long since buried. We see his absolute joy at seeing Fan and Fezziwig again, but his immense sorrow and regret for what happened between him and Belle. The Ghost is presented as very unusual looking and re-reading and re-analysing the use of description of the character would be very useful to you as part of your revision.	<p>"It wore a tunic of the purest white, and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful."</p> <p>But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light</p>	Supernatural Memory and the Past Compassion and Forgiveness Regret Sorrow Guilt and Blame Choice Isolation Christmas Spirit Family Emotional Warmth Time
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	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
The Ghost of Christmas Present	The second of the three spirits that is presented a giant representing all that is great and good about Christmas Day. He is more dominating than the previous spirit and mocks Scrooge's own words from Stave 1 when Scrooge previously asked about prisons and workhouses being in operation. This spirit shows to Scrooge how everyone across society takes joy from Christmas and celebrate together, they do not isolate themselves like Scrooge has done. In particular, the visit to the Cratchits and Scrooge seeing the love for Tiny Tim hits him hard.	"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me." "The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there"	Christmas Spirit Family Compassion and Forgiveness Isolation Emotional Warmth Supernatural Choice Guilt and Blame Time Self-awareness

The Ghost of Christmas Yet-to-Come	The final spirit is a dark, silent phantom that terrifies Scrooge and in some ways resembles the Grim Reaper, a classical symbol of death. This spirit shows Scrooge how the death of an isolated and friendless man sees vagabonds still his personal items, people celebrating his death and others suffering at his lack of compassion in life. Finally, the Ghost shows Scrooge his own gravestone and it is at this point that Scrooge has his epiphany.	But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded. "He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him." "We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline."	Supernatural Regret Sorrow Choice Time Guilt and Blame Transformation Emotional Coldness Isolation Death Family
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	Character summary	Key Quotations	Associated themes or ideas:
Fred	Scrooge's nephew and the son of Ebenezer's sister Fan. Fred embodies everything good about Christmas and is filled with joy and happiness everywhere he goes. He is the antithesis of Ebenezer Scrooge. When Scrooge sees Fred spending Christmas with his friends Fred refuses to criticise Scrooge, only saying he pities him. Fred is delighted to see his uncle in Stave 5.	<p>"He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow"</p> <p>(Talking about Scrooge) "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried."</p>	Family Christmas Spirit Memory and the Past

The Cratchits	<p>Bob Cratchit – An honourable man and a wonderful father. Scrooge comes to respect him very much. He is part of the Cratchit family including his wife, Martha, Belinda and Peter.</p> <p>Tiny Tim - Bob's son who everyone loves and everyone pities. Dickens was arguably trying to evoke immense sympathy from his readers for this weak but wonderful young boy. Tiny Tim survives his illness thanks to Scrooge's financial help.</p>	<p>"[Tiny Tim] told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see."</p> <p>"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all. (Stave 3)</p> <p>Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons</p>	Christmas Spirit Family Memory and the Past Guilt and Blame Emotional Warmth Regret Sorrow Transformation Charity
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Understanding context (AO3)

Although now in Britain we have what is known as the welfare state (which includes support for the neediest including the NHS, social housing, unemployment benefits and more), there was little government support for the poorest in society during the Victorian era.

Many wealthy Victorians who were socially conscious (meaning they felt a responsibility to help those who could not help themselves) became heavily involved in philanthropy. They used their own money to give to charities and to set up their own charities to help those that needed help. Charles Dickens was one such person and he used his own money to help others, as well as working with wealthy benefactors to make changes in society, too. Moreover, Dickens used his writing to act as a social commentator – bringing to the attentions of his middle and upper class readers the need for social upheaval.

Throughout much of Dickens' life, workhouses were one form of 'welfare' for the poorest in society. Workhouses existed well before the Victorian era, but the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act made it a legal requirement for all able-bodied people to work in workhouses to get their 'poor relief' (financial support). Before this time the poorest in society had to rely on charity and handouts to survive. However, Victorians saw poverty as a kind of illness or disease in society that needed to be eradicated. Governments were keen to move the poorest indoors, away from everyone.

However, those in charge of the country made workhouses places to be feared in order to prevent 'lazy' citizens thinking it was an easy option instead of going out to find work.

Workhouses meant the poorest would work for food and a place to sleep, but many people saw it as a form of slavery. workhouses also took in orphans, abandoned children, the mentally ill, the disabled, unmarried mothers and the elderly. Despite their age or abilities, all were required to work long and demanding hours.

Whenever someone entered a workhouse they were stripped, bathed whilst being supervised and then provided with a uniform. This uniform separated them from the rest of society. If those from workhouses were out in the streets everyone else would instantly know they were in a workhouse. Often children were 'hired out' to wealthy business men and made to work in awful places such as mines.

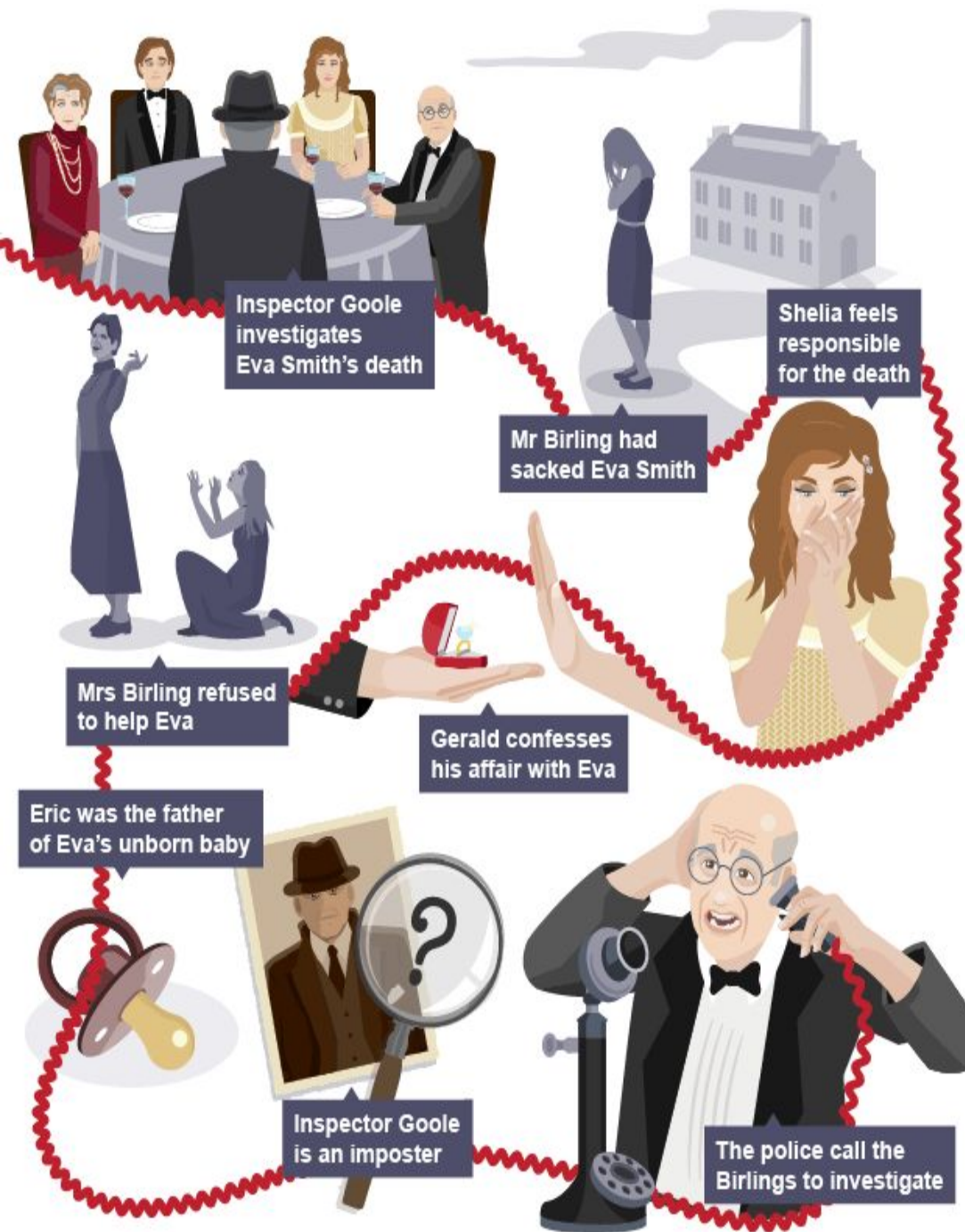
You were not allowed to try to contact your family and doing so could result in being punished. The standard of education provided was awful and would not help those within the workhouses get out of them. The food given to those in the workhouses was of a poor quality, simple and the same every day. Food was seen as a tool to keep you working, not as something to be enjoyed.

GCSE English Literature Paper 2

An Inspector Calls

GCSE Revision Guide





1. An inspector arrives at the Birling house. He tells them how a girl called Eva Smith has killed herself by drinking disinfectant - he wants to ask them some questions.
2. The Inspector reveals that the girl used to work in Arthur Birling's factory and he had her sacked for going on strike. Mr Birling refuses to accept any responsibility for her death.
3. The Inspector then reveals that Sheila thought that Eva had made fun of her, complained and got her sacked. Sheila is deeply ashamed and feels responsible for the girl's death.
4. The Inspector forces Gerald to confess to an affair he had with Eva. Sheila respects Gerald's honesty but returns the engagement ring he gave her.
5. It is revealed that Sybil Birling had refused to help the pregnant Eva.
6. It turns out that it was Eric who got Eva pregnant, and stole money from his father to help her.
7. The Inspector leaves. The family ring the infirmary and there is no record of a girl dying from drinking disinfectant.
8. Suddenly the phone rings, Mr Birling answers it, to his horror the phone call reveals that a young woman has just died from drinking disinfectant and the police are on their way to question them about it. The curtain falls and the play ends.

Mr Arthur Birling

Mr Birling is described as "a heavy-looking, rather portentous man in his middle fifties but rather provincial in his speech." He is proud that he has built up his business and made so much money himself.

Birling boasts of his achievements to others, particularly Gerald and Eric, explaining how he was once Mayor and is hoping to get a knighthood soon. Plus, he uses his connections as a way of trying to influence the Inspector and protect his family's reputation.

Birling is very pleased his daughter is marrying someone whose family is higher up in society than he is and wants himself and his family to continue to rise up socially. He tells Gerald: "it's exactly the same port your father gets." Marrying Gerald will also mean Birling and Co potentially merging with Crofts Limited rather than competing as rivals.

Birling seems confident that war will not happen and mentions about the Titanic being unsinkable, even though the war takes place just two years after 1912 when the play is set, and the Titanic sinks just a few days after it is set. Priestley shows Birling to be wrong about everything, including his optimism.

When the Inspector questions Birling, he never once admits responsibility for Eva Smith's death and says he paid his workers the 'usual rate' – no more or less.

Birling is more concerned with maintaining his reputation than taking any kind of responsibility, and is particularly concerned when it is revealed that Mrs Birling was responsible for turning away a pregnant Eva looking for help with the charity she was chairing. ("I must say, Sybil, that when this comes out at the inquest, it isn't going to do us much good. The press might easily take it up—"). This, coupled with the fact Eric was stealing money from the company, means Birling is incredibly keen to cover up as much as he can to protect his reputation.

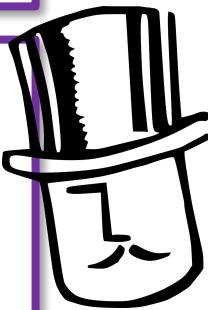
In fact, Birling attempts to bribe the Inspector to hush up the investigation ("Look, Inspector – I'd give thousands – yes, thousands...") which of course the Inspector refuses. It seems as though Birling may not be getting his precious knighthood after all, and the merger of Birling and Co with Crofts Limited seems unlikely.

As soon as the Inspector leaves, Birling works with his wife and Gerald to discredit Goole by claiming he is a fake and that no girl has died at all – it is all a hoax.

It seems like Birling might be right, only for a phone call at the end to confirm that a girl had killed herself and a police inspector is coming round to ask the family questions. Imagine how a man like Birling feels at this point. What message was Priestley trying to give to people like Mr Birling?

Why is Mr Birling important?

- He represents middle class men who have made money via capitalism.
- He refuses to accept responsibility for anyone else except himself.
- He represents capitalism and its ideals.
- He also represents an older generation that is less likely to be influenced by ideas of socialism.



Mrs Sybil Birling

She is initially described as being "about fifty, a rather cold woman and her husband's social superior" suggesting Mr Birling may have married her for her social standing.

Mrs Birling is shown throughout the play to be very snobbish – thinking herself better than people from other classes – and having very forthright and sanctimonious views.

She criticises her husband for failing to follow accept social conventions and etiquette ("Arthur, you're not supposed to say such things-") and is cruel in the way she describes Eva ("girls of that class"). She even refuses to believe that Eva would not accept money from Eric when she knows it is stolen because Eva was working class ("She was giving herself ridiculous airs.")

Mrs Birling sees herself as a powerful figure and tries to use her social standing and power to get rid of the Inspector, but it fails. She also denies recognising Eva from the photo she is seen despite the fact she was the last person in the family to have seen her alive.

She refuses to believe that Eric is a drunkard, that Gerald had an affair and even that Alderman Meggarty is anything but a morally perfect person. As chair of her charity, Mrs Birling used her power to ensure Eva received no financial aid despite her being heavily pregnant.

Mrs Birling refuses to take responsibility for Eva or her future baby and instead says the father should take the responsibility – the dramatic irony here being that Sheila and the audience have already worked out that Eric is the father, and thus Mrs Birling has just pinned all the blame on her own son unknowingly.

Like Mr Birling, Sybil Birling always sees Eric and Sheila as children and not as adults and will not change her view on this throughout the whole play.

Moreover, just like Arthur, Sybil tries to find any way out of accepting responsibility for Eva's death by developing a theory that Goole is a fake and the death a hoax. When it is revealed that Eva has died at the end of the play, Mrs Birling knows her reputation will be damaged, her daughter is no longer marrying an aristocrat and her son is a drunkard who got a young girl pregnant and stole money from the family business.

Why is Mrs Birling important?

She represents many of the upper and middle class attitudes from the time: arrogance, sanctimony, snobbishness and selfishness.

She is part of the older generation that refuses to change or accept new ideas. She is happy to live in the status quo.

She uses her influence to hurt other people rather than help them – it is difficult for the audience to do anything but dislike Mrs Birling, as is the case with her husband.



Sheila Birling

Sheila begins the play very much as childlike: "a pretty girl in her early twenties, very pleased with life and rather excited." She is innocent and naïve, living in a world where her biggest concerns are engagement rings and dresses.

She is engaged to be married to Gerald Croft, the son of wealthy aristocrats, but suggests she is not entirely happy after mentioning about Gerald not going near her one summer. This implies she has more depth to her than we first think.

Unlike her parents, Sheila immediately feels empathy and pity for Eva when she hears her story and takes responsibility for her role in her death when she knows what consequences her actions have had. By getting Eva fired from the Millwards department store, Sheila realises she has forced Eva into a more difficult life.

As the play progresses, Sheila appears more understanding and perceptive of those around her: she sees Gerald's reaction to the name Daisy Renton and explains that the Inspector already knows how all the characters are connected to Eva.

She tries to protect her mother later in the play – a brilliant reversal of roles from the beginning – but her mother inevitably and unknowingly denounces her own son.

Sheila shows a growing maturity as she explains she is not angry at Gerald but rather respects him more for his honesty as he retells his relationship with Daisy.

In the final act of the play, Sheila shows a confrontational side and an anger at her parents for refusing to accept any responsibility for Eva's death ("pretend that nothing much has happened." "It frightens me the way you talk").

It is clear that Sheila has changed by the end of the play and like her brother Eric is now more socially responsible. She is the kind of younger head that could lead to a changing society, or face the harsh consequences of fire, blood and anguish as the Inspector elucidates.

Why is Sheila important?

She shows how gender roles are clearly defined at the start of the play: she is meant to be the sweet, innocent and naïve girl that gets married.

As the play progresses, her character changes and she becomes far more determined, confrontational and aware.

By the end of the play she represents a younger generation that is far more willing to take responsibility for the people around them.



Eric Birling

At the start of the play, Eric is described as "in his early twenties, not quite at ease, half shy, half assertive." He is an awkward character that doesn't seem to fit in very well with his family. This awkwardness seems to be explained once we find out that he got an unmarried girl working class girl pregnant and stole money from his parents.

Eric is not naïve like his sister and is even willing to briefly challenge his father: "What about war?" It also suggests all is not well in his relationship with his dad.

Moreover, it is soon revealed to the characters and the audience that Eric is a drunkard and drinks alcohol heavily, as Gerald explains: "I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard."

Like Sheila, who says that the workers are not cheap labour but rather people, Eric shows empathy for the workers of the factory: "Why shouldn't they try for higher wages? We try for the highest possible prices. And I don't see why she should have been sacked just because she'd a bit more spirit than the others. You said yourself she was a good worker. I'd have let her stay."

Eric's drinking can likely be equated with his thoughtless actions and the consequences he can now see as a result of what he did. He got a young girl pregnant by violently threatening her, and can see how he has contributed to Eva's death.

Eric, like Sheila, is disgusted by his parents' reactions as the end of the play, and even tells his father: "I don't give a damn now whether I stay here or not." Whilst Birling thinks he may be able to protect his reputation, it appears his children have lost any respect they might have had for him.

Eric has changed by the end of the play and realises his actions had consequences. He is now aware of his social responsibilities.

Why is Eric important?

He represents the younger generation that are more socially responsible than their parents.

He drinks because he feels guilt about what he did: by violently forcing himself on Eva, he got her pregnant and helped to drive her towards suicide.

Because he accepts responsibility by the end of the play, the audience come to respect Eric a lot more.



Gerald Croft works at his father's company, Crofts Limited, a rival to Birling and Co. Although engaged to be married to Sheila at the start of the play, we find out that his parents - Sir George and Lady Croft - are higher up the social hierarchy than the Birlings (Mr Birling and Mrs Birling) and are aristocrats. It is also suggested by Mr Birling that Gerald's parents do not approve on the marriage to Sheila – they are, after all, not at the engagement party. Gerald is an attractive, popular man of about 30 years old.

As the play develops, it is revealed that Gerald had an affair with Eva Smith when she was calling herself Daisy Renton. He met her at the Variety Theatre in town and 'rescued' her from Alderman Meggarty (a well-known and highly respected dignitary) who Gerald describes essentially as a womanizer.

Gerald and Daisy enter into a relationship behind Sheila's back (during the same summer when he wouldn't go near Sheila, as she reminds him in Act One). Gerald eventually breaks it off and gives Daisy money to keep her going. He tells her he has to go away on business.

It is the shock of hearing the name 'Daisy Renton' that reveals to Sheila and the Inspector that Gerald knew Eva, and after all is revealed about his relationship with her, Gerald goes outside for fresh air to reflect on his relationship with her.

Gerald is older than both Sheila and Eric, but is not as old as Mr and Mrs Birling. He initially takes some responsibility for Eva's death, but then like Mr and Mrs Birling at the end of the play is all too willing to cover it up and deny that Goole is a real inspector. He seems happy enough at the end when it seems that Mr and Mrs Birling might be right. Gerald is more concerned with protecting his reputation than he is taking

Why is Gerald important?

He represents the upper classes in the play

We – the audience – want him to change, after all, he did help Daisy with money, but he doesn't.

He represents how the old class system is hard to remove – aristocrats don't want to lose their power and their status.



The Inspector

Inspector Goole is described as "an impression of massiveness, solidity and purposefulness. He is a man in his fifties, dressed in a plain darkish suit. He speaks carefully, weightily, and has a disconcerting habit of looking hard at the person he addresses before actually speaking" when he enters in Act One.

Despite questioning a family of wealthy members of the upper middle classes, the Inspector appears calm and assertive throughout. He uses his language like a machine to gain control over the other characters and seems to have already pre-planned exactly who is going to speak to and when and how he will speak to them.

As Sheila comes to understand, the Inspector already knows how all the characters are connected to Eva. Because of this, it seems to give him a ghost-like or supernatural quality to him.

Although Mr Birling tries to bribe him, Goole is not in the slightest bit interested. Nor does Birlings' apparent connections to the police or those in politics have any effect on the Inspector.

His final speech seems like a politician or a sermon to a congregation. When he leaves and we find out he was not a real police inspector, it confuses us about who he was and why he was there, but the second phone call at the end confirming a young girl has died adds in another 'supernatural' layer to the play.

Why is the Inspector important?

He seems to be operating on a different level of consciousness to the other characters and this has led to a number of theories about who or what Inspector Goole is. Could he a ghost? The name 'Goole' could be a pun on 'ghoul', which is similar to a spirit or ghost. Could he be the voice of Priestley or the voice of God? Could he represent the voices of the working classes as a collective? You can choose for yourself.



Mrs Birling: Now, Sheila, don't tease him. When you're married you'll realize that men with important work to do sometimes have to spend nearly all their time and energy on their business. You'll have to get used to that, just as I had.

Sheila: But these girls aren't cheap labour – they're people.

Inspector ... what happened to her then may have determined what happened to her afterwards, and what happened to her afterwards may have driven her to suicide. A chain of events.

Act One

Birling: Community and all that nonsense

Birling: And I say there isn't a chance of war.

Sheila: (*taking out the ring*) Oh – it's wonderful! Look – mummy – isn't it a beauty? Oh – darling - (*she kisses Gerald hastily.*)

Birling: And I'm taking as a hard headed, practical man of business

Eric: Yes, I know – but still -

Birling: Just let me finish, Eric. You've a lot to learn yet

Birling: the titanic...unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable.

Birling: Still, I can't accept any responsibility.

Sheila (to Gerald): Why - you fool - *he knows*. Of course he knows. And I hate to think how much he knows that we don't know yet. You'll see. You'll see. *She looks at him almost in triumph.*

Act Two

INSPECTOR [massively] Public men, Mr. Birling, have responsibilities as well as privileges.

Sheila: (*eagerly*) Yes, that's it. And I know I'm to blame – and I'm desperately sorry

Inspector: And you think young women ought to be protected against unpleasant and disturbing things?

Gerald: If possible – yes.

Inspector: Well, we know one young woman who wasn't, don't we?

Gerald to Sheila: You've been through it – and now you want to see somebody else put through it.

Sheila: (*bitterly*) So that's what you think I'm like. I'm glad I realised it in time, Gerald.

Gerald: (*apologetically, to Mrs Birling*) I have gathered that he does drink pretty hard.

Note: Gerald explains that Eric is a heavy drinker to his mother.

Gerald: (*hesitatingly*) it's hard to say. I didn't feel about her as she felt about me.

Sheila: (*with sharp sarcasm*) of course not. You were the wonderful fairy prince. You must have adored it, Gerald.

Mrs Birling: I must say that so far you seem to be conducting in a rather peculiar and offensive manner. You know of course that my husband was lord mayor only two years ago and that he's still a magistrate--

Gerald: (*distressed*) sorry – I – well, I've suddenly realized – taken it in properly – that's she's dead--

Mrs Birling: That – I consider – is a trifle impertinent, Inspector.

Sheila: (*slowly, carefully now*) You mustn't try to build up a kind of wall between us and that girl. If you do, then the inspector will just break it down. And it'll be all the worse when he does.

Mrs Birling: secondly, I blame the young man who was the father of the child she was going to have

Act Three

Inspector: We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.

Sheila: I tell you – whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke. You knew it then. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way.

Sheila: And it frightens me the way you talk, and I can't listen to any more of it.

Eric: And I agree with Sheila. It frightens me too.

Birling: ... we've been had ... it makes all the difference.

Gerald: Of course!

Sheila [bitterly]: I suppose we're all nice people now.

Gerald: Everything's all right now, Sheila. (*Holds up the ring.*) What about this ring?

Sheila: No, not yet. It's too soon. I must think.

Birling: (pointing to Eric and Sheila) Now look at the pair of them – the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke-

Eric: (*bursting out*) What's the use of talking about behaving sensibly. You're beginning to pretend now that nothing's really happened at all. And I can't see it like that. This girl's still dead, isn't she? Nobody's brought her to life, have they?

Sheila: (*eagerly*) That's just what I feel, Eric. And it's what they don't seem to understand.

Eric: whoever that chap was, the fact remains that I did what I did. And mother did what she did. And the rest of you did what you did to her. It's still the same rotten story whether it's been told to a police inspector or to somebody else... The money's not the important thing. It's what happened to the girl and what we all did to her that matters. And I still feel the same about it, and that's why I don't feel like sitting down and having a nice cosy talk.

An Inspector Calls and Context

John Boynton Priestley was born in Yorkshire in 1894 and from an early age he began writing. As a member of the middle classes he had the chance to go on and study at university, but felt he would get more of a feel for the 'real' world by going out to work instead. Therefore, he became a junior clerk with a wool firm at the age of 16.

During the First World War, Priestley joined the infantry and narrowly avoided death on a number of occasions. After the war, he went to Cambridge University and earned a degree before moving to London to work as a freelance writer. Although mostly remembered for *An Inspector Calls*, Priestley wrote many, many articles, novels and plays. He was very much into his politics and this shone through in his writing.

In the 1930s Priestley became very much concerned about social inequality and this led to him setting up a new political party (The Common Wealth Party) to try and fight this. The new party wanted public ownership of land, greater levels of democracy, and a new kind of 'morality' in politics. This party eventually went on to merge with the Labour Party in 1945, but it was instrumental in helping to establish the Welfare State in the United Kingdom (which includes pensions, benefits, the NHS and more).

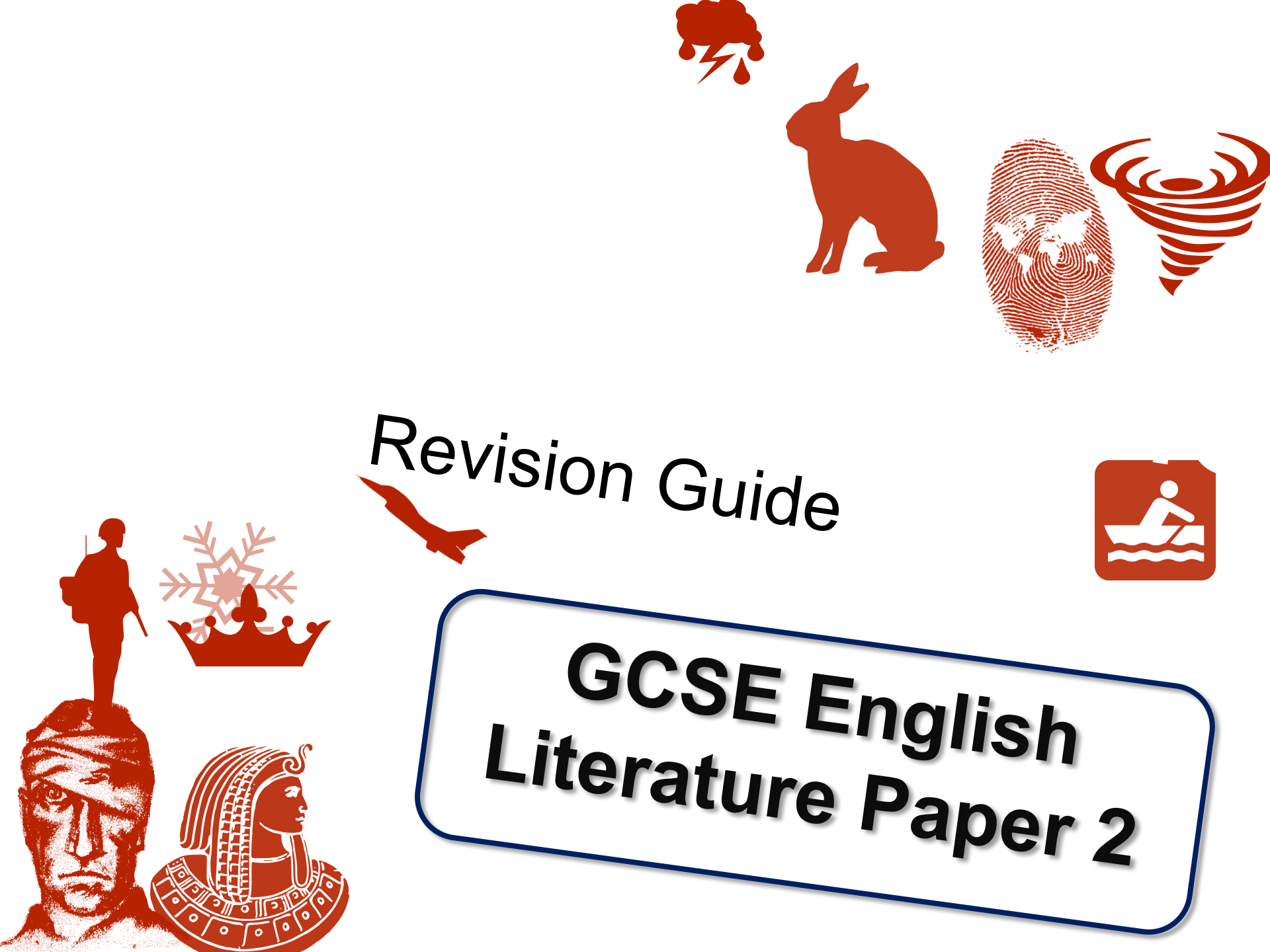
During the Second World War he presented a very popular weekly radio programme which the Conservative political party branded as being very left-wing. The programme was cancelled by the BBC because it was felt to be too one-sided and critical of the Government at the time.

'*An Inspector Calls*' was published and performed in 1945 in the Soviet Union as the Second World War came to an end. It was written at a time when class divisions were becoming blurred in Britain, where women were being given more rights and respect, and people want great change in society.

The play itself is set in 1912 – a time before the two World Wars, where class divisions were very clear, where women were poorly treated, where social inequality was great and where there was very little support for the elderly, sick, disabled and poorest in society. It is important to remember that women were not even given the vote in Britain until 1928; before that time movements like the Suffragettes campaigned through militant action to make significant changes to society.

In 1945 Clement Attlee's Labour Party won a landslide election victory despite Winston Churchill's Conservatives leading the UK to victory in Europe in the Second World War. It was clear that the British people wanted great social change, and with the NHS being founded in 1948, the play helped to continue to change attitudes towards social inequality in the country. This is what Priestley intended with his play; he wanted the people of Britain to embrace change and make the most of the social upheaval that the two World Wars had caused.

Priestley continued to write into the 1970s, and died in 1984.



Revision Guide

GCSE English Literature Paper 2

[illegible]



The Prelude by William Wordsworth



Language: This can be quite a difficult poem for students to get their heads around; this is because Wordsworth is being very metaphorical. The nature that surrounds him is a representation of his state of mind: at first he is confident, self-assured and ultimately happy, but later his mood completely alters. He becomes anxious, fearful and scared. It is about a man finding his own identity and how he fits into the world around him.



What happens in the poem? The speaker is out walking in the Lake District, an area of England that is known for its stunning natural beauty (mountains, trees, plants, and flowers – essentially, beautiful countryside). When out walking the speaker finds a boat and steals it.

During his journey he describes the natural world around him and seems full of admiration and happiness, but then his mood change as he encounters an enormous, black mountain. This fills him with fear and dread. The speaker then decides to head home, but his whole view of nature has been fundamentally altered.



Context: William Wordsworth belonged to a group of poets known as the Romantics. The Romantics were a group of writers, artists and musicians from the late 18th century into the early 19th century.

The Romantics had a very clear political philosophy and they wanted to stop the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. Rather than following the rules of society, the Romantics believed every person should follow their own ideals.

They felt it very important that people only express their personal feelings. They also felt a sense of responsibility to everyone in society: they felt it was their duty to use their work to change society.



Structure: The extract from The Prelude is written in blank verse, or unrhyming lines of iambic pentameter (ten syllables a line: 5 bars, 2 beats per bar). Iambic pentameter is the type of meter that best mimics natural speech and presents a realistic representation of the speaker's thoughts and feelings.

At times the poem employs enjambment (where lines carry on into each other) to represent an overflowing of emotions.



Revision activities:

Go through the poem and using highlighters or coloured pens:

- Highlight all the parts of the poem which show a positivity to nature
- Highlight all the parts of the poem which show a negativity towards nature
- Highlight all the examples of the speaker *personifying* nature and explain why the speaker does this.
- The speaker uses the pronoun 'her' on a number of occasions in this extract. Why does he do this? Who might 'her' be? Which is it feminine?
- What do you notice about positivity and negativity within this poem? What does this tell you about the speaker's thoughts?





Storm on the Island by Seamus Heaney



Language: Like many of Heaney's other poems, this one is packed with images of nature. He describes the work the people of the community are doing to ensure they are protected from the oncoming storm; the speaker also describes the power of the storm through very military-like imagery and shows the growing strength of it, but ultimately this is a 'huge nothing' that they fear- which is the wind.



What happens in the poem? An isolated community is preparing itself for the onslaught of a severe storm. The speaker describes the preparations, his thoughts and feelings about the storm, the storm itself and how it affects him.



Context: Seamus Heaney grew up in rural Northern Ireland, where his father was a farmer. Much of Heaney's poetry focuses on the countryside of his childhood and his descriptions of nature can often act as metaphors for human behaviour – in many ways this is similar to Wordsworth's 'The Prelude'. Heaney spent much of his life living and teaching in Northern Ireland and devoted himself to his writing.



Structure: The poem is presented in one stanza, which could be used to represent the isolation of the island within the storm. Both enjambment and caesuras are used at times throughout the poem to emphasise the preparations of the people on the island and the ferocious power of the storm. Moreover, the poem is presented in blank verse: 19 lines of unrhyming iambic pentameter. Again, like 'The Prelude', iambic pentameter is used as it best represents the natural way of speaking. When you couple this with the at times informal language of the speaker ("you know what I mean") it feels as if the speaker is addressing us directly.



Revision activities:

- Highlight all the parts of the poem which shows the people on the island are well prepared and are safe.
- Highlight all the parts of the poem which show the power of the storm.
- Find all the military images used within in the poem. What do you think is the conflict within the poem? What do you think is the speaker's attitude towards the storm? Why?
- At which points is the poem at its most tense? When is it least tense? Why do you think Heaney constructed his poem like this?





Exposure by Wilfred Owen



Language: Owen was disgusted by the war and what he perceived as the utterly futile or pointless nature of it. Thousands of young men seemed to be losing their lives in horrifying ways for no reason. In this poem, Owen turns his focus to the weather and how it too becomes an enemy to the soldiers. By using a range of metaphors and similes, Owen is able to bring to life the weather that surrounds the soldiers and transforms it into their most deadly enemy.



What happens in the poem? A group of soldiers during the First World War are waiting around in the trenches before they are given orders to 'go over the top' and fight. During this time, the speaker describes the horrendous weather conditions that surround the soldiers and threaten to kill them: they are shown to be another type of enemy. Indeed, many soldiers did perish because of the appalling conditions rather than because of the fighting itself. The speaker mentions about soldiers remembering being back home, but ultimately 'nothing happens' in this poem.



Context: Wilfred Owen fought during the First World War and was killed just before the war ended. He used his writing abilities to create deeply cynical and angry poems about the War and the reasons why it had happened. Owen's works were very unusual at a time when most writing about the war had been deeply patriotic.



Structure: This poem is divided up into eight stanzas of five lines each (using iambic hexameter – lines of eight syllables), with each final line being indented and shorter than the rest. These shorter lines help to provide a type of final idea to each stanza that emphasises the speaker's thoughts and feelings regarding the war. They are often framed as rhetorical questions, asking the reader question the point of these men being exposed to these conditions.



Revision activities:

- Highlight all the words which show existing in these conditions was incredibly tough.
- Find all the words which show the speaker is not the only one who is suffering in these conditions.
- Find the examples of negative imagery being used in the poem. How is the weather described? Why do you think the speaker chose to personify the weather in this way?
- Which lines in the poem do you think are the most tragic and desperate? How does Owen use language in the poem to emphasise just how awful these conditions were?





The Charge of the Light Brigade by Alfred, Lord Tennyson



Language: Although the soldiers were killed because of a stupid mistake, the speaker tries to refocus the outcry that this generated and instead asks the reader to remember the soldiers' bravery and nobility rather than anything else. He describes the actions of the soldiers in detail, focusing on their bravery rather than their deaths. Repetition and refrains (see structure notes) are used to reinforce the emphasis on bravery, nobility and honour rather than sadness or anger.



Context: This poem is based around an infamous conflict during the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War, which took place between 1853 and 1856. Britain was at the time fighting with Russia. A miscommunication meant the soldiers in the Light Brigade were sent on the wrong mission, and ultimately many of those men were killed. The soldiers were sent into a valley that was surrounded by enemy soldiers with guns, whereas the Light Brigade only had swords on them.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson read about these events during 1854 and decided – in his position as Poet Laureate – to write his piece to praise the soldiers despite the error that led to their deaths.

Tennyson was one of the most famous and celebrated poets of the Victorian era and therefore a man of considerable influence.

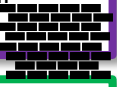


What happens in the poem? The speaker pleads with the reader to picture the six hundred soldiers that formed the Light Brigade to see them as brave and to be respected, even though their deaths were tragic and because someone 'blundered' or made a huge mistake. The soldiers charge into certain death and bravely fight on against impossible odds with those remaining alive returning at the end.



Structure: The poem is divided up into six stanzas, with the first being 8 lines long, the next two have 9 lines, the fourth stanza is 12 lines long, the fifth 11 and the final stanza only 6 lines long. The structure in this poem is driven by the refrain that appears at the end of each stanza and begins 'Rode the six hundred'. This line changes slightly depending on the message of each stanza, but the repetition of it focus the reader on the bravery of these men. They continue to ride on despite the horrors they face.

The poem also features repetition heavily, suggesting an unrelenting rhythm that mimics the fast pace of the soldiers and the horses as they rode into battle. This is further emphasised with the use of rhyming triplets and couplets throughout the poem, including at times the use of half rhyme.



Revision activities:

- Highlight all the words which show the speaker thinks the soldiers are **brave**.
- Highlight all the words which show the speaker thinks these soldiers should be **respected**.
- Look at the refrain at the end of each stanza. How does Tennyson use this in each stanza to emphasise the message of his poem?
- Look at Tennyson's use of imperative sentences within the poem. How do they help Tennyson to influence his reader?





Bayonet Charge by Ted Hughes



Language: The speaker explains how a soldier begins the war full of patriotism and pride in fighting for his country, but halfway across on his journey his feelings change and he gets a sense of 'bewilderment' or realisation of where he is and what he is doing. The inclusion of the yellow hare could be literal or it could be metaphorical, representing the cowardly side of the soldier wanting to escape the situation he now finds himself in. By the end of the poem he is desperate to escape. This poem contrasts particularly well with 'Charge of the Light Brigade' in terms of attitudes towards war and bravery.



Context: Ted Hughes once served in the RAF and studied Archaeology and Anthropology at university, so he was already thinking deeply about history and mythology by the time he came to his writing.

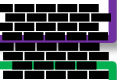
Hughes grew up in the 1930s and so could see the impact of the First World War on the world he lived in, but soon saw the reality of the Second World War kick in, too. Hughes' brother Gerald would leave home to join the RAF (Royal Air Force) and his father fought in the First World War as well.



What happens in the poem? A soldier during the First World War is sent 'over the top' to charge across no man's land with a bayonet or knife fixed to the end of his rifle. As he moves his thoughts and feelings begin to change. The soldier loses his sense of raw patriotism and this is replaced with overwhelming fear and terror. By the end of the poem the soldier can only think of trying to find a way out of his situation.



Structure: The poem begins with the soldier already running – he finds himself running across the battlefield, as if he is detached from what is happening. The poem is broken up into three stanzas: the first explains the soldier's initial actions and the patriotism he had at the beginning: "The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye / Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest". The second stanza shows a significant change in tone with the soldier experiencing 'bewilderment' and a level of self-awareness: "In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations / Was he the hand pointing that second?" It is a kind of existential experience for the soldier as he begins to question exactly what he is doing. The third stanza sees the soldier 'awaken' again and find a way to keep moving, to get out of "blue crackling air", but the yellow hare is included potentially as a form of metaphor to represent cowardice. The use of caesuras and enjambment creates lines of differing lengths which could represent the uneven running of the man through the mud.



Revision activities:

- Find all the words in the first stanza which represent bravery and patriotism.
- Find all the words in the second stanza which question those ideas of bravery.
- Find all the words in the final stanza which suggest panic and fear.
- Find three language techniques being used in this poem. For each one, explain how the technique gets across the writer's ideas to the reader.
- Choose three examples of enjambment and caesuras and evaluate how they impact on the reader.





Remains by Simon Armitage



Language:

The title has multiple meanings: It can mean 'remains' as in what remains of a body after a person has been killed, it can refer to what 'remains' in the soldier's head after the event and finally what remains of the soldier now that his life has been turned upside down. The first-person perspective provides a kind of monologue and the use of no particular rhyme scheme and examples of enjambment make the poem sound like natural speech, as if the speaker is talking directly to us.



What happens in the poem? A soldier recalls the memories he has of killing a man who was running from a bank raid he was a part of. The soldier describes the memory of killing him in great detail and explains his feelings about it afterwards. It is not something he can just forget about and the images of the man keep going around and around his head – this is something called 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder'.



Context: Simon Armitage is a very famous British poet and wrote a collection of poems called 'The Not Dead' based on the experiences of soldiers in the Gulf, Bosnian and Malayan Wars – those that happened after the Second World War.

Remains itself is based on the real life experiences of Guardsman Rob Tromans who served in Iraq in 2003 as a machine gunner. There is a link to Tromans retelling his story here but please be prepared for an account that is difficult to listen to:

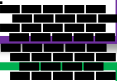
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DHWqppktFo>



Structure: The poem is made up of eight stanzas, with the first seven made up of mostly unrhymed quatrains (four line stanzas). However, the last stanza is only two lines long acting as a kind of summary of the soldier's feelings about the experience. Ultimately, he cannot get the image of the dead man out of his head.

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The first person perspective provides a kind of monologue and the use of no particular rhyme scheme and examples of enjambment make the poem sound like natural speech, as if the speaker is talking directly to us.



Revision activities:

- Find all the words which describe the killing of the man.
- Find all the words which show the soldier keeps remembering the event.
- Find all the words which show he cannot forget about what has happened.
- Find three language techniques being used in this poem. For each one, explain how the technique gets across the writer's ideas to the reader.
- How do the perspectives of the other soldiers mentioned in the poem differ to those of the speaker? What does this tell us about war?





Poppies by Jane Weir



Language:

As a mother prepares to say goodbye to her son who is leaving to go to war, she remembers the experiences she had with her son when he was a child, how she feels now that he is going and her fears of what will happen in the future. The speaker employs military imagery to always link her son to war. Throughout the poem a military motif is used to provide constant reminders of war and conflict and echoes the speaker's own feelings as she keeps thinking of her son going off to fight. Images such as "blockade", "spasms", "bandaged" and "reinforcements" all allude to the threat of war throughout the entire piece.



What happens in the poem? A mother describes her thoughts and feelings as her son is leaving home to join the army. As a mother prepares to say goodbye to her son who is leaving to go to war, she remembers the experiences she had with her son when he was a child, how she feels now that he is going and her fears of what will happen in the future. Like some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, Weir's Poppies deals with the feelings of absence and loss.



Context: Jane Weir is of English and Italian heritage, and grew up in both Manchester and Italy. As an adult she spent time living in Belfast but now resides in England. The poem 'Poppies' was commissioned as part of a collection of modern war poetry by Carol Ann Duffy in 2009.

The poem uses military imagery throughout but seems to point to modern warfare and how this impacts on the lives of family at home.



Structure: The poem has four clear stanzas, the opening and closing stanzas with six lines, the second with 11 and the third 12.

The heavy use of caesuras suggests a person unsure about themselves and how they feel. Whilst the mother gives the outward appearance of confidence and certainty to her son, inside we can see through her thoughts that she is struggling to come to terms with the loss of her son as he leaves.

As the poem moves along we see it is moving across time as well: "Three days before", "Before you left", "After you'd gone", "later" and "this is where it led me". Throughout the poem the mother returns to her past with her child as she remembers their experiences together.

The memorial in the final stanza acts as a visual metaphor for the past as the speaker stands in the present looking to the future. Like some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, Poppies focuses on the idea of time and the power it has.



Revision activities:

Highlight all the words in the poem that show the role of a mum or mother.

For each word or phrase highlighted, explain how the speaker is feeling.

Using the quote on the left hand side and your own interpretation of the poem, what message was Weir trying to send to her readers? Why?



Jane Weir on Poppies:

"I wanted to write a poem from the point of view of a mother and her relationship with her son, a child who was loved cherished and protected... and it had led to this....

heightened and absolute fear that parents experience in letting their children go, the anxiety and ultimately the pain of loss... I hoped to somehow channel all this, convey it into something concise and contemporary, but also historically classic, in terms of universal experience."



War Photographer by Carol Ann Duffy



Language:

Duffy uses her poem to not only explain the difficult role of being a war photographer, but to ask the reader to look at themselves and ask why they have become desensitised to images of war. It also seems like the war photographer is finding it increasingly difficult to find comfort in his own world but also forget about the events he has seen – he is emotionally and mentally torn. The religious imagery in the first stanza allows the photographer to detach himself from the process of developing the photos and being affected by the suffering he has witnessed. It has become a process he must go through without emotional response in order for him to complete it. However, we know he is affected by it as his hands ; which did not tremble then though seem to now'. The sibilance of 'spools of suffering' again seems to dehumanize or desensitize the photographer and the reader to the violence of war.



What happens in the poem? This poem focuses on the experiences of someone who goes to war zones to take pictures for national newspapers back in the UK. In his darkroom (where he develops his photos) at the start of the poem, he develops the pictures he's taken. Being back at home in the UK presents a very different world to the ones he has visited in the midst of war. Like in 'Remains', the photographer remembers the experiences he went through and the 'ghosts' that are in his thoughts.



Context: Carol Ann Duffy was friends with a war photographer herself and was intrigued by the idea of people who go to war zones to record what is happening there without being able to get directly involved themselves. The poem mentions several war zones like Belfast and Phnom Penh. The photographer lives in rural England and this acts as a contrast to the war zones.



Structure: The poem is divided up into four regular six line stanzas and each one ends with a rhyming couplet. Unlike some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, War Photographer is rigidly structured. Could this mirror the photographer's determination to find some sort of order in the chaos he finds himself in? He does put the 'spools of suffering' into 'ordered rows' after all. Moreover, a war photographer must be detached and distant from his work in order to do his job. The regular structure to the poem seems to reflect this.

The final lines "From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where / he earns his living and they do not care" suggest the people he takes photos for do not care about the people he takes photos of, and the war photographer is off to his next assignment to earn his living and feels 'impassive' or without care about having to do it once more.



Revision activities:

Highlight all the words which show the war photographer is trying to detach himself from the experiences he has been through.
Highlight all the words which show the true horrors of war.

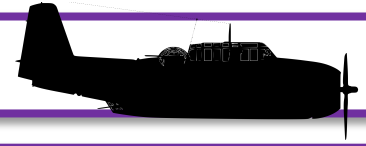
Find the quotes which show the people back at home do not really care about the war photos they see. How does Duffy use language to emphasise this lack of feeling towards others?

How does Duffy use language to make clear to the reader how the war photographer is struggling to exist within the two worlds that he finds himself trapped between? How is this similar or different to one of the other poems in the collection?





Kamikaze by Beatrice Garland



Language:

Beatrice Garland uses this poem to question the attitudes surrounding Kamikaze pilots and how the pilot is treated when he returns. The way the fish are described in the sea emphasises how beautiful they were to the father, and the way speaker talks of her father suggests she can understand why he did what he did.

The pilot has a dichotomy to choose between: a physical death and an emotional death. If he completes his mission, he loses his physical life. If he does not, he loses any emotional connection with his family and friends. Throughout the poem similes ("strung out like bunting") adjectives ("green-blue translucent sea") and powerful imagery ("flashing silver as their bellies swivelled towards the sun") are used to show the power of the pilot's childhood memories to make him want to return home.



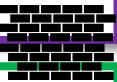
Context: Kamikaze pilots were used more and more during the final stages of the Second World War as the Japanese war leaders became increasingly desperate. It was seen in Japanese society as a great honour to die for your country and Kamikaze pilots were highly respected – but to refuse to complete your mission left you isolated and ostracised, as we see in this poem.



What happens in the poem? A kamikaze pilot sets off on his mission but halfway on his journey he changes his mind. Kamikaze pilots were trained to go on suicide missions, or to crash their planes into enemy boats. The pilot's daughter tries to explain to the reader why she thinks he turned back: because he loved the beauty of nature around him and because he remembered the wonderful days of his childhood. It was a great honour to become a kamikaze pilot in Japanese culture at the time and to not complete your mission would be viewed as cowardice and a great dishonour to your family. The pilot's wife and family shun and isolate and slowly his children learn to do so too.

Structure: The poem is set out in seven, six-line stanzas and although there isn't a regular rhyming pattern to the piece, most lines have a similar length and number of syllables to them, providing a calmness, neutrality and regularity to the poem. The speaker tells the reader the story, and the reader can then make up their own minds about the events that have taken place.

There is a shift in perspective halfway through the poem. Initially, the poem is told in third person ("her father, "she thought"), but this changes to first person ("my mother never spoke again") which changes our understanding of the poem and of the pilot. Finally, we are told that the speaker's mother thinks the father probably felt about would have been the better way to die. We are provided with three perspectives throughout the poem and it is up to the reader to interpret the events.



Revision activities:

- Find three quotes which show the speaker understands why her father did what he did.
- Find all the quotes which show the family shunned the pilot.
- How do you interpret the poem? Do you think the pilot was right to turn back? Why? Why not? Use quotes from the poem to support your interpretation.
- Choose three language techniques the writer has included in her poem. How does each one influence the reader in terms of their interpretation of the pilot's actions?





Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley



Language:

Ozymandias was once the ruler of a great civilisation, but now virtually nothing exists of the city he presided over. It can be argued that the poem 'Ozymandias' is not just about Ramesses but about the abuse of power generally and how those with power can perceive themselves to be invincible or undefeatable.

The adjectives 'vast' and 'trunkless' provide the perfect juxtaposition to describe Ozymandias and his legacy: A vast statue was created of him, but it lacks a torso and so the intention of the statue to provoke fear and respect from everyone is now redundant. The repetition of 'King of Kings' highlights Ozymandias' ridiculous sense of self-importance, and the oxymoron of 'colossal wreck' again brings together the ideas of power mixed with being powerless.



What happens in the poem? The speaker meets a traveller who explains to him about a broken statue he saw standing in the middle of a desert. We find out the statue was of a former pharaoh or king known as Ozymandias. The statue's base contains an inscription which shows that Ozymandias is boasting of his immense power, but around the statue is nothing but wasteland.



Context: Written by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1818, it focuses in on Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II who ruled from 1279 BCE to 1213 BCE (66 years!) Ozymandias was another name for Ramesses. Ramesses II had hundreds of statues and temples built in his name, which would have used slave labour to build them.



Shelley was born into a wealthy family and was set to inherit his father's fortune. However, Shelley began writing on controversial topics – including atheism (not believing in God) – which meant his father disowned him.

Structure: The poem has a rhyme scheme of ABABACDCDEFEF. It is a mixture of a Petrarchan sonnet (a traditional way of structuring a sonnet) and a Shakespearean sonnet which came later. There is a 'volta' or twist in the poem on the ninth line ("And on the pedestal, these words appear"), which again is traditional within a sonnet. A sonnet is a very specific, very rigid form of poetry, so why does Shelley use it for his poem? Well, it seems almost fitting that a man of such immense power and arrogance like Ozymandias should have his entire legacy reduced down to 14 lines and to be controlled by the writer, not himself. Instead of an epic poem that might have been expected for a great pharaoh, he is boxed in to this very rigid pattern. It almost seems inevitable that power will corrupt and be destroyed eventually as well.



Revision activities:

Structure:

How does the rhyme of 'stand' and 'sand' give the image extra power?

Why does Shelley rhyme 'decay' and 'away' and 'despair' and 'bare' at the end of the poem?

Most of the poem is written as a quote from the traveller. Why does Shelley choose to do this?

Language:

Highlight all the negative ideas within the poem. Choose three and explain what they mean.

Highlight in one colour the description of the statue and in another the description of Ozymandias as a person. What do you notice about the two descriptions?

Label all the language techniques you can find being used in the poem. How do they help to emphasise the meaning or message of the poem?





London by William Blake



Language:

Blake wanted to bring change to his own country and hated seeing the suffering around him. In his poem he uses imagery to emphasise just how awful life is for most people in the city and how those with power simply ignore what is happening around them. Throughout the poem the writer takes advantage of the use of sound to create a cacophony of pain and sadness through the cries and curses of all the people of London.



What happens in the poem? The speaker describes a walk around the city of London during the 18th century. Everywhere he looks the speaker sees poverty, misery and despair. No one escapes it, except perhaps those who live behind the palace walls and the Church – who seem to do nothing about the inequality that surrounds them.



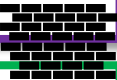
Context: Blake lived at time of huge change in Europe: France had gone through a revolution where the ordinary people had risen up against the wealthy ruling classes. It inspired Blake to look to his own country and see the suffering all around him.

Blake lost faith in his religion and so began to question the role of Christianity and the Church in society, something which he alludes to in the poem 'London'. England itself was going through the Industrial Revolution which itself was bringing enormous changes to life for the people of the country.



Structure: The structure is simple and regular – the poem is presented in four stanzas of four lines (quatrains) with a regular ABAB rhyme scheme. This allows Blake to create regular snapshots of all the misery taking place in London, but also may imply that such suffering is firmly established and normalised in 18th century London.

At the centre of the poem lies the Church and the palace – both home to the centres of power in 18th century England. This is symbolic and significant – surrounding the places of power in this society is great suffering.



Revision activities:

Find three powerful images of the suffering of ordinary people in London.

Find three powerful images of the people with power doing nothing to help those suffering.

Why does Blake speak of 'charter'd street' and 'charter'd Thames'? 'Charter'd' means privately owned. What does it suggest about life in 18th century London?

Why does Blake use the oxymoron 'marriage hearse' at the end of the poem? What does it suggest about the futures of the poor in London?



My Last Duchess by Robert Browning



Language:

The poem is critical of the pride and vanity of the Duke, whose jealousy and suspicious nature seems him lose his wife – potentially because he had her murdered. He is presented as a sinister and unlikeable character who judges things by its appearance rather than having any substance. Look at how he refers to his wife as 'my' Duchess – as if he owns her. When he alludes to his wife he speaks of "A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad" with the dashes suggesting the Duke is considering his words very carefully but also may suggest he is angry and furious at what happened, highlighting his jealousy at his wife delighting in others' gifts and suggesting she may have had affairs behind his back. The line "I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together" is particularly sinister as the noun 'commands' suggest the Duke had his wife killed and the sibilance of "smiles stopped" hints at his delight at what happened.



What happens in the poem? The poem is a type of dramatic monologue and 'Ferrera' is the character saying it. It is believed Ferrera is based on Alfonso II d'Este, the fifth Duke of Ferrara (1533–1598), who, aged 25, married Lucrezia di Cosimo de' Medici, the 14-year-old daughter of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Eleonora di Toledo.

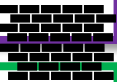
The Duke is presenting a painting of his ex-wife to a visitor to his home. The Duke explains that he was angered by his wife's behaviour towards him and other people: she treated him like anyone else and she seemed to enjoy simple gifts from others just as much as any he gave her. It is hinted at in the poem that the Duke may have had the Duchess murdered. By the end of the poem it is made clear he is moving on to a potential new wife. The old Duchess was simply his 'last' Duchess.

Context: Robert Browning was a 19th century poet and born into a wealthy family. He later moved to Italy and married his wife Elizabeth Barrett – one reason that they moved was to escape her over-protective father. These experiences meant Browning knew all too well about over-controlling patriarchs or leading male family members. It is believed Ferrera is based on Alfonso II d'Este, the fifth Duke of Ferrara (1533–1598), a well-known aristocrat.



Structure: The poem is presented in lines of iambic pentameter (five bars of two beats = 10 syllables per line) and in rhyming couplets. However, although rhyming couplets would normally help make a poem easy to remember, the Duke employs lots of enjambment and caesuras throughout the poem, with caesuras showing he is being very controlling in what he says, but enjambment showing he is very keen to show off his wealth and power to his visitor, or presents the anger and jealousy he feels about his wife's behaviour.

Like some of the other poems in the 'Power and Conflict' collection, this poem is presented as a dramatic monologue meaning we only ever hear from one perspective; in this case it is only the Duke's. He is controlling the conversation in this poem and it symbolises his over-protective nature.



Revision activities:

Highlight all the words that suggest the Duke is a proud man.

Circle all the parts of the poem that suggest the Duke was suspicious of his wife.

What is the Duke proud of? What might this suggest to us about him as a character?

In what ways does Browning portray the Duke? What message might the writer be presenting to his reader? Although not told directly, the reader can begin to understand how the Duke and Duchess' relationship deteriorated. How do we see this?





The Emigrée by Carol Rumens



Language:

Throughout the poem there is a contrast between the light of the positive memories of the speaker's childhood home and the darkness of the negative memories of her home being destroyed by war and conflict. A light motif is shown in contrast and even in conflict with the darkness motif, with the speaker personifying both ideas and acting as a guardian to the positive memories, protecting them from the darkness of the negative effects of conflict.



What happens in the poem? The speaker is a young girl who was forced to leave her home country, but rather than be negative about she clings on to the positive memories of her home and her childhood. There is a lot of war and military imagery used in this poem, so we assume she has left home because of war. She explains she knows what her home is like now, but she refuses to accept that as a reality, rather imagining the world she remembered instead.



Context: Rumens bases much of her poetry on ideas of people emigrating from places like Russia or the Middle East to move elsewhere and escape corruption or tyranny (the abuse of power), or where places have been widely affected by war, such as Syria.



Structure: The poem is divided into three stanzas, with the first two being eight lines long and the final stanzas nine lines long. This extra line may represent the determination of the speaker not to let go of the positive image of her city.

There is no rhyme pattern used in 'The Emigrée' but most lines use five stresses – although this is not always the case. This may reflect the chaos and confusion that surrounds war zones and fleeing the place you once called home.



Revision activities:

Use four colours:

- Find all the words to do with **lightness**. Highlight them.
- Find all the words to do with **darkness**. Highlight them.
- Find all the words to do with a **positive city**, highlight them.
- Find all the words to do with a **negative city**, highlight them.
- Is the positive city linked to light or darkness?
- Why might this be? What is the writer trying to tell us?
- Why is there also a negative city? Why is this linked to darkness?





Checking Out Me History by John Agard



Language:

Many of the non-European historical figures are associated with fire, water or light, indicating hope, freedom or positivity ("Fire-woman", "hopeful stream", "freedom rover"). The other Eurocentric historical figures or even nursery rhymes are treated with a far more comical and musical tone that seems to satirize their importance in traditional British education.



What happens in the poem? The speaker of the poem is angry at the way he has been taught only nursery rhymes and European history at school. He feels that he has to carve out his own identity through his own efforts rather than relying on schools to tell him about his own past. He goes through a number of examples of Eurocentric historical figures like Napoleon and Lord Nelson, before switching his focus to historical figures he sees more relevant to his own background, such as Mary Seacole and Nanny de Maroon.



Context: John Agard was born in Guyana in 1949 and moved to Britain in 1977. Identity and ethnicity are therefore very important in many of his poems.

Creole is a mixture of different languages and is a type of **dialect**, so words that are unique to it and aren't usually found in English. John Agard writes in Creole in some parts of his poem 'Checking Out Me History' and in more formal English in others.



Structure: There are two clear structures in this poem: the Creole-influenced sections which focus on European historical figures, written mostly in rhyming couplets, triplets or quatrains. End rhyme is also used regularly in these sections. They all work together to create a bouncy, comical sound to these descriptions. The other type of structure is when the speaker focuses on three black historical figures: Toussaint L'Overture, Nanny de Maroon and Mary Seacole. Here there is a more irregular rhyme scheme and the lines are much shorter. These help to produce a more serious, sombre tone that perhaps imply respect.



Revision activities:

Highlight the parts written in 'Creole' in one colour and in another the parts written in more formal or 'standard' English.

For which parts has Agard used Creole and for which has he used formal? Why does he do this?

How does Agard's use of language in these stanzas help to mirror Agard's message in the poem?



Tissue by Imtiaz Dharker

Language:

The speaker uses a light motif throughout the poem to symbolize human hope, human intelligence and the capability of humans to become so much greater than they are. Metaphors or symbols are used to represent different 'achievements' in human history but that spiritually we can go much further than roads, buildings or maps.



What happens in the poem? This poem is not narrative but rather sets out to explain the power of tissue paper as an extended metaphor for life. The speaker explains how paper has been important to us throughout our history, including through recording our history and its power in religious texts like the Quran. Moreover, the speaker talks of the power of paper through receipts, maps and architectural drawings. Paper is incredibly important to us, but the speaker also makes clear how fragile it can be as well.

The speaker goes on to suggest that human life is more significant than paper and it will go on to outlive the records we make. However, the speaker might also suggest that human life is fragile like paper and what we build and create cannot always last. It is a poem that is open to interpretation.



Context: Imtiaz Dharker is a poet of Pakistani origins but was raised in Glasgow in Scotland. Many of her poems focus on topics such as the power and role of religion, the issue of terrorism and finding your identity. Much of her work is metaphorical and symbolic. Tissue doesn't refer to any specific time or place, but seems to transcend time and place to question the very nature of existence.



Structure: The poem is broken up into mostly unrhymed and irregular quatrains (lines of four). This 'messy' layout can reflect the way life is both irregular and often flimsy. Moreover, the use of enjambment across the poem suggests a lack of control by human beings over their own lives and reflects the flowing and delicate nature of both humanity and paper – there are many similarities between the two.

Every stanza is of four lines, except one: the last stanza, which has only one line to it. This therefore brings attention to the last stanza: "turned into your skin".



Revision activities:

Find all the quotes which use the symbol or metaphor of *light*. Why do you think the speaker uses this metaphor to describe paper?

Find all the quotes which show paper is powerful. Explain in what ways does the speaker show paper to have power.

Find all the quotes which show paper and humanity are similar. In your own words, evaluate what the poem says about the similarities between paper and humanity.

