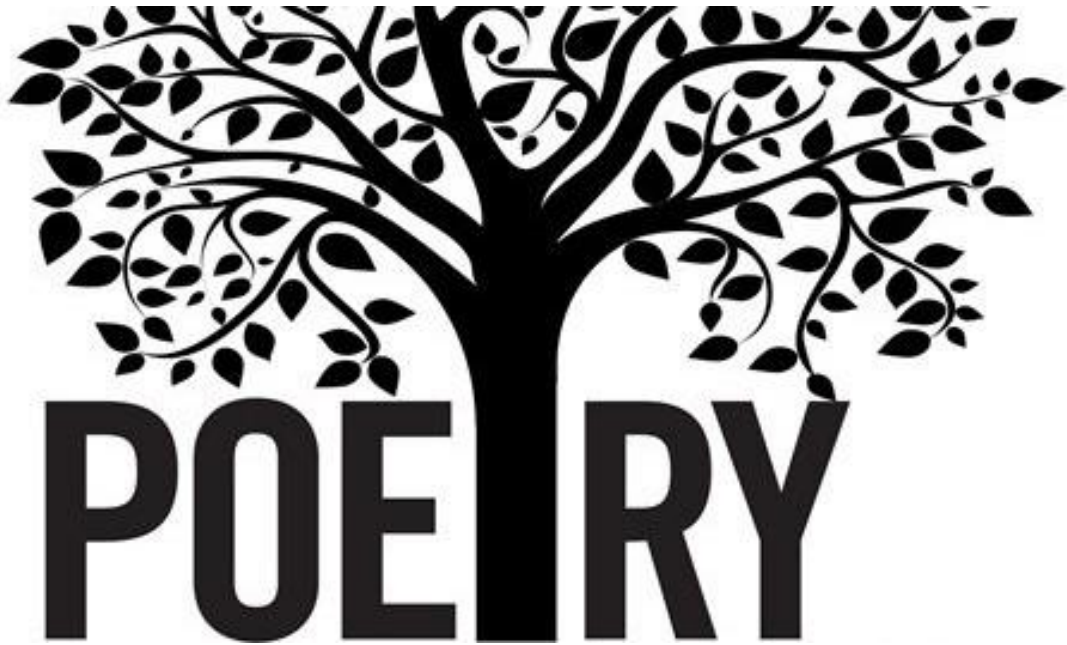


Outwood Grange Academies Trust

English Literature Revision Guide

WJEC EDUQAS Anthology Poetry



Version 1

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The Manhunt by Simon Armitage

The one about the scarred soldier

The Manhunt is written from the perspective of the wife of a soldier who has sustained serious injuries at war and has returned home. The poem explores the physical and mental effects of living with injuries sustained when on active service in the armed forces.

Key Quotations:

- The title 'The Manhunt' suggests a chase or searching for something or that he is lost
- Images of delicate materials "porcelain" and "silk" suggests beauty and vulnerability
- Images of broken body parts "grazed heart", "broken ribs" suggests human casualties of war and the vulnerability of mind and body
- Pain still growing mentally and physically "foetus of metal" and "unexploded mine" suggests potential to still explode or permanent scarring
- Final words – "only then did I come close" suggests it is a journey through his pain and healing and their reconciliation as a couple. She is finally closer to 'catching' him.

Context:

- Told from the perspective of a soldier's wife – deals with the idea of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its impact on the soldier and those around him/her.

Structure:

- The poem is organised into couplets. Initially these couplets rhyme ("first phase... intimate days"), perhaps reflecting the couple's harmony when they were first reunited. However, as the poem progresses the rhyme scheme falters, reflecting the increasingly disjointed nature of their relationship.

Possible Themes and Links:

- War and its lasting effects – *Mametz Wood*, *A Wife in London* and *Dulce et Decorum Est*
- Relationships and love – *Cozy Apologia* and *A Wife in London*
- Suffering (mental and physical) – *Mametz Wood* and *Dulce et Decorum Est*

The title **puns** on the idea of the 'manhunt', meaning literally a hunt to capture a man, often a criminal. Here the wife's search is for the husband she knew so well but who seems *lost* to her, metaphorically, after his experiences at war.

The Manhunt

After the first phase,
after passionate nights and **intimate days,**

only then would he let me **trace**
the frozen river which ran through his face,

only then would he let me **explore**
the **blown hinge of his lower jaw,**

and **handle and hold**
the **damaged, porcelain collar-bone,**

and **mind and attend**
the **fractured rudder of shoulder-blade,**

and **finger and thumb**
the **parachute silk of his punctured lung.**

Only then could I **bind the struts**
and **climb the rungs of his broken ribs,**

and **feel the hurt**
of his **grazed heart.**

Skirting along,
only then could I picture the **scan,**

the **foetus of metal beneath his chest**
where the bullet had finally come to rest.

Then I widened the search,
traced the scarring back to its source

to a **sweating, unexploded mine**
buried deep in his **mind,** around which

every nerve in his body had tightened and closed.

Then, and **only then,** did I come close.

Simon Armitage

'Only then' is repeated four times perhaps this suggest that it is a slow process to get him to open up.

Poem is written from the perspective of his wife who is trying to understand the mental and physical effects of war. The loving, sensual language throughout may reflect the intimacy of husband and wife, and keen devotion from the wife hoping to heal him.

The verbs reflect the activities of the wife as she conducts her "search", suggesting careful treatment of her husband's injured body and mind. It may also imply that he is no longer familiar to her.

The words 'mind' and 'attend' are related to medical attention, therefore suggesting that his wife is attempting to heal her husband.

The 'fractured rudder' suggests that he can't 'steer' himself – she has to guide him.

'Parachutes are used within the military, however a broken parachute is useless. Perhaps this is a reflection of how the man feels about himself.

The man has a "grazed heart", perhaps literally from an injury caused by "the metal beneath his chest", but also metaphorically. He is unable to connect with his wife, unwilling to speak of his experiences, and so their loving relationship is affected.

The image of the metal bullet still inside him as a "foetus" suggests that, like having a baby, the couple's relationship will be forever changed by what he has gone through. It may also suggest that the 'foetus' feeds off him and takes his energy – perhaps reinforcing the idea that his injuries are life changing.

The final line of the poem emphasises the impact that war has on relationships. This is made clear in the line "Then, and only then, did I come close". Her search is not fully successful, she only comes "close", and only after she realises that her husband's problems lie as much in memories of his experiences as they do in his physical scars.

The use of the metaphor suggests that the jaw is physically and metaphorically broken. This may suggest that he is no longer open with her, perhaps unable to talk of his feelings and experiences.

The use of the metaphor 'porcelain collar – bone' implies that he fragile and delicate and that he needs to be handled with care. 'Porcelain' is often hard, but can also chip easily and is cold to the touch. Perhaps it is a reminder of the 'frozen river which ran through his face.'

Creates an image of a ladder and a closely observed detail of her hands exploring the altered body of her husband. The idea of the ladder is reflective of the effort involved in the wife's gradual search for answers and her gradual coming to terms with her husband's state of mind.

The metaphor of "a sweating, unexploded mine buried deep in his mind" implies that the source of the problem is not physical but mental, and threatens to cause problems at any time. Perhaps the wife is trying to diffuse him. The importance of the wife's care and delicacy is highlighted by her discovery of this problem, she has to tread carefully as to not trigger PTSD.

Sonnet 43 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The one with all the ways of loving someone

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet sequence was written before she married Robert Browning to express her intense love for him. Sonnet 43 is the most famous of the 44 sonnets. In it, Browning attempts to define her love. The opening of the poem suggests it arises from a question: 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways!'

Key Quotations:

- The opening line 'How do I love thee?' suggests an intimate conversation between lovers.
- 'Depth', 'breadth' and 'height' are weighty concepts which suggest her love is comprehensive and allows her to reach impossible extremes.
- Poem of comparisons – 'Most quiet need' and 'men strive for Right' are two very different ideas. One is simple and one is complex showing the intensity of her feelings.
- Replaced her faith in God with her love for her husband – 'lost saints'.
- Final words – 'I love thee better after death' suggests even death will not part them. Their love is eternal.

Context:

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning's brother drowned at a young age and as a result her father was very over-protective. She eloped against his wishes with the poet, Robert Browning, showing how important love was to her.
- Elizabeth's Barrett Browning's father disinherited her after she married Robert Browning.

Structure:

- Browning uses repetition of 'I love thee'. This sounds similar to a prayer so therefore she could be praying/hoping that someday they will be able to be together.
- At the beginning of the poem she makes references to her love being limitless and she also reinforces this at the end in the last line 'I shall but love thee more after death.'
- *Sonnet 43* is the length of a traditional sonnet (14 lines) but doesn't follow the traditional sonnet rhyme scheme. There are rhyming couplets yet the poem avoids a perfect rhyme scheme. Perhaps this reflects their relationship – unconventional but with close unity.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Relationships and love – *Cozy Apologia*, *Valentine* and *She Walks in Beauty*.

It was number 43 out of 44 sonnets that Browning wrote as part of her collection. Sonnets are generally love poems and this poem is one of the most famous sonnets ever written.

By using the verb 'count' this could suggest that there are many ways that she loves him and there are too many to mention.

By asking this question, Browning could be questioning how she can prove/express how much she loves Robert Browning.

Browning could be referring to God in this part and comparing her love for Robert Browning as the way she loves God.

This could imply that her love is immeasurable and infinite.

Sonnet 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways! -
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight -
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right,
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;
I love thee with the passion, put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith:
I love thee with the love I seemed to lose
With my lost Saints, - I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Browning is explaining that even though she loves him passionately she also loves him on a regular day to day basis.

This could suggest that she loves every part of every day and her love does not falter. By using the image of the 'sun' could suggest that he is her life source and that she cannot live without him. By using the image of 'candlelight' this could suggest that that he lights up her dark thoughts.

The adverb 'freely' could suggest that no one is influencing the way she feels about him and could relate to how her father disapproved of their relationship. The phrase 'Strive for Right' could imply that she is willing to 'fight' for their love.

This could imply that she has turned the bitterness and anger she had previously into something positive because she loves him so much. He has transformed her sadness into happiness.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

This could suggest that she loves everything about Robert Browning. She loves him with every emotion. Even with every 'breath' she takes she thinks about him.

This could suggest that her love is eternal and that it is a level of commitment she is willing to promise.

London by William Blake

The one where he wanders around the city of London

The speaker wanders through the streets of London and comments on his observations. He sees despair in the faces of the people he meets and hears fear and repression in their voices. The speaker openly criticizes the church, the monarchy and the government. Blake blames these institutions for the treatment of the poor people.

Key Quotations:

- The opening “I wander thro’” shows the poem is structured as a journey.
- Repetition of “charter’d” suggests London is owned and people have been robbed of their rights.
- In stanza two, the repetition of “every” suggests the enormity of poverty from children through to adults.
- Blake places blame on the church and state – “black’ning Church” and “Runs in blood down Palace walls”.
- Final words – “blights with plagues” suggests everything good is destroyed. “Plagues” implies decay and pestilence.

Context:

- Published as part of ‘Songs of Innocence and Experience’. This poem is one of the songs of Experience reflecting the more negative aspects of life.
- Blake lived and worked in London during the Victorian era, a time of great poverty and industrial change.

Structure:

- Blake uses a lot of repetition which could imply the cycle of poverty and that there is no escape for the lower social classes.
- Blake begins the poem London by just observing the streets. However, as the poem progresses, it is evident he is angry about the institutions that should support the poor people such as the church, the monarchy and the government. The poem ends negatively with implications of death.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Welfare and living conditions – *Living Space*
- Power and control – *Hawk Roosting, Ozymandias*

Blake writes this poem using 1st person signifying a personal first-hand account of the problems in London.

The repetition of the word 'mark' symbolises the physical scarring of the people of London. It could also suggest the obvious suffering that was happening.

The repetition of 'every' implies the size of the problem because it impacts on children and adults. No-one can escape the poverty.

Blake is angry that the Church is not helping the poor people of London. By using the adjective 'blackening' this implies that the church is corrupt.

'Harlots' are prostitutes. By using the adjective 'youthful', Blake is observing how young women/girls in London have to go to desperate lengths to survive. The word 'curse' could imply that they are punished because they are born into poverty and they are forever trapped.

The word 'plague' could suggest that there is no cure for the level of suffering and the pain is like an infestation that is attacking London.

Blake probably chose the title 'London' because he observed what misery the poor people had to endure in the capital city of England. What do you think the capital city of a country should represent?

This word could suggest that everything in London is mapped out and is owned by the government.

This could suggest even the nature in London is owned by the government and they have control over everything in London.

'Manacles' are handcuffs. The image of 'mind-forg'd manacles' implies that the people are trapped emotionally in society and in their social class.

Blake is criticising the exploitation of children in London. Children were expected to do dangerous jobs to survive.

This could suggest that soldiers are dying in pointless wars. Blake is blaming the monarchy for the deaths of the soldiers as the metaphor of 'runs in blood' implies that the Monarchy is murdering the soldiers.

A 'hearse' is a funeral carriage. Blake ends London with this oxymoron (two opposite words) to create a ominous tone. He seems to be implying that there are no happy endings for the poor people and that being born into a lower social class equals pain and death.

London

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.

And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,

The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every black'ning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

William Blake

The Soldier by Rupert Brooke

The one about how wonderful it is to die for your country

The poem describes Brooke's overtly patriotic view that it is a glorious and honourable sacrifice to die for your country, and specifically England. The poem acts almost as a love poem to England, which he romanticises and praises for its beauty and bounty. It is an idealistic view of war and what it was like or would be like to die in battle.

Key Quotations:

- The title 'The Soldier' suggests an anonymous person, reflecting how many soldiers died during WWI. It is a sonnet, a love poem to England.
- Opening line "If I should die" suggests an acceptance of death and modal verb "should" indicates a willingness to die for his country.
- The words "richer dust" suggests the remains of his body are superior to the ground he lies in because he is English not foreign. Dust also relates to the religious idea of our bodies becoming "dust" when we die.
- "A pulse in the eternal mind" suggests his presence in the soil of foreign land will always live on, making him immortal.
- Final words – "under an English heaven" shows his pride in England as he is suggesting England is almost like paradise and to die in England's name would bring him "peace".

Context:

- Rupert Brooke was a soldier during WWI and died of blood poisoning. He was buried in "a foreign field" in Cyprus.
- He never was involved in active service but this poem shows he felt very patriotic about England.

Structure:

- The poem begins with the idea of the anonymous soldier's death and suggests his decomposing body will infuse the ground around him with a little of his English values and ideals.
- The middle of the poem personifies England and considers how beautiful and picturesque the countryside is.
- The final stanza suggests that in death he will achieve some form of immortality under a "heaven" that is English, even if the land he lays in is not.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Patriotism – *Dulce et Decorum Est*
- Impact of war – *Dulce et Decorum Est* and *A Wife in London*
- Pride – *Ozymandias* and *Dulce et Decorum Est*

The Soldier

The title suggests an anonymous soldier and perhaps reflects how many soldiers were to lose their lives in battle.

There is an acceptance that he may die, but this is viewed as a sacrifice he is willing to make.

The poem is written in the first person and reflects the idea that it is an honour to fight and die for your country.

The adjective "foreign" suggests how far from home he is and how strange the environment feels compared to England.

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field

That is for ever earth England. There shall be

Religious overtones, reminiscent of a funeral service, he returns to dust upon his death.

In that rich a richer dust concealed;

The first mention of his country and his pride in fighting for her – that he represents her, even in death.

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,

Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,

A body of England's breathing English air,

Imagery suggests the beauty of England – her "flowers" and lanes, her "rivers".

Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.

Here he personifies England – she is almost his mother, who raised him and nurtured him.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,

A pulse in the eternal mind, no less

Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given:

Her sights and sounds, dreams happy as her day;

And laughter, learnt of friend; and gentleness,

The use of the adjective "evil" is perhaps an implied reference to the horrors of war and the cruelty mankind is capable of.

Again, almost religious, the verb "blest" suggests she is his benefactor, his protector.

In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

This suggests that in death he almost becomes part of the universe, he achieves some form of immortality.

Death brings peace and comfort and he can die in the knowledge of a life well spent and sacrificed appropriately to help protect a nation that is so important and righteous - even heaven reflects its values.

The poet reminds us of the cherished memories of England and home, shared with friends.

She Walks in Beauty by Lord Byron

The one with the beautiful woman

'She Walks in Beauty' is a short eighteen line poem celebrating female beauty. The beauty of the woman the speaker describes is in both her external appearance and her inner goodness. Although it might generally be classified as a love poem, the poet never actually declares that love. He concentrates on the subject's captivating attractiveness and purity. The speaker is a highly biased observer and he seems entirely fascinated by the woman's beauty. He is telling himself what he finds most captivating about this woman but at the same time communicating his feelings to a wider audience – the reader. We are therefore given a portrait of this woman, as seen through someone else's eyes. The speaker is keen to emphasise that it is not all about outward appearances. The early description of her physical beauty is matched by the description of her inner beauty or 'goodness' towards the end of the poem. She almost seems to be unobtainable and, to some extent, we may sympathise with the poet's sense of longing.

Key Quotations:

- The title and opening line 'She walks in beauty' celebrates female beauty, a portrait of a woman through someone else's eyes.
- References to light suggests an inner radiance – 'starry skies' and 'tender light'.
- Sense of mystery surrounding her - she is compared to the darkness of night and 'raven tress' is associated with bad omens.
- Suggestion of a recent encounter as description is superficial – 'smiles that win, the tints that glow' suggests inner modesty and she is loved by all.
- Final words – 'A heart whose love is innocent!' is the first time love is mentioned and her beauty is described both internally and externally.

Context:

- Byron was a leading figure of the Romantic movement and liked to break conventions.
- Byron's private life was very public and he was known for his many relationships with different women.

Structure:

- At the beginning of the poem, Byron expresses his admiration for the woman and as the poem progresses he then speaks about her inner 'goodness'. He ends the poem with the idea of 'love', an experience that perhaps brings together both the external and internal beauty.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Relationships and love – *Sonnet 43*, *Cozy Apologia* and *Valentine*

The pronoun 'she' could suggest an air of mystery around the woman because he doesn't know her. She could be anyone. The verb 'walks' could imply that everything about her is beautiful. It is not just her physical appearance that he admires but everything about her is beautiful even the way she moves.

Byron could use the simile 'like the night' to symbolise that this woman is different to all other women he has admired. Byron breaks the ordinary conventions of romantic poetry by emphasising how attractive her darkness is. For example, Shakespeare compares someone to 'a summer's day'.

The imagery used here is romantic and is mysterious just like the woman he is describing. Byron could be suggesting she is like the stars in the sky and is both lighting up the darkness and unobtainable.

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

This could imply that her beauty is understated and natural. He admires how effortless her beauty is.

Byron uses a contrast of 'dark and bright' throughout the poem. This could suggest that both 'dark' and 'bright' come together in this woman to create perfection and balance.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;

Byron is admiring her perfection.

The adjective 'raven' could suggest an element of danger about the woman. Byron is also breaking conventions of the stereotypical sense of beauty, showing the appeal and intrigue of such darkness and mystery.

Byron is admiring not only her physical appearances but her 'inner beauty'. Her 'sweet' thoughts match her external beauty.

Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,

The adjective 'eloquent' could suggest that her beauty is clear and sophisticated.

In this stanza, Byron is zooming into specific details of her face. 'The smiles that win' could suggest that she has the best smile he has ever seen.

The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Byron is admiring her innocence and her kindness.

Lord Byron

Why does Byron only mention 'love' in the last line? There are many interpretations for this. It could suggest that he is just physically attracted to her so he doesn't 'love' her. However, it could suggest that by writing the poem in the order he does shows the process of falling in 'love' with someone and he realises at the end that he does 'love' her.

Living Space by Imtiaz Dharker

The one about the slums in India

The poem describes a ramshackle living space, with its lack of 'straight lines' and beams 'balanced crookedly on supports'. Imtiaz Dharker has explained that the poem describes the slums of Mumbai, where people migrate from all over India in the hope of a better life. The slum areas are living spaces created out of all kinds of found materials: corrugated sheets, wooden beams and tarpaulin. In this poem she celebrates the existence of these living spaces as a miracle.

Key Quotations:

- The title is ironic as there isn't much "living space" in the slums of Mumbai.
- The enjambment of the poem reflects how the structures lean over and are on top of each other and the central stanza is "squeezed" in to reflect how living spaces are "squeezed" into small gaps.
- Language such as "crookedly", "clutch" and "leans dangerously" suggests it is unsafe.
- The image of the "eggs" shows ordinary objects make the slums feel like home and also reflect the fragility of life.
- Final words – "thin walls of faith" suggests the existence of these living spaces is a miracle and implies they still have "faith" even in difficult conditions.

Context:

- Born in Pakistan but raised in Scotland, Imtiaz Dharker has an interest in representing a different culture.

Structure:

- The poem Living Space begins with Dharker being sarcastic towards the negative views of the slums.
- The middle stanza represents the small 'Living Space' the people have to use as the stanza is 'squeezed' into the middle of the poem.
- The poem ends with Dharker's admiration of the people who live in the slums and their positive attitudes towards their negative circumstances.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Welfare and living conditions – *London*
- Fragility of life and resilience of spirit – *The Manhunt* and *Mametz Wood*

Dharker could have used this title because it is ironic as there is little 'living space' in the slums. However she could have used this title to suggest how other people just view it as just a 'living space' and not a home.

Dharker is identifying the divide between the rich/poor people of India. She is clearly saying there is a 'problem' between the different social classes.

Living Space

Dharker could be criticising the rich or the western views of the slums and that by writing 'not enough' suggests that they don't appreciate the beauty of the slums.

There are just not enough
Straight lines. That
Is the problem.

Dharker could use the adjectives 'flat and parallel' to signify that the social classes are not equal and there is a clear divide.

The adverb 'crookedly' could symbolise that the class system is corrupt. It could also highlight the dangerous living conditions that the people have to endure.

Nothing is flat
Or parallel. Beams
Balance crookedly on supports
Thrust off the vertical.
Nails clutch at open seams.

'Nails clutch' could be a metaphor for how the people in the slums 'clutch' for opportunities to raise their social status.

The word 'miraculous' implies Dharker's admiration for the people who live in the slums and create homes/lives there. She is emphasising that their society is special and unique.

The whole structure leans dangerously
Towards the miraculous.

The adverb 'dangerously' could imply that the people in the slums have to live in hazardous conditions.

Into this rough frame,
Someone has squeezed
A living space

The verb 'squeezed' could suggest that the people in the slums make the most out of everything they have.

The verb 'dared' could imply that the people are willing/have to take risks to make their lives better.

And even dared to place
These eggs in a wire basket,

'Wire basket' could imply the metaphorical prison the people are in.

'Eggs' could convey the vulnerability and fragility of their society/living areas. It could also suggest new life and optimism.

Fragile curves of white
Hung out over the dark edge

This could imply death and that the slums are a dangerous place to live.

Of a slanted universe,
Gathering the light
Into themselves,

'Slanted universe' could be a metaphor for their society because it is not equal and the inequality of the rich/poor engulfs everything.

As if they were
The bright, thin walls of faith.

'Light' could represent hope.

The adjective 'bright' could suggest the hope and happiness the people create in the slums despite their circumstances. However, the adjective 'thin' could represent the fragility and vulnerability of their society.

The metaphor of the 'walls' could imply that their optimism protects them from the harsh reality of their lives. Dharker ends the poem positively and with hope. Dharker could be implying that it does not matter if you are rich or poor as nobody can take away your beliefs/religion.

Imtiaz Dharker

As Imperceptibly as Grief by Emily Dickinson

The one where summer is ending

This poem is about Emily Dickinson's fear of death and feeling that she is tricked by time passing away. It could also be speaking of how her happiness is disappearing.

Key Quotations:

- The title and the first line "As imperceptibly as Grief" links the idea of grief to the passing of summer.
- The tone is melancholic – "Twilight long begun" suggests that grief is overtaking her happiness.
- The images of the end of a day/season such as "dusk", "twilight" and "Summer lapsed away" suggest the passing of time and life.
- Final words – "Summer made her light escape Into the Beautiful" suggests the passage of time is inevitable but will end in something more positive – possibly a release into heaven.
- The tone of the final words is more hopeful than the rest of the poem.

Word Definitions:

- ⊙ **Imperceptible** – slight/subtle – hardly noticeable
- ⊙ **Lapsed** – not valid / expired / out of date
- ⊙ **Perfidy** – being deceitful and untrustworthy
- ⊙ **Distilled** – heated to extract something
- ⊙ **Sequestered** – isolated / hidden away
- ⊙ **Courteous** – polite and respectful
- ⊙ **Harrowing** – really distressing

Context:

- Emily Dickinson lived in Massachusetts, USA, 1830-86. She was reclusive so did not leave the house often.
- Before she wrote this poem several family members and friends had died.

Structure:

- Dickinson uses a series of dashes to create a hesitant and disjointed pace to the poem, reflecting her own fractured state of mind

Possible Themes and Links

- Time passing – *To Autumn* and *Afternoons*
- The natural world – *To Autumn*, *Excerpt from the Prelude* and *Death of a Naturalist*

The word 'imperceptibly' could suggest that no-one notices the speaker's pain and grief because it has happened so gradually.

The word 'grief' suggests that the pain is unbearable and overwhelming. Grief is seen to be life-changing.

As Imperceptibly as Grief

The imagery of 'Summer' could represent happiness or the peak time in life.

The verb 'lapsed' could represent that time is passing and the speaker in the poem is thinking that death is approaching.

The use of the image 'Twilight' could suggest that the speaker is trapped between dark/depressed and light/happiness.

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away—
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy—

The word 'Perfidy' may suggest that Dickinson does not trust time and she feels almost tricked by how quickly time/happiness is taken away.

A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself

'Long ago' shows a melancholic tone of the darkness taking over the happiness.

The word 'Dusk' suggests that the speaker feels the darkness is drawing closer and she feels that the light (her happiness) is growing shorter each day.

Sequestered Afternoon—
The Dusk drew earlier in—
The Morning foreign shone—

'Dusk' is coming earlier each day suggesting the light's leaving her life

A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone—
And thus, without a Wing

The morning is 'foreign' to her because it offers light and hope. This is something that she does not recognise.

'Wing' and 'Keel' could suggest that the speaker feels like she is unstable and trapped. The speaker craves freedom but can't see any escape.

Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

The phrase 'harrowing Grace' suggests that everything that should be gentle and kind to her seems painful and frightening.

Emily Dickinson

The poem ends positively by Dickinson using the word 'Beautiful'. This could imply that she is now ready to move on to heaven.

The word 'light' could suggest that the speaker has finally accepted that time passes and that they will have to face death.

Cozy Apologia by Rita Dove

The one with the hurricane

Waiting for a storm to hit, the speaker hunkers down, snug and safe in her study. Though Hurricane Floyd disrupts the business of daily life, it also allows time for daydreams. So, with time on her hands, the speaker finds herself daydreaming about her partner.

Everything the speaker sees, from the rain outside to the ink on the page, reminds her of her partner. She pictures him as a knight in shining armour, protecting her. He's a vivid contrast, she thinks, to the 'worthless' boys she used to date. She's embarrassed by how content their cosy, ordinary lives have made them. Yet she draws comfort from filling the 'stolen time' resulting from the hurricane's approach with thoughts of Fred.

The word 'apologia' means 'a defence'. A paraphrase of the poem's title might be, 'A Defence of Cosiness'.

Key Quotations:

- The poem is in first person and could be autobiographical – “I could pick anything and think of you”.
- Uses a cliché ironically – “the chain mail glinting” and has a dreamy tone but is affectionate and humorous.
- It is a love poem filled with day to day details such as “compact disks” and “faxes” which shows it is about the realities of relationships, not “the divine”.
- The hurricane “Big Bad Floyd” has allowed her to daydream about the “worthless” boys of her past.
- Final words – “I fill this stolen time with you” suggests their relationship is happy and appreciated and the tone is reflective and thoughtful. Being content is better than great romance – it is consistent.

Context:

- It is set against the arrival of Hurricane Floyd, a powerful storm which hit the east coast of the USA in 1999.
- Rita Dove is American and married to the writer Fred Viebahn (probably the “Fred” in the poem)

Structure:

- In the first stanza, Dove uses the clichéd image of a knight in shining armour.
- In the second stanza, Dove reminisces on her childhood ‘crushes’.
- In the last stanza, Dove ends with how happy she is with her everyday ‘ordinary’ life/relationship.

Possible themes and links:

- Relationships and love – *Sonnet 43*, *She Walks in Beauty* and *Valentine*

Dove has probably used the title 'Cozy Apologia' to defend her relationship because other people might view their relationship as 'boring' and 'uneventful' but to her their relationship is special and is worth protecting. Fred is Dove's husband.

Cozy Apologia - for Fred

Dove is using a first person viewpoint. This suggests that this is autobiographical. The word 'anything' suggests everything in her life has memories of being with her husband.

Dove lists everyday things to emphasise her love for her partner. 'The lamp' could suggest he is the hope and happiness in her life. The 'glossy blue' ink could symbolise the inspiration he gives her on a daily basis.

I could pick anything and think of you—
This lamp, the wind-still rain, the glossy blue
My pen exudes, drying matte, upon the page.
I could choose any hero, any cause or age
And, sure as shooting arrows to the heart,
Astride a dappled mare, legs braced as far apart
As standing in silver stirrups will allow—
There you'll be, with furrowed brow
And chain mail glinting, to set me free:
One eye smiling, the other firm upon the enemy.

Dove uses a clichéd image of a knight in shining armour. This has a dreamy tone but is quite humorous. 'Set me free' could imply that Dove feels that her husband rescued her.

This could symbolise that life gets too busy to stop and think about the love for your partner so Dove is appreciating this 'stolen time'.

This is 'oddy male' as hurricanes usually have female names. This reinforces her memories of the failed past relationships she has had.

This post-postmodern age is all business: compact disks
And faxes, a do-it-now-and-take-no-risks
Event. Today a hurricane is nudging up the coast,
Oddly male: Big Bad Floyd, who brings a host
Of daydreams: awkward reminiscences
Of teenage crushes on worthless boys
Whose only talent was to kiss you senseless.
They all had sissy names—Marcel, Percy, Dewey:
Were thin as licorice and as chewy,
Sweet with a dark and hollow center. Floyd's

Dove has time to think about the 'worthless boys' she used to be interested in. The simile 'were as thin as licorice' suggests that she wasted her time with them and that they had no substance to them because they are 'hollow' and empty.

This represents their busy and maybe separate lives together.

Dove feels embarrassed by how happy she is because nothing exciting or eventful is happening in their life/relationship. Their love/relationship is simple.

Cussing up a storm. You're bunkered in your
Aerie, I'm perched in mine
(Twin desks, computers, hardwood floors):
We're content, but fall short of the Divine.
Still, it's embarrassing, this happiness—
Who's satisfied simply with what's good for us,
When has the ordinary ever been news?
And yet, because nothing else will do
To keep me from melancholy (call it blues),
I fill this stolen time with you.

The word 'Divine' emphasises that their relationship might not be viewed as heavenly and unique but Dove is happy with their everyday love.

Fred is the person who keeps Dove from 'melancholy'. This suggests he is the only person who makes her happy.

Rita Dove

The poem ends with Dove having an appreciation of this 'stolen time'. It implies she is grateful to have time to sit and think about her relationship, how content she is with her life.

Valentine by Carol Ann Duffy

The one with the onion

Valentine describes a gift for a lover, such as you would give on Valentine's Day. It is a rather unusual present – an onion. The poem explains why it is a powerful gift of love, much more than the clichéd roses or box of chocolates. The onion becomes a metaphor for love, and so the poem is about love as well as Valentine gifts.

Key Quotations:

- The title suggests a typical love poem but the opening line “Not a red rose or a satin heart” suggests the poet flouts traditional images of love.
- The poem is written in first person, “I give you an onion” immediately debunking the idea of a traditional gift.
- The idea of love isn't elevated or refined as “a wobbling photo of grief” suggests love can be painful and our emotions can overwhelm us.
- Language such as “blind”, “fierce” and “possessive” suggests an intensity to love that will only last as long as they are true to each other. “If you like” implies the intensity of love isn't dependant on a wedding ring.
- Final words – “cling to your knife” suggests love can be dangerous and all consuming. The slightly sinister tone suggests an obsessive side to love.

Context:

- Duffy likes to break conventions and in Valentine she is criticising society's views of being materialistic.
- Duffy's poetry is often feminist in its themes and approach.

Structure:

- The poem begins by listing clichéd gifts that people give and receive for Valentine's Day. As the poem progresses, Duffy explores pain and hurt that is associated with love and she ends the poem using a negative tone and a hint of danger.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Relationships and love – *Sonnet 43*, *She Walks in Beauty* and *Cozy Apologia*

Duffy creates an unusual but memorable metaphor to symbolise her love – “an onion”, “wrapped in brown paper”. An onion has a strong, sharp and acidic taste, giving flavour and depth to a meal. The comparison with the onion suggests her love is very distinctive and cannot be ignored – perhaps overwhelming for some?

On the surface the title suggests that the poem will be a simple expression of love. However, just like an onion, there are many different layers to the poem, surprising the reader as we ‘unpeel’ the meanings.

Valentine

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

The first line stands out and creates an initially assertive and negative tone. This surprises the reader who is perhaps expecting a traditional romantic poem having read the title. This confrontational tone is repeated throughout the poem, emphasising the poet’s intention to challenge the stereotypical ideas of love – “cute card”, “red rose”.

I give you an onion.

It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.

It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

The “moon” metaphor is also an interesting comparison. Whilst the moon is associated with love it is also linked with mystery. “It promises light” could suggest that her love might be attractive at first, but may bring darkness later.

Here.

It will blind you with tears
like a lover.

It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

This hints at a bad experience with love in Duffy’s past – she knows the pain of lost love. Did an ex-lover cheat on her?

The “brown paper” suggests Duffy is being honest about herself – she is not dressing herself up to pretend she is something she is not.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

Duffy uses the first person (“I”) and present tense to make the poem seem very personal and immediate. It is like we are watching her profess her love.

The language becomes increasingly dark and almost violent in the second half of the poem.

I give you an onion.

Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

The use of pronoun “we” suggests she sees them as a couple already.

Duffy repeatedly uses imperatives to command her lover’s attention. This could suggest she is confident in communicating her love – or perhaps hints at a desperate and needy side to her.

The adjectives “fierce” and “lethal” create a threatening tone to the poem. She seems slightly unstable towards the end of the poem – “possessive”.

Take it.

Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-ring,
if you like.

The “wedding-ring” shows she intends to marry this man – this makes her seem very forward and almost obsessive.

The verb “cling” is repeated twice to suggest she is not going anywhere until he returns her love.

Lethal.

Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

The final stanza leaves the reader wondering what the ‘lethal’ consequences might be if she doesn’t get her way!

Carol Ann Duffy

A Wife in London by Thomas Hardy

The one with the fog and the letter

Key Quotations:

- The poem is structured in two halves “The Tragedy” and “The Irony” showing it is like chapters in a tragic story. The two halves could suggest her life has been split into two.
- The language is ominous, indicating darkness and tragedy – “tawny vapour”, “webby fold” and “waning taper”. Her whole world is covered in gloom.
- “He – has fallen” is a euphemism to shield the widow from the harsh truth but the dashes represent her grief and inability to process the news of her husband’s death.
- Pathetic fallacy of the “fog hangs thicker” shows her grief is settling in.
- Final words – “new love that they would learn” shows the irony that he was looking forward to their new life together. It heightens the tragedy and heartbreak of his death because they will never be together and rekindle their relationship.

Context:

- Thomas Hardy was a novelist – so was a storyteller
- The poem is probably related to the Boer War but the fact she is ‘a’ wife reflects the tragedy of how many lives were lost during many wars.

Structure:

- The poem is divided into two events covering two days: ‘The Tragedy’ and ‘The Irony’.
- There is a clear rhyme scheme in each verse, creating a sense of inevitability to these tragic events.
- Hardy uses the present tense to create a sense that this is a story unfolding in front of us, making it more dramatic and emotional.

Possible Themes and Links:

- London life, environment – *London*
- Relationships – *The Manhunt*
- Impact of war – *Dulce et Decorum Est, Mametz Wood*

In this poem a wife is waiting at home in London for news of her husband who is fighting in South Africa. The poem is structured in two halves showing it is like chapters in a tragic story. The two halves could suggest her life has been destroyed.

A Wife in London

I--The Tragedy

Describes the mist rolling up the streets. Poor houses all very close together.

This spider web imagery evokes the feeling of poverty, entrapment and anxiety. As a widow, she will be further trapped.

She receives a message to tell her that her husband has died. The news is speedy and difficult to take in. She struggles to comprehend the tragic news which she has just been told.

The speaker uses the 'euphemism' fallen rather than died – maybe trying to divert the horror.

The phrase 'nears and goes' emphasises the normality of the post man's round. Perhaps this also reinforces the normality of the casualties and bereavements in war.

Further irony because he is no longer fresh and firm, just like their loves, hopes and dreams.

The final line heightens the tragedy of his death because they will never get to rekindle their relationship. Perhaps Hardy leaves it here because it is more powerful than describing the widow's grief.

The adjective 'tawny' suggests a dull, brown, foggy London. The language is ominous and may indicate the darkness and highlights the tragedy about to happen – her whole world is covered in gloom. It may also suggest a stark contrast to the place where her husband died.

Taper - A thin candle often used to light lamps. Waning – Going out/diminishing

The simile may imply that the light of her life is going out, perhaps with her hopes for the future.

The dashes indicates the short sharp breaking sounds, perhaps this was how she read the letter. It may also suggest how her life is now broken.

Ironically, after his death she receives a letter from him.

Pathetic fallacy of the 'fog hangs thicker' shows her grief is settling in. The fog is ominous and can cover things up, much like communications in war.

He was excited to be returning home.

Indicates of what they would do upon his return – simple pleasures.

She sits in the tawny vapour

That the City lanes have uprolled,
Behind whose webby fold on fold

Like a waning taper

The street-lamp glimmers cold.

A messenger's knock cracks smartly,

Flashed news is in her hand

Of meaning it dazes to understand

Though shaped so shortly:

He--has fallen--in the far South Land . . .

II--The Irony

'Tis the morrow; the fog hangs thicker,

The postman nears and goes:

A letter is brought whose lines disclose

By the firelight flicker

His hand, whom the worm now knows:

Fresh--firm--penned in highest feather -

Page-full of his hoped return,

And of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn

In the summer weather,

And of new love that they would learn.

Death of a Naturalist by Seamus Heaney

The one with the frogs

The poem opens with some rich description of a swampy area where flax (a kind of plant) grows. Heaney describes the flies buzzing, and how the sun beats down on the mucky soil. He pays particular attention to the slimy frogspawn (what eventually becomes tadpoles, then frogs). This sparks a memory for the speaker, and he begins to talk about how in school, his teacher had students collect the gooey frogspawn in jars to watch it turn to tadpoles as part of a science lesson about frogs.

Then we're snapped into the present. One hot, steamy and stinky day, the speaker follows the sound of croaking frogs to its source. He sees more frogs than he's ever seen amongst the frogspawn (no, this is not a scene from a horror movie). They're croaking and slapping in the flax dam. Not surprisingly, he gets grossed out—so much so that he freaks out and runs away.

Key Quotations:

- The title is metaphorical – the “death” symbolises the speaker’s loss of innocence as he grows up.
- The tone of the poem at the beginning is almost enthusiastic – the verbs “sweltered”, “festered” and “gargled” suggest the speaker is almost relishing the vile smells of the dam.
- Language such as “jampotfuls”, “fattening dots” and “mammy frog” suggest childhood innocence.
- The tone changes on “ Then one hot day” and the tone becomes more aware of the dangers – “angry frogs”.
- Final words – “spawn would clutch it” shows the contrast with when he would collect the “jellied specks” – he has grown up and no longer wants to play the games of his childhood.

Context:

- Seamus Heaney’s four year old brother died in a car accident when Heaney was a young boy. The death affected him badly and many of his poems are about loss of innocence.
- Heaney grew up on a farm and many of his poems reflect his upbringing.

Structure:

- In the first stanza, the speaker in the poem is full of enthusiasm and enjoys nature.
- In the last stanza, this changes as he becomes more aware of the dangers of the world around him.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Loss of innocence – *Afternoons*
- Childhood memories – *Excerpt from The Prelude*
- Passing of time – *As Imperceptibly as Grief, Excerpt from The Prelude and To Autumn*

Heaney uses the word 'Death' to suggest a metaphorical death of the speaker's innocence. This could also represent that it is lost forever and they cannot get it back.

'Flax' is a type of plant that grows annually.

Death of a Naturalist

The word 'heart' suggests that it is a central place in the 'townland' and shows the importance of the flax-dam to the speaker.

The verbs 'festered' and 'rotted' could suggest that it is rotting/decaying just like his innocence.

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.

Heaney uses personification of the sun by using the word 'punishing'. This could suggest that summer is relentless and harsh.

Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.

The adverb 'delicately' is a strange word to use to describe this disgusting scene. This shows the speaker's appreciation for the flax-dam. 'Best of all' also emphasises his youthful fascination.

There were dragon-flies, spotted butterflies,

But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water

The words 'slobber' and 'Jampotfuls' suggests that the speaker in the poem is young.

In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied

This vivid memory suggests that he is enthusiastic about the lesson regarding the frogs.

Specks to range on window-sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until

The verbs 'wait' and 'watch' suggests that the speaker is excited and impatient.

The fattening dots burst into nimble-
Swimming tadpoles Miss Walls would tell us how

The speaker in the poem has learnt facts about the frogs.

The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog

The 2nd stanza has a change in tone. The word 'Then' suggests that the speaker in the poem changes his views.

Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too

The adjective 'angry' to describe the frogs suggests that the speaker in the poem is aware of the dangers.

For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

The words such as 'invaded', 'cocked' and 'grenades' suggest a war between the speaker in the poem and the frogs.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs

The noun 'king' implies that the frogs now rule the flax-dam and that he is not wanted there. The adjective 'great' suggests that they hold all the power.

Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard

This is a direct contrast to his enthusiasm and passion in the beginning. Metaphorically, he has now lost his innocence and can see the dangers in the world.

Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked

On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat

Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings

Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

The verb 'clutch' suggests that he is now afraid and scared of the frogs. He believes he will not be able to escape from the knowledge of how he views the 'angry frogs.' Again, this is a metaphor for his loss of innocence.

Seamus Heaney

Hawk Roosting by Ted Hughes

The one where the hawk is in charge

The speaker of the poem is a hawk who is looking down on the earth beneath him. He begins the poem perched at the top of a tree, waiting to swoop on his next prey. His attitude and tone are very arrogant and he compares himself to God. He is very proud of his place in the food chain and the fact he can choose who lives and who dies. He doesn't want the natural order of things to be disrupted.

Key Quotations:

- In the title of the poem "roosting" suggests the hawk is still, not a swooping bird of prey as we may imagine. This gives a sense of the hawk meditating on his powers of destruction.
- The tone is haughty. The hawk is focussed and not distracted – "no falsifying dream".
- The language creates an arrogance to the hawk – "I hold Creation in my foot", "it is all mine".
- There is a sense of control and that the hawk is playing God throughout the poem – "allotment of death".
- Final words – "I am going to keep things like this" shows the power that the hawk has. It is a statement suggesting he is king of the animal kingdom and untouchable.

Context:

- Ted Hughes was Poet Laureate until his death in 1984 and wrote many poems about the natural world
- Hughes said the poem wasn't about cruelty – he just wanted to show a hawk's 'natural way of thinking'

Structure:

- The clearly organised structure of the six stanzas reflects the hawk's control over his life and land.
- The steady and calm pace to the poem again mirrors the hawk's measured control over the woodland – he will not be rushed by anyone.

Possible Links:

- Power and control – *Ozymandias*
- The natural world – *To Autumn*, *Afternoons*, *Death of a Naturalist*

Hughes uses the image of the hawk to suggest power. The word 'Roosting' implies that the hawk feels at home and is comfortable on his perch.

Hawk Roosting

The word 'top' shows that he is at the top of the food chain.

I sit in the **top** of the wood, **my eyes closed**.

He does not need to look at the world to know his place in it – he is almost meditating on his success

Repetition of 'hooked' suggests he is in control – his claws are sunk in.

Inaction, no **falsifying dream**

Between my **hooked head and hooked feet**:

Reality is better than dreaming for him. He doesn't need to lie.

He even dreams that his kills go perfectly. He is constantly thinking about death.

Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

All aspects of nature are for his ease.

Suggests they are there specifically for him

The **convenience** of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of **advantage** to me;

Arrogant tone – he is even scrutinising earth.

And the earth's face upward for **my inspection**.

Verb shows his power – links to the idea of a dictator 'locking down' on others' freedom.

My feet are **locked** upon the rough bark.

Sees himself as God-like.

It took the whole of **Creation**

To produce my foot, my each feather:

Repetition of 'Creation' and the capitalisation of it emphasises his arrogance and God delusions.

Now **I hold Creation in my foot**

The verb 'revolve' the world turns just for him.

Or fly up, and **revolve it all slowly** -

Shows his selfish and power obsessed nature.

I kill where I please because **it is all mine**.

No false arguments – links to the arrogance in the first stanza – he feels he is perfect.

There is no **sophistry** in my body:

Brutally honest – violent language shows his brutality.

My manners are **tearing off heads** -

He can 'play God' and decide who lives and who dies .

The allotment of death.

For the one path of my flight is direct

Contrast between 'bones' and 'living' reminds the reader he has the power to take life away.

Through the **bones of the living**.

Links to dictatorship – no one else has a say or can challenge him.

No arguments assert my right:

Suggests even the sun is backing him up and supporting him.

Links to the circle of life – his reign will never end

The sun is behind me.

Nothing has changed since I began.

He is in charge – he decides the rules of nature.

My eye has **permitted** no change.

Arrogant tone to end the poem. Reinforces his need for power and control.

I am going to **keep things like this**.

Ted Hughes

To Autumn – John Keats

The one about autumn

The poem 'To Autumn' is an 'Ode' which means that it is dedicated to autumn. Keats wrote the poem to celebrate the season and the various changes which take place during the time. The poem is about autumn and covers the three stages of the season – the beginning when fruit/plants are ready to harvest, the middle when animals go into hibernation and things begin to die, and the end as winter begins

Key Quotations:

- 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' the first line of the poem suggests that autumn is a season of change but despite this, it is a calm season.
- 'Thee sitting careless on a granary floor' by personifying autumn it suggests that autumn can be a season which can be quite thoughtless in the changes it brings.
- Keats continues to personify autumn and addresses it directly – 'thou watchest oozings'. He implies that autumn 'behaves' as if it has all the time in the world even though time is passing by.
- The last line 'And gathering swallows twitter in the sky' shows that winter is drawing in and time is coming to an end – it could represent the circle of life.

Context:

- Keats was a romantic poet and wrote a lot about nature and the natural world.
- Keats died at the age of 25, he was worried that he would leave no lasting impression on the world – this poem could be his attempt to leave his mark and be remembered.

Structure:

- The first stanza is a celebration and it suggests that autumn begins in a rich and calm way.
- In the second stanza, Keats speaks directly to autumn and makes the suggestion that autumn is in no rush to move on.
- The final stanza shows change, just as the season is changing from autumn to winter, Keats recognises this and is accepting of the fact he cannot control this.

Possible themes and links:

- The passing of time – *Afternoons, Death of a Naturalist, As Imperceptibly as Grief*
- The natural world – *Excerpt from The Prelude, Death of a Naturalist.*

Keats named his poem 'To Autumn' as he wanted to celebrate the season.

To Autumn

Autumn is a season of change.

'Close bosom friend' suggests that autumn works with summer to produce wonderful things.

The verb 'conspiring' suggests that autumn is quiet and secretive.

Autumn is able to 'trick' nature and the wildlife into thinking that summer will never end.

Keats speaks directly to autumn. This suggests that autumn can clearly be seen everywhere.

'Drows'd with the fume of poppies' could imply that autumn is intoxicating and overwhelmingly beautiful.

Autumn has time to observe the changes it has made and enjoy the difference it has made to nature.

This implies nature needs to be reassured, that it is a season which should be admired.

This suggests that autumn has done its job and winter is on its way.

The adjective 'mellow' suggests that autumn is calm and that the changes are not disruptive.

The adjective 'maturing' used to describe the sun suggests that time is passing.

'Ripeness to the core' suggests that autumn is the best season and represents the peak time in life.

Keats uses adjectives such as 'plump' and 'o'erbrimm'd' to show the abundance of food that autumn creates.

Autumn is personified and this suggests that autumn works hard to make the changes in the season. However, the word 'careless' implies that it is effortless.

Autumn needs to rest due to all the changes 'she' has made.

Due to the changes autumn has made, spring has been forgotten. This implies autumn is powerful.

In the last stanza, Keats uses language associated with death such as 'soft-dying', 'wailful' and 'mourn'. This could imply that autumn is dying and that Keats's own life is coming to an end.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with his how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bed with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
They hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,

Drows'd with the fume of poppies while thy hook
Sparest the next swathe and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook;

Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozing hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn,

Among the river sallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

The last line could suggest that Keats is ready for death and to 'move on' just as the 'swallows' are 'gathering' to move on to warmer climates.

Afternoons by Philip Larkin

The one with the young mothers

This is a melancholy poem, which reflects on the subject of marriage. The poem deals with Larkin's view on young mothers watching their children playing in a playground and he concludes that marrying young leads to the mothers losing their identities. Larkin's description of young mothers taking their children to a playground seems normal but the narrator's point of view on life is expressed. What seems like an ordinary, everyday occurrence highlights the theme of change and how it cannot be avoided, like the passing of time.

Key Quotations:

- The title "Afternoons" suggests the end of the day and time passing.
- The tone is wistful and the poem has a sense of longing for the past – "summer is fading."
- The language suggests there is little meaning in the lives of the "young mothers" – "hollow" and "assemble" suggest routine and boredom creating a sense of emptiness.
- The idea of time passing is developed throughout the poem – "their beauty has thickened" suggests aging.
- The last line "to the side of their own lives" echoes the idea of "setting free their children" from the first stanza. There is the implication that their lives are ruled by their children who "expect to be taken home."

Context:

- Philip Larkin's poetry celebrates the ordinary details of day to day life
- Larkin never married, had children or even left the UK in his whole life

Structure:

- The first stanza deals with Larkin's rather cynical view of marriage and deals with the idea that the young mothers are isolated. Larkin's use of language emphasizes the recurring theme of emptiness within the young mothers and how regimented their lives have become.
- In the second stanza Larkin moves from the general view into the individual and describes the mothers as being alone with little support from their working husbands.
- In the third stanza Larkin focuses back onto the children and how because of them the mothers are unable to live their own lives and they are merely looking in. Their dreams, aspirations and needs have been put to the side.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Time passing – *To Autumn* and *As Imperceptibly as Grief*
- Loss of innocence/growing up – *Death of a Naturalist*

The title suggests that the young mothers are in the 'afternoons' of their lives where children have taken away their identities and their lives are not their own.

Afternoons

The trees are 'bordering' which is almost stopping the mothers escaping.

'Summer' could represent the happy times in life and the verb 'fading' implies that their life/happiness is coming to an end.

Summer is fading:

The leaves fall in ones and twos
From trees bordering

Decline is gradual and almost unnoticeable.

The adjective 'new' suggests that this is a new stage in the mothers' lives or it could also suggest that there is a new generation.

The new recreation ground.

In the hollows of afternoons

The word 'hollows' suggests that the mothers' lives are empty.

Young mothers assemble

The word 'assemble' suggests that the mothers gather without choice and that it is routine.

At swing and sandpit

Setting free their children.

The children are being set 'free'. Freedom is something that these mothers crave.

Behind them, at intervals,

Stand husbands in skilled trades,

'Behind them' suggests that the mothers do not feel like they are supported by their husbands.

An estateful of washing,

And the albums, lettered

Our Wedding, lying

Near the television:

'Skilled trades' suggests that the women are not recognised for how they raise their children. They don't earn any qualifications and are almost seen as being unskilled.

The mothers do not have their own identities and Larkin is suggesting that all of the women do the same tasks.

Before them, the wind

Is ruining their courting-places

'Lying' suggests that the wedding album is ignored just like their relationships with their partners. This is not the most important thing anymore in their lives.

That are still courting-places

(But the lovers are all in school)

And their children, so intent on

Finding more unripe acorns,

Expect to be taken home.

The 'lovers' are who the parents used to be before they had children. Or the 'lovers' could be the younger generation of people who are in new relationships.

Their beauty has thickened.

Something is pushing them
To the side of their own lives

The adjective 'unripe' suggests that the children are unaware of what life will be like when they are older. They are still naïve, not ready for adulthood.

'Expect' suggests that the children make demands on their mothers and that their mothers have no choice.

Philip Larkin

The word 'thickened' suggests that the mothers are growing older and they are not as beautiful as they used to be. They have no time to look after themselves.

The word 'something' suggests that the mothers do not realise who or what is 'pushing' them. The verb 'pushing' suggests that the mothers are being forced away from their own lives. The most important thing in their lives is their children. The mothers are almost at the side now looking in on a life that isn't theirs; a life that they have no control over.

Dulce et Decorum Est by Wilfred Owen

The one with the gas

Key Quotations:

- The opening image of the soldiers, “Bent double”, “coughing like hags”, suggests they have been physically broken by war. They are exhausted and dirty - they “trudge”, they march “asleep” and they are “drunk with fatigue”
- The use of the exclamation mark and capitalisation in “Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!” suggests the urgency and fear of the impending gas attack
- The stand-alone stanza, together with the verbs “guttering, choking, drowning” reinforced the horror of the soldier caught in the attack. The verb “drowning” also suggests the impenetrability of the gas and how it is invading his lungs
- The repetition of “dreams” emphasises how war has infiltrated his sleep, how he can never have peace, not even when he is sleeping
- Final words – “the old Lie”, allows Owen to highlight how war is not honourable or glorious, but cruel, degrading, dirty and horrifying

Context:

- Wilfred Owen was killed in action on 4 November 1918 exactly one week (almost to the hour) before the signing of the Armistice, which ended the First World War.
- His mother received the telegram informing her of his death on Armistice Day, as the church bells were ringing out in celebration.

Structure:

- The first stanza has a slow, turgid pace due to the first sentence layering clause on top of clause. This creates a turgid tone, reflecting the soldiers’ feeling that the march will never end.
- However, the second stanza is fast paced through one word sentences and exclamation marks. This reflects the sense of panic as the gas attack unfolds.
- The pace slows again in the final stanza to reflect the feeling that war is never ending. Owen uses the second person (“you”, “my friend”) to address the reader personally, creating an uncomfortable and accusatory tone. These final lines are clearly aimed at those in command.

Possible Themes and Links:

- Impact of war – *Mametz Wood*, *The Manhunt*
- Patriotism – *The Soldier*

The poem's title is taken from a Latin saying which was often quoted at the start of the First World War to encourage men to fight. It means, 'It is sweet and honourable...', yet in this poem Owen presents the harsh and unglamorous reality of trench warfare.

The words 'bent double' shows that the soldiers are so exhausted that they cannot even stand up

Dulce et Decorum Est

Owen uses similes to suggest that the men are prematurely old and weakened.

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,

The metaphor 'men marched asleep' suggests the extreme exhaustion of the soldiers. They are 'deaf', 'lame' and 'blind', which suggests that war has completely broken these men.

Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.

The verb 'trudge' suggests a slow and heavy walk because of the harsh conditions suffered by the soldiers.

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Suddenly, the pace of the poem quickens with the warning 'Gas! GAS! Quick boys!', creating a sense of urgency as the soldiers scramble around trying to fit their gas masks.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime. —
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

The speaker describes the terror and panic of a soldier who has not managed to pull on his gas mask in time.

The speaker describes his recurrent, haunting nightmares of the gas attack, showing he can never have peace, not even in his sleep.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

His dreams recount the feeling of helplessness as he watched his fellow man suffocate, the listed verbs emphasising a slow, drawn-out

The grotesque image of the man's eyes rolling back in his head suggest that he is still alive when he is 'flung' into the wagon. The verb 'flung' shows that there is no time or space for dignity in death at war, and no burial for its victims.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, —

The speaker addresses the reader directly. He feels that if those back home had experienced the horrors of war first-hand, they would not convince men to go to war.

Owen continues to use gruesome imagery to emphasise the horrific consequences of the gas attack.

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

The Latin used at the end of the poem means, 'It is sweet and honourable to die for your country'. Owen rejects this as an 'old lie', and highlights that war is cruel, degrading and horrifying.

The word 'children' shows Owen's belief that war is wasteful of young lives. Owen feels that impressionable young men are lured to war by the false promise of 'glory', and he is blaming the attitude back at home that serving your country is glorious.

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

The one with the broken statue

The speaker meets an unknown 'traveller' who has journeyed from a land far away and tells the speaker his story. On his travels he came across a ruined and broken statue in the desert. The statue was once a huge monument to Ozymandias (Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II) who was a tyrannical and harsh ruler. The traveller implies that Ozymandias has the statue made of himself and the sculptor made it deliberately look cold and sneering. The traveller tells the speaker that, as well as there being not much left of the statue, there is also now nothing left surrounding it. The statue now stands alone as the 'sands stretch far away.'

Key Quotations:

- The poem opens in the first person as the speaker tells of a "traveller" he has met. The use of the adjective "antique" suggests the land he is visiting is rich with history.
- The "frown" and "wrinkled", the "sneer of cold command" suggests that the leader's proud, arrogant and stern face is still "stamped" on the broken stone, even though he and the sculptor are both long dead.
- The king's proud boast, "Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!" has been ironically disproved.
- "Nothing beside remains", suggests that Ozymandias' works have crumbled, his civilisation is gone and has been turned to dust by the power of history and time.
- Final words – "The lone and level sands stretch far away," suggests how the broken statue is a monument to man's hubris. The poem is a statement about insignificance of human beings to the passage of time.

Context:

- Percy Bysshe Shelley was a romantic poet and wrote a lot about the power of nature.
- Shelley was considered to be a 'radical' and Ozymandias reflects this side of his character. He is writing about the dangers of thinking you are invincible, a timeless message.

Structure:

- The poem is a sonnet, although it mixes the two main types of sonnet forms. This could show the broken nature of the statue and Ozymandias' rule.
- The majority of the poem is through the voice of the 'traveller'. As it has no stanzas it is like a long story being told by travellers.

Possible themes and links:

- Power – *Hawk Roosting, London*
- Nature and time – *To Autumn, Mametz Wood*

The title refers to Ramses II, an Egyptian Pharaoh who was known for being a tyrant.

Ozymandias

'Antique' suggests age – the events happened a long time ago but the memory is still in existence.

The speaker begins by introducing someone they met – most of the poem is told through that person's story.

The nouns 'desert' and 'sand' show the isolation of the statue in its environment – the sands surround this one example of humanity. Perhaps a civilisation has been destroyed?

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Statue is 'vast' but also trunkless – shows his power may have been huge but there was no substance to it, it soon faded away.

The verbs 'sunk' and 'shattered' show nature has eroded and destroyed this symbol of human power. This suggests the natural environment will always outlast any human settlement, reminding us of our own mortality; even the most powerful kings will turn to dust.

The adjectives in "wrinkled lip" and "cold command" give an evil impression of Ozymandias as a ruler.

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

The words on the pedestal are Ozymandias' own opinion of himself and show his inflated opinion of himself. He was clearly a tyrannical ruler who seemed to use his power to punish others. When he addresses the "Mighty" he could have been talking to the gods, suggesting his deluded opinion of himself.

The verb "stretch" suggests that nature will outlast man and humanity – our place on this earth is only temporary and is no match for our natural environment and time.

The nouns 'decay' and 'wreck' symbolise the legacy of Ozymandias, nothing but crumbling stone that is turning to dust. The oxymoron "colossal wreck" suggests the fragile nature of human power – even the mightiest will fall.

The imperatives here show Ozymandias' commanding style. The verb 'despair' shows he wanted his subjects and enemies to view him with fear and envy. The irony is that there is nobody in the desert to view the crumbling statue – the only one who would 'despair' is Ozymandias

Mametz Wood by Owen Sheers

The one where farmers find broken bones in their fields

Key quotations:

- The poem opens with the phrase “For years afterwards...”, which suggests that the horror of war, and this particular tragedy still affects us.
- The language, such as “china plate”, “broken bird’s egg of a skull”, the broken “mosaic of bone” used suggests that the soldiers were vulnerable and fragile.
- The poem’s stanzas alternate between ideas to do with the land, “the earth stands sentinel” and imagery to do with the bones of the dead soldiers. The earth is a witness to the tragedy.
- The imagery evokes the horror of war. The “socketed heads tilted back at an angle” brutally visualises the moment the men were shot and their screams of pain.
- Final words – “their absent tongues”, suggests that the soldiers have finally found a voice. The final stanza combines both elements of the alternating stanzas and suggests that the poem is about offering redemption or justice, both for the dead and the land.

Context:

- *Mametz Wood* was one of the bloodiest battles of World War One. As part of the first Battle of the Somme in 1916, soldiers of the Welsh division were ordered to take *Mametz Wood*, the largest area of trees on the battlefield.
- The 38th Welsh Division lost 4,000 men during the attack which lasted five days.
- The poet Owen Sheers grew up in Wales and wrote the poem in 2005 as he felt their bravery and sacrifice was never really acknowledged

Structure:

- The poem’s structure is in regular three-line stanzas almost reflecting the neat linear pattern of a ploughed field. However, at times the length of the lines change, with longer lines breaking up the neat form. This disrupted pattern could reflect the ‘chits of bone’ rising out of the ground and disrupting our attempts to forget the past.
- The first part of the poem focuses on the land itself before the focus shifts to the bones and dead soldiers in the final stanzas. The concluding stanza brings all the elements together

Possible Themes and Links:

- Impact of war, patriotism – *Dulce et Decorum Est*, *A Wife in London*, *The Soldier*
- Fragility of soldiers/human life – *Manhunt*

Mametz Wood

The opening lines emphasise how deadly the battle was as they found the remains for "years afterwards".

For years afterwards the farmers found them - the wasted young, turning up under their plough blades as they tended the land back into itself.

The adjective "wasted" suggests the young soldiers lost their lives before they had really started living.

The verb "tended" personifies the land, suggesting that the farmers tried to care for the wounded surface that was so badly damaged by the war.

A chit of bone the china plate of a shoulder blade, the relic of a finger, the blown and broken bird's egg of a skull,

"A chit" is a short note and indicates that these pieces of bone contain a message for us about the brutalities of war.

The metaphors of a "china plate" and "broken bird's egg" emphasise how fragile and precious the human body is.

all mimicked now in flint, breaking blue in white across this field where they were told to walk, not run, towards the wood and its nesting machine guns.

The command "to walk, not run" creates a cynical tone to the poem - the poet clearly felt the orders sent the soldiers to their deaths.

And even now the earth stands sentinel, reaching back into itself for reminders of what happened like a wound working a foreign body to the surface of the skin.

Here the poem switches to the present tense and makes the tragedy seem more immediate and real for the reader. The horrors of war are still being felt today and remind us of the fatal consequences of conflict.

This morning, twenty men buried in one long grave, a broken mosaic of bone linked arm in arm, their skeletons paused mid dance-macabre

in boots that outlasted them, their socketed heads tilted back at an angle and their jaws, those that have them, dropped open.

In stanza four Sheers again personifies the land. The noun "sentinel" links back to soldiers standing watch all night and suggests the land cannot rest because of the horrors it has seen in war. The simile "like a wound working a foreign body" suggests the land is trying to cleanse itself of the damage that has been done.

As if the notes they had sung have only now, with this unearthing, slipped from their absent tongues.

The phrase "linked arm in arm" suggests the soldiers were close as a division and stayed together as a team, even in death.

Soldiers often sang to keep their spirits up in the darker moments of war. Welsh divisions were particularly well-known for their songs.

Owen Sheers

The final stanza creates a haunting tone. The adjective "absent" suggests the men's voices were lost in battle - they were silenced by their generals and then the machine guns. Only now, "with this unearthing", is the truth emerging.

Excerpt from The Prelude by William Wordsworth

The one about ice skating on a winter's evening

The poem describes the sheer thrill and exultation of children as they skate in the gathering darkness of a frosty day. Wordsworth uses imagery of sound, sight and the natural world to bring alive the vivid and joyous experience. The poem has a nostalgic feel and Wordsworth looks back at the innocence and happiness of his childhood.

Key Quotations:

- The poem opens with imagery to do with winter, such as “frosty”, and suggests the premature end of a wintry day. Images of warmth, such as “blaz’d” and “the sun” are contrasted with this
- The use of verbs such as “wheel’d”, “hiss’d” and “flew”, such rapid movement, while the noun “rapture” suggests the intense enjoyment of the boys skating on the lake
- The natural world is represented in the poem, with “woodland pleasure”, and “leafless trees”, while the humans are also portrayed as animals. The skaters are all “shod with steel” like “untir’d” horses, chasing the “hunted hare”
- There is imagery to do with sounds, the pack is “bellowing”, the icy crags “tinkled like iron”, there is an “alien sound/Of melancholy”
- Final words – “in the west/The orange sky of evening died away”, which suggests the vivid image of a sunset as we return to the warm glow of the evening

Context:

- William Wordsworth was one of the first and most influential of the Romantic era
- The Prelude is nostalgic in its thoughts about his childhood and the intense feelings of delight he experienced when he was walked or, as a child, played in the countryside

Structure:

- The poem begins with the end of the day and the warm light of the setting sun reflecting in the cottage windows
- In the middle of the poem, the young Wordsworth ignores his mother’s calls to come in for his tea and instead delights at skating with the other boys from the village. They are playing tag and chasing each other across the ice and this reminds Wordsworth of a pack of hounds hunting a fox.
- The end of the poem reflects the end of the day as the sun sets and the stars appear

Possible Themes and Links:

- The natural world, passing of time – *Death of a Naturalist, To Autumn*

The poem is filled with imagery to do with winter and the end of the year as well as the end of the day.

Excerpt from **The Prelude**

And in the frosty season when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile

The cottage windows through the twilight blaz'd,
I heed not the summons—happy time

It was, indeed, for all of us; to me

It was a time of rapture; clear and loud

The village clock toll'd six; I wheel'd about,

Proud and exalting, like an untir'd horse,

at cares not for his home—All shod with steel,

We hiss'd along the polish'd ice, in games

Confederate, imitative of the chase

And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,

The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.

So through the darkness and the cold we flew,

And not a voice was idle; with the din,

Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud,

The leafless trees, and every icy crag,

Tinkled like iron, while the distant hills

Into the tumult sent an alien sound

O melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,

Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west

The orange sky of evening died away.

Rural setting, sense of cosiness

The use of the noun "rapture" suggests a joyous ecstasy and a time of celebration.

The simile of a "untir'd horse" gives the idea the boys are untamed, still wild at heart, with no fear and full of energy to discover the world.

Wordsworth summons up the idea of the hunt as the boys chase each other across the ice – the imagery is vivid due to his use of the senses.

The natural world is drawn as hard and frozen, but it has its own voice. The verbs "rang" and "tinkled" suggests the countryside is alive, almost with music.

The idea of "melancholy" introduces us to a sense of sadness and an insight into Wordsworth's nostalgia at these happier days of innocence which are now long passed. The tone seems almost wistful here, Wordsworth yearning for those simpler times of youth.

There are images of warmth, contrasting the wintry scene and images of darkness. The verb "blaz'd" suggests fire and comfort. This warmth reflects Wordsworth's warm feelings when looking back on her childhood

The pronoun "us" give sense of communal or shared happiness between the boys and in the larger community.

The poet uses verbs such as "flew" and "hissed" to show the movement and sounds of the boys, emphasising their skilful speed and their sense of freedom.

The scene is filled with energy and excitement as the boys revel in the winter activities. "Din" suggests a constant hum of noise from masses of boys.

More wintry images allows us to imagine how cold the evening is. The simile "tinkled like iron" emphasises how deeply frozen the countryside yet it seems to make its own.

The final image reminds us the day is ending and so is the year, and so did his childhood as he became an adult. The intensity of the orange sky and sparkling stars reflects the energy and vibrancy of youth, something that declines with the aging process.

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