

1. ULYSSES – Alfred, Lord Tennyson

*It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—*

*That ever with a frolic welcome took
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
 Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
 'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

SPEAKER

Ulysses (Odysseus)

, the legendary Greek hero, now an old king returned to Ithaca after the Trojan War and his long journey home. He speaks in a dramatic monologue, revealing his restless dissatisfaction with domestic life and his burning desire for one final adventure before death.

Context: The speaker is not content with kingship. He contrasts himself with his son Telemachus, who is suited for governance, while Ulysses craves the glory and experience of exploration.

TONE

Defiant, aspirational, heroic, with a melancholic undertone

Words showing tone:

- "I cannot rest from travel" – restless, driven
- "I will drink/Life to the lees" – determined, passionate
- "How dull it is to pause" – contemptuous of idleness
- "'Tis not too late to seek a newer world" – optimistic defiance
- "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" – heroic resolve
- "Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will" – acknowledges decline but refuses defeat
- "Roaming with a hungry heart" – insatiable desire

- "Vile it were" – moral disgust with inaction

The tone shifts from bitter dissatisfaction (opening) to nostalgic reflection (middle) to rousing determination (conclusion).

DICTION

Formal, archaic, elevated, and abstract

Examples:

- "Meted and doled" – archaic legal language suggests tedious duty
- "Unburnish'd" – metaphorical; means losing shine through disuse
- "Frolic welcome" – joyful, adventurous spirit
- "Vile it were" – old-fashioned construction emphasizes moral disgust with inaction
- "Lees" – sediment at bottom of wine barrel; drinking to the dregs
- Abstract nouns: "honour," "knowledge," "experience," "silence"
- Active verbs dominate: "drink," "roam," "strive," "seek," "sail," "smite"

The elevated diction reflects Ulysses' heroic self-image and epic tradition.

ATTITUDE

Toward domestic life: Dismissive and contemptuous. "It little profits that an idle king" reveals his view of kingship as profitless. "Match'd with an aged wife" shows detachment from marriage.

Toward his people: Condescending. He calls them a "savage race / That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me." They don't understand his heroic nature.

Toward experience and knowledge: Insatiable hunger. "Roaming with a hungry heart" and "To follow knowledge like a sinking star" show his relentless pursuit of meaning.

Toward Telemachus: Respectful but detached. "Most blameless is he" praises his son's suitability for governance, but the contrast ("He works his work, I mine") shows fundamental difference in character.

Toward death: Defiant acceptance. "Death closes all: but something ere the end" shows he acknowledges mortality but refuses passivity.

Toward his mariners: Camaraderie and shared heroism. "You and I are old" creates intimacy; they are "men that strove with Gods."

IMAGERY

Visual and sensory imagery creates contrast between stagnation and adventure:

Domestic stagnation:

- "Still hearth" and "barren crags" – static, lifeless setting
- "Gray spirit" – dull, fading vitality

Adventure and nature:

- "Ringing plains of windy Troy" – auditory and dynamic
- "Dark, broad seas" – vast, mysterious
- "Sail beyond the sunset, and the baths / Of all the western stars" – cosmic, limitless
- "The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks: / The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs" – transition from day to night mirrors life to death
- "The deep / Moans round with many voices" – auditory, ominous

Imagery evokes grandeur, vastness, and the epic scale of heroic ambition.

METAPHOR & FIGURES OF SPEECH

"I will drink / Life to the lees" – Extended metaphor comparing life to wine. "Lees" are the sediment at the bottom of a wine barrel, suggesting Ulysses wants to consume every last drop of experience, even the bitter parts.

"All experience is an arch where thro' / Gleams that untravell'd world" – Experience is a gateway that constantly reveals new horizons. The more you know, the more you realize remains unknown. This captures the endless quest for knowledge.

"To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use" – Extended metaphor comparing a hero to a sword. If unused, it rusts and loses its shine. Action keeps one vital and purposeful.

"This gray spirit yearning in desire / To follow knowledge like a sinking star" –

Knowledge is compared to a falling star—something pursued relentlessly but forever just out of reach.

Personification: "The deep / Moans round with many voices" – the sea becomes a living, speaking entity, adding to the ominous atmosphere of the journey.

HYPERBOLE

"Life piled on life / Were all too little" – Exaggeration emphasizes his insatiable appetite for experience. Even multiple lifetimes wouldn't satisfy his hunger for adventure and knowledge.

PRONOUN USAGE

"I" dominates the first two-thirds of the poem: Emphasizes Ulysses' individual ambition, ego, and heroic self-image. The focus is on his personal dissatisfaction and desire.

Shift to "we," "you," and "us" in the final section: When addressing his mariners, the pronouns become collective. "You and I are old" creates intimacy and shared experience. "We are not now that strength" acknowledges collective decline but also collective resolve. This shift transforms personal ambition into communal heroism—they will embark together.

STRUCTURE, PUNCTUATION & INTENTION

Form: Blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) – mimics natural speech while maintaining elevated, formal tone suitable for epic subject matter.

Three-part structure:

- **Lines 1-32:** Ulysses' dissatisfaction with domestic life; his past glories and present restlessness

- **Lines 33-43:** Praise of Telemachus and delegation of governance
- **Lines 44-70:** Call to arms; final voyage with his mariners

Punctuation: Frequent colons, semicolons, and enjambment create flowing, cumulative sentences that mirror the forward momentum of thought and action. The lack of full stops until major transitions suggests continuous movement—appropriate for a speaker who "cannot rest."

Climactic ending: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" – four infinitives build to final, definitive statement of heroic purpose.

REPETITION

"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" – Climactic repetition of infinitives emphasizes resolve and creates memorable, rhythmic conclusion.

"Much" repeated: "Much have I seen and known," "Tho' much is taken, much abides" – emphasizes abundance of experience.

THEMES

- **Stagnation vs. Adventure:** Rejection of passive domestic life in favor of active exploration
- **Mortality and Legacy:** Awareness of aging drives desire for meaningful final act
- **Knowledge and Experience:** Life as continuous quest for understanding beyond human limits
- **Heroic Identity:** Definition of self through action, not rest
- **Age and Vitality:** "Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will" – physical decline doesn't diminish spiritual strength

FOR GRADE 12 BOYS – EXAM FOCUS:

- Connect Ulysses' restlessness to male role expectations and purpose
- Contrast Ulysses (action, adventure) vs. Telemachus (duty, governance) – two valid paths
- The poem questions: What makes life meaningful? Is it safety or risk?
- Final line is crucial for essays: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" – memorize it
- Consider modern parallels: fear of mundane life, mid-life crisis, legacy anxiety
- Words showing motivation: "I cannot rest," "hungry heart," "My purpose holds"

2. THE SUN RISING – John Donne

*Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
Thy beams, so reverend and strong*

*Why shouldst thou think?
 I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
 But that I would not lose her sight so long;
 If her eyes have not blinded thine,
 Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
 Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
 Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
 Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
 And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.
 She's all states, and all princes, I,
 Nothing else is.
 Princes do but play us; compared to this,
 All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.*

*Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
 In that the world's contracted thus.
 Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
 To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
 Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
 This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.*

SPEAKER

~~A confident~~ lover

lying in bed with his beloved. He addresses the sun directly in a dramatic monologue, arguing that the lovers' world is superior to all external reality. The speaker is witty, intellectually playful, and supremely confident in the power and value of his love.

Character: Educated, sophisticated, possibly aristocratic (references to kings, Indias, princes). He uses metaphysical wit—blending passion with intellectual argument.

TONE

Development across stanzas: Mocking irritation → triumphant confidence → tender authority

Stanza 1 – Playful irritation and witty defiance:

- "Busy old fool" – mocking dismissal
- "Unruly sun" – the sun is disobedient, not the speaker
- "Saucy pedantic wretch" – humorous insults; treats cosmic force like annoying servant
- Tone is bold, argumentative, humorous

Stanza 2 – Triumphant confidence and intellectual assertiveness:

- "I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink" – boasts of power over the sun
- "She's all states, and all princes, I" – proud, declarative claim of love's supremacy
- "Nothing else is" – absolute statement; dismisses rest of world
- Tone becomes more assertive, celebratory

Stanza 3 – Tender triumph and cosmic authority:

- "Thou, sun, art half as happy as we" – patronizing but gentler
- "Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere" – gives sun permission; instructive tone
- Tone is serene, authoritative, affectionate

DICTION

Blend of colloquial insults and elevated metaphysical language

Stanza 1 – Casual, insulting diction:

- "Fool," "saucy," "pedantic wretch" – everyday insults
- "Late school boys and sour prentices" – mundane references to ordinary life
- "Country ants" – dismissive metaphor for farm workers
- "Rags of time" – time is torn, worthless clothing
- Creates contrast between cosmic sun and trivial human routines

Stanza 2 – Imperial, exotic, and philosophical diction:

- "Indias of spice and mine" – exotic wealth, global trade
- "Kings," "princes," "states" – political power
- "Mimic," "alchemy" – philosophical terms suggesting falseness vs. true value
- Elevated diction reinforces hyperbolic claims about love

Stanza 3 – Softened, declarative, cosmic diction:

- "Center," "sphere" – astronomical terms; Ptolemaic universe model
- "Contracted" – technical term for shrinking the world to their bed
- Diction becomes more formal and philosophical

ATTITUDE

Toward the sun:

- **Initially mocking and dismissive:** "Go chide / Late schoolboys" – treats sun as petty busybody
- "Thy beams... I could eclipse" – challenges its power
- **Later instructive and tolerant:** "Shine here to us" – allows sun to stay but on his terms

Toward love and his beloved:

- **Reverent, celebratory, proud:** "Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime"
- "She's all states, and all princes, I" – love elevated above all worldly concerns
- "I would not lose her sight so long" – tender concern for beloved

Toward the external world:

- **Dismissive of social hierarchy and duties:** "Princes do but play us" – royalty is mere playacting
- "All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy" – everything outside love is worthless imitation

IMAGERY

Cosmic and domestic imagery create contrast between universe and bedroom:

Cosmic/Royal imagery:

- "Indias of spice and mine" – exotic wealth of East and West Indies
- "Kings," "princes," "states" – political power and global empire
- "Western stars," "sphere" – astronomical, universal scale

Domestic imagery:

- "Bed," "walls," "windows," "curtains" – intimate, enclosed space
- "This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere" – bedroom becomes universe

The juxtaposition creates ironic effect: the lovers' small, private space contains more value than entire world.

METAPHOR & FIGURES OF SPEECH

"Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime" – Love transcends time and space; it's eternal and unchanging unlike seasons.

"Hours, days, months, which are the rags of time" – Time is torn clothing, worthless and tattered. Love exists outside temporal measurement.

Bed as microcosm: The lovers' bed becomes the center of the universe. The bedroom walls become the "sphere" (in Ptolemaic cosmology, the spheres held celestial bodies). Love inverts cosmic hierarchy.

"She's all states, and all princes, I" – The beloved embodies all kingdoms (feminine, contained); the speaker embodies all rulers (masculine, active power). Together they are complete political world.

"All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy" – Honor is mere imitation (theater); wealth is alchemy (fake gold). Only love is real and valuable.

Hyperbolic reversal: Throughout, Donne reverses expected hierarchy—sun should rule humans, but here the lover commands the sun. Bedroom should be insignificant, but here it's the universe.

HYPERBOLE

Stanza 2 is the height of exaggeration:

- **"I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink"** – Claims he can overpower the sun with a mere gesture
- **"Both th' Indias of spice and mine... lie here with me"** – All global wealth (spices from East Indies, gold/silver from West Indies) is contained in their bed

"All here in one bed lay" – All kings of the world are in their bed

"She's all states, and all princes, I" – They embody entire political world

"Nothing else is" – Absolute negation of external reality

"All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy" – Everything outside their love is fake

Purpose: Hyperbole elevates private love above physical, political, and cosmic world. It's playful exaggeration that makes serious point: love creates its own reality.

PRONOUN USAGE

"Thou" (sun): Direct address creates dramatic immediacy; sun is personified as conversation partner.

"I" and "me": Emphasizes speaker's individual power and agency. He claims ability to eclipse sun, command its movements.

"Us," "we": Creates intimacy and partnership. "Thou art half as happy as we" – they are united entity, superior to sun.

"She" and "her": The beloved is praised but not given voice. She's idealized object, embodying perfection ("all states").

Shift from "I" to "we": Early poem emphasizes speaker's power ("I could eclipse"); later shifts to shared happiness ("we"), reinforcing that love's power comes from union.

STRUCTURE, PUNCTUATION & INTENTION

Form: Three stanzas of 10 lines each. Irregular rhyme scheme and meter create conversational, argumentative tone.

Stanza structure mirrors argument:

- **Stanza 1:** Mock the sun's authority; dismiss its power over lovers
- **Stanza 2:** Assert love's superiority; prove sun is inferior to love
- **Stanza 3:** Grant sun new role; instruct it to serve love

Punctuation:

- **Rhetorical questions:** "Why dost thou thus...?" "Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?" – challenge sun's authority
- **Commands:** "Go chide..." "Look, and tomorrow late, tell me..." – speaker gives orders
- **Enjambment:** Lines flow into each other, creating sense of rushing argument and passion

REPETITION

"All" repeated to emphasize completeness:

- "Love, **all** alike"
- "**All** here in one bed lay"
- "She's **all** states, and **all** princes"

- "All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy"

This repetition reinforces hyperbolic claim that love contains everything worth having.

THEMES

- **Love vs. Time:** Love transcends temporal constraints; it's eternal
- **Private vs. Public:** Intimate love superior to public duties, social hierarchy, political power
- **Power and Authority:** Lover challenges cosmic authority of sun; love creates its own kingdom
- **Microcosm and Macrocosm:** The bedroom contains/replaces entire universe
- **Reality vs. Appearance:** Love is true reality; external world is mere imitation

FOR GRADE 12 BOYS – EXAM FOCUS:

- Understand metaphysical poetry: intellectual argument + passionate emotion
- The hyperbole in stanza 2 is KEY – know how to explain each exaggeration
- Compare speaker's confidence with Ulysses' restlessness – both reject external authority
- Note the wit and humor – don't write about this as if it's deadly serious
- Memorize: "She's all states, and all princes, I, / Nothing else is"
- "All" repetition – emphasizes love contains everything
- This is about love stopping time, not carpe diem

3. FOR OOM PIET – Finuala Dowling

*When I was least happy in life
my daughter led me across the road
to a neighbour whom I did not know*

*with the purpose of a toddler
who does not see gates and fences
but the ducks and puppies
on the other side.*

*You spoke to me in the same
low murmuring tones
you used for lame horses
and bilious dogs.*

*Crops, flowers and poultry
were our theme:
you made me tea
and wiped the counter,
you said 'Foe itog'
and 'I don't hope so.'
You guessed.*

*You told me I was beautiful,
In the courtly way of an old man.*

*One day when it rained
you phoned from your side
and said 'I'm sending some ducks
for Beatrix'—*

you always called her 'Beatrix'—

*out the window we saw them,
waddling over,
in the way of ducks
when directed by Oom Piet.*

*You moved and I moved,
but one thing stays:
the sense of a rescue,
somehow being saved.*

SPEAKER

A ~~woman~~ (mother) reflecting on a difficult period in her life

, probably experiencing depression or personal crisis. She speaks retrospectively, looking back with gratitude at the kindness shown by an elderly Afrikaans neighbour. The speaker is vulnerable but saved through simple human connection.

Context: She was at her lowest point ("least happy in life") when her young daughter unknowingly led her to help. The poem is both personal tribute and meditation on how small acts of kindness can transform lives.

TONE

Tender, nostalgic, grateful, quietly reflective

Words showing tone:

- "When I was least happy in life" – understated pain; doesn't dramatize suffering
- "Low murmuring tones" – gentle, soothing quality
- "You guessed" – tender acknowledgment that he understood without being told
- "The courtly way of an old man" – respectful, affectionate description
- "The sense of a rescue, / somehow being saved" – profound gratitude expressed simply

The tone is conversational and intimate, as if speaking directly to Oom Piet. There's warmth without sentimentality.

DICTION

Simple, everyday language with Afrikaans cultural markers

Examples:

- "Made me tea and wiped the counter" – mundane domestic actions convey care
- "Foeitog" – Afrikaans expression of sympathy (like "shame" or "oh dear")

- "I don't hope so" – direct translation from Afrikaans; authentic voice
- "Oom Piet" – respectful Afrikaans title for older man (Uncle Piet)
- "Crops, flowers and poultry" – simple, rural concerns
- "Waddling over" – gentle, humorous verb captures duck movement

The plain diction reflects genuine, unpretentious kindness. No fancy words needed for profound human connection.

ATTITUDE

Toward Oom Piet: Deep admiration and gratitude. "You spoke to me... you used for lame horses / and bilious dogs" – he treats her with same gentle care he gives wounded animals. This isn't insulting; it shows his healing nature. "The courtly way of an old man" reveals respect for his dignity and gentlemanly kindness.

Toward her daughter: Loving and appreciative. The child's innocence ("purpose of a toddler / who does not see gates and fences") unknowingly leads to rescue. The daughter's simple action saves the mother.

Toward her own suffering: Matter-of-fact, not self-pitying. "When I was least happy in life" acknowledges pain without dwelling on it. Focus is on healing, not trauma.

Toward small acts of kindness: Profound appreciation. Tea-making, counter-wiping, calling daughter by full name – these tiny gestures have lasting impact.

IMAGERY

Domestic and pastoral imagery creates safe, healing environment:

Barrier-breaking:

- "Gates and fences" vs. "ducks and puppies" – child sees past obstacles to connection
- "Across the road" – small physical distance represents emotional gap being bridged

Gentle care:

- "Low murmuring tones" – auditory; soothing, calm
- "Madame tea and wiped the counter" – visual; domestic comfort
- "Lame horses and bilious dogs" – he's caretaker of vulnerable creatures

Movement and rescue:

- "Ducks... waddling over" – comical, endearing image; even ducks obey Oom Piet
- "When it rained" – weather detail adds intimacy; ordinary day made memorable by kindness

All imagery is concrete, specific, unpretentious – mirrors the poem's emotional authenticity.

METAPHOR & FIGURES OF SPEECH

"Purpose of a toddler / who does not see gates and fences" – The daughter represents innocent wisdom. Adults see barriers (social, emotional, physical); children see only what they want (connection, joy). This childlike directness leads to healing.

"You spoke to me in the same / low murmuring tones / you used for lame horses / and bilious dogs" – This comparison elevates rather than diminishes. Oom Piet is healer of wounded beings. The speaker recognizes she was wounded and needed gentle handling.

Ducks as symbols: Represent Oom Piet's generosity and control over his world. "In the way of ducks / when directed by Oom Piet" suggests both humor and his gentle authority.

"You moved and I moved, / but one thing stays" – Physical separation contrasts with emotional permanence. Some experiences transcend place and time.

HYPERBOLE

None present. The poem's power comes from understatement and restraint. The speaker doesn't exaggerate suffering or gratitude – this makes both more believable and moving.

PRONOUN USAGE

"I" and "me": Speaker's vulnerability. "When I was least happy" admits personal crisis. "My daughter led me" shows she needed guidance even from toddler.

"You": Poem is direct address to Oom Piet (though he's absent). Creates intimacy.

Repeated "you" emphasizes his active role: "You spoke," "you made," "you said," "you told," "you phoned."

"We": "Out the window we saw them" – shared moment between speaker and daughter; memory preserved together.

STRUCTURE, PUNCTUATION & INTENTION

Form: Free verse; no regular rhyme or meter. Structure mirrors memory – fragmented, impressionistic.

Short stanzas: Varying lengths create pauses, reflection. Mimics how memory works.

Key structural moments:

- **"You guessed."** – Single line, profound. He understood without explanation.
- **"You always called her 'Beatrix'"** – Single line emphasizes this detail mattered.

Circular structure: Opens with unhappiness, closes with rescue. Movement from darkness to light.

REPETITION

"You" repeated throughout: Emphasizes Oom Piet's central, active role in rescue.

"Moved" repeated: "You moved and I moved" – parallel structure shows both lives continued elsewhere, but past stays.

THEMES

- **Kindness and rescue:** Small acts of care can save lives
- **Connection across difference:** Age, culture, gender don't prevent human understanding
- **Innocence and wisdom:** Child's simple action leads to profound healing
- **Memory and gratitude:** Some moments transcend time and place

- **Depression and healing:** Recovery through community, not isolation
- **South African context:** Cross-cultural kindness in post-apartheid SA

FOR GRADE 12 BOYS – EXAM FOCUS:

- This teaches that asking for help is strength, not weakness
- Oom Piet is model of quiet, practical masculinity – presence, not words
- The Afrikaans phrases add authenticity – know what "Foeitog" means
- Compare this quiet rescue to Ulysses' dramatic heroism – both valid
- Key line: "You guessed" – emotional intelligence matters
- About community and interdependence, not rugged individualism

4. REMEMBER – Christina Rossetti

*Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

SPEAKER

A dying woman addressing her beloved

,probably her fiancé or husband. She speaks from perspective of anticipating death, offering instructions about how to remember her. The speaker is selfless, mature, and deeply loving – more concerned with beloved's happiness than her own legacy.

Context: Victorian era (1849); women often died young from illness. This is likely about tuberculosis. Rossetti herself struggled with illness.

TONE

Gentle, contemplative, melancholic yet consoling, selfless

Octave (lines 1-8) – Plea for remembrance:

- "Remember me when I am gone away" – gentle request, not demand
- "Only remember me" – urgent but still tender
- Tone is sad, resigned, but calm

Sestet (lines 9-14) – Release from obligation:

- "Yet if you should forget me for a while" – permission to forget
- "Do not grieve" – comforting, protective
- "Better by far you should forget and smile" – selfless prioritization

- Tone becomes more consoling, loving, generous

DICTION

Simple, lyrical, formal yet intimate

Examples:

- "Silent land" – euphemism for death; avoids harsh words
- "Vestige" – trace, remnant; formal but precise
- "Corruption" – Victorian term for bodily decay
- "Counsel" and "pray" – religious language
- "Gone away," "hold me by the hand" – simple physical language makes loss concrete

ATTITUDE

Toward death: Peaceful resignation. "Silent land" portrays death as quiet rest. "It will be late to counsel then or pray" accepts that death ends earthly connection.

Toward her beloved: Tender, protective, selfless. "Better by far you should forget and smile / Than that you should remember and be sad" prioritizes his joy over her memory.

Toward memory and legacy: Initially desires remembrance, but ultimately releases that need. Love means wanting beloved's happiness even after death.

IMAGERY

Physical and spiritual imagery creates sense of separation:

Physical touch:

- "Hold me by the hand" – intimate gesture; death severs physical bond
- "Half turn to go yet turning stay" – hesitation of parting; moment before departure

Journey imagery:

- "Gone away," "gone far away" – death as journey
- "Silent land" – peaceful destination

Darkness and decay:

- "Darkness and corruption" – physical reality of death
- Contrasts with "smile" (light, life, joy)

METAPHOR & FIGURES OF SPEECH

"Silent land" – Metaphor for death/afterlife. "Silent" suggests peace, rest. "Land" implies destination, perhaps heaven.

"Half turn to go yet turning stay" – Captures paradox of parting: wanting to leave yet wanting to stay. Movement suspended in moment of departure.

"Darkness and corruption" – Physical reality of grave. "Darkness" = being buried; "corruption" = bodily decay. Unflinching Victorian realism.

"Vestige of the thoughts that once I had" – Consciousness might survive death in fragmented form. Tentative about afterlife.

Antithesis: "Forget and smile" vs. "remember and be sad" – opposing outcomes emphasize choice.

HYPERBOLE

None present. Power comes from restraint and sincerity. Even love is expressed through understatement and sacrifice.

PRONOUN USAGE

"Me" and "I": Speaker refers to herself but never demands. "Remember me" is request, not command.

"You": Direct address creates intimate conversation. Repeated throughout.

Shift in focus:

- **Octave:** More "me" – her need to be remembered
- **Sestet:** More "you" – his need for happiness
- Shift embodies movement from self to selflessness

"Our future": Shared dreams now impossible; "our" emphasizes what they're losing together.

STRUCTURE, PUNCTUATION & INTENTION

Form: Petrarchan sonnet (Italian sonnet)

- **Rhyme scheme:** ABBAABBACDDECE
- **Volta (turn) at line 9:** "Yet" signals shift from plea to release

Octave: Plea for remembrance. Repeats "remember" and "gone away."

Sestet: Release from obligation. Grants permission to forget if it brings happiness.

Punctuation: Semicolons create pause and solemnity. Enjambment creates measured rhythm.

Meter: Iambic pentameter – formal, dignified rhythm.

REPETITION

"Remember" repeated throughout:

- Line 1, 5, 7: "Remember me"
- Line 10, 13: In context of permission NOT to remember

Creates incantatory effect. After volta, "remember" appears in new context, showing emotional evolution.

"Gone away" repeated: Emphasizes distance of death.

THEMES

- **Love and mortality:** True love wants beloved's happiness even after death

- **Memory vs. forgetting:** Tension between desire to be remembered and beloved's wellbeing
- **Selflessness and sacrifice:** Speaker releases her claim on beloved's grief
- **Acceptance of death:** Peaceful resignation to mortality
- **Grief and healing:** Grief is natural but shouldn't become permanent

FOR GRADE 12 BOYS – EXAM FOCUS:

- This is what mature love looks like – putting someone else first
- The volta at line 9 is CRUCIAL – know how to identify and explain it
- Sonnet form = traditionally love poem; here used for love beyond death
- Contrast octave (remember me) vs. sestet (forget if needed)
- Memorize: "Better by far you should forget and smile / Than that you should remember and be sad"
- About healthy vs. unhealthy grief – she wants life to continue
- Notice she never says "I love you" – love shown through sacrifice

5. STRANGERS FOREVER – Amin Kassam

*Each of us is a passenger
seated in one huge compartment
going we do not know where
all strangers thrown together by chance
who travel without arriving;*

*Who can read the whispers of your mind
when they are hidden even from you?
Though you open a window
in the chambers of your heart
though you strive to say what you feel
and in striving reach a state of understanding
there is still one part
one small part
that remains your own
one part that neither I nor anyone else
will ever penetrate.*

Forever strangers.

SPEAKER

A philosophical observer reflecting on human existence and relationships

. The speaker is thoughtful, existential, perhaps lonely or disillusioned. They speak from experience of trying and failing to achieve complete understanding with others. The voice is universal – "each of us" suggests this applies to all humanity.

Perspective: First-person plural ("we") and second person ("you") create sense that speaker includes themselves in this isolation.

TONE

Philosophical, reflective, quietly resigned, melancholic but not bitter

Words showing tone:

- "We do not know where" – uncertain, lost
- "All strangers thrown together by chance" – impersonal, fatalistic
- "Travel without arriving" – futile, cyclical
- "Hidden even from you" – empathetic acknowledgment
- "Neither I nor anyone else will ever penetrate" – definitive, resigned
- "Forever strangers" – final, absolute but calm

Tone is meditative, accepting. Sadness but no rage.

DICTION

Sparse, abstract, philosophical

Examples:

- "Compartment" – impersonal, mechanical; confined space
- "Whispers" – quiet, private, barely audible thoughts
- "Chambers of your heart" – architectural metaphor
- "Penetrate" – strong verb; suggests barrier
- "Strive," "striving" – effort, struggle without guarantee
- "Passenger," "travel," "arriving" – journey metaphors

Abstract diction creates universality.

ATTITUDE

Toward human connection: Realistic, slightly pessimistic. We try ("you strive") and sometimes succeed ("reach a state of understanding") but complete connection is impossible.

Toward communication: Sympathetic but skeptical. "Though you open a window" and "though you strive" acknowledge effort, but "though" signals insufficiency.

Toward individuality: Protective, valuing. "One part that remains your own" isn't entirely negative – there's something sacred about irreducible self.

Toward isolation: Accepting. "Forever strangers" is declaration, not lament.

IMAGERY

Spatial and metaphorical imagery emphasizes separation:

Journey/travel imagery:

- "Passenger seated in one huge compartment" – confined space, no control
- "Travel without arriving" – purposeless motion

Architectural imagery:

- "Chambers of your heart" – inner spaces, rooms within rooms
- "Open a window" – attempt to let others see inside

Auditory imagery:

- "Whispers of your mind" – barely audible, private

METAPHOR & FIGURES OF SPEECH

"Each of us is a passenger / seated in one huge compartment" – Life as train journey. We're traveling together but separate, strangers sharing space without real connection.

"Travel without arriving" – Paradox. We're in motion but reach no destination. Suggests futility.

"Whispers of your mind" – Personification. Thoughts are whispered voices, secret communications.

"Open a window in the chambers of your heart" – Mixed metaphor combining architecture with emotional vulnerability. Windows only show so much.

"One small part that remains your own" – The irreducible self. Core that stays private, unknowable.

HYPERBOLE

None present. Power comes from understatement. "Forever strangers" sounds absolute but poem's argument supports this as literal truth.

PRONOUN USAGE

"Each of us" and "we": Creates collective voice. Speaker includes themselves in isolation.

"You": Direct address makes reader the subject. Pulls reader into experience.

"I": Appears once: "neither I nor anyone else." Speaker acknowledges own inability.

Shift from collective to personal:

- **First stanza:** "Each of us," "we" – universal
- **Second stanza:** "You," "your," "I" – personal, intimate

STRUCTURE, PUNCTUATION & INTENTION

Form: Free verse; no rhyme or regular meter. Structure reflects fragmentation.

Two-stanza structure:

- **Stanza 1:** Life as journey metaphor; collective condition
- **Stanza 2:** Individual unknowability
- **Final line stands alone:** "Forever strangers" – isolated, emphatic

Punctuation: Minimal. Rhetorical question opens stanza 2. Repetition of "one part" without punctuation creates emphasis. Final period is definitive.

REPETITION

"One part" repeated three times:

- "There is still one part"
- "one small part"

- "one part that neither I nor anyone else will ever penetrate"

Emphasizes irreducible core of self.

"Though" repeated: "Though you open... though you strive" – emphasizes failed attempts.

"Strangers": First and last lines – circular structure.

THEMES

- **Existential isolation:** Human beings fundamentally alone, unknowable
- **Limits of communication:** Language can't achieve complete understanding
- **The unknowable self:** Mysteries even to ourselves
- **Life as journey without purpose:** Existential futility
- **The irreducible self:** Core that remains private, sacred
- **Permanence of alienation:** This is permanent condition

FOR GRADE 12 BOYS – EXAM FOCUS:

- Existential philosophy in poem form – we're all fundamentally alone
- Don't mistake for pessimism – it's philosophical observation
- Train metaphor is KEY – know it thoroughly
- Compare to other poems: Ulysses seeks external meaning; this says there might not be any
- "Forever strangers" sounds negative, but there's dignity in accepting truth
- Question: Is this about loneliness or privacy/individuality? Both?
- Modern relevance: social media era – we share everything, yet still feel unknown
- Validates feeling misunderstood – it's human condition, not personal failure