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CAPS

Mind the Gap!

English First Additional Language Paper 2: Literature

Poetry
Study Guide

Grade 12

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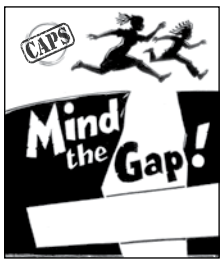

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Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Grade 12 English First Additional Language Mind the Gap study guide for Poetry
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222 Struben Street, Pretoria, South Africa
Contact person: Dr Patricia Watson
Email: watson.p@dbe.gov.za
Tel: (012) 357 4502
http://www.education.gov.za
Call Centre: 0800202933

The first edition published in 2012 for the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grade 12 Mind the Gap study guides for Accounting, Economics, Geography and Life Sciences; the second edition, published in 2014, aligned these titles to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and added more titles to the series, including the CAPS Grade 12 English First Additional Language **Mind the Gap study guide for Poetry**, **ISBN 978-1-4315-1943-9**

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Mind the Gap team
Series managing editor: Dr Patricia Watson
Production co-ordinators: Radha Pillay and Gill McDowell
Authors: Abel Khatlake, Sylvester Mensah, Pila Mngqibisa, Nonhlanhla Mzila, Joanne Stielau and Priscilla Vos
Expert readers: Jenny de Wet, Bulara Monyaki, Roselet Netshilata, Yvonne Reed and Willem Ros
Editor: Julia Grey
Proof reader: Pat Tucker
Designer: Nomalizo Ngwenya
Illustrators: Michele Dean, Ivan Keir, Vusi Malindi, Khosi Pholosa and Kenneth Tekane
Series cover illustration: Alastair Findlay
Onsite writers' workshop support: Wayne Cussons

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Ministerial foreword

Matsie Angelina Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has pleasure in releasing the second edition of the *Mind the Gap* study guides for Grade 12 learners. These study guides continue the innovative and committed attempt by the DBE to improve the academic performance of Grade 12 candidates in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination.

The study guides have been written by teams of exerts comprising teachers, examiners, moderators, subject advisors and coordinators. Research, which began in 2012, has shown that the *Mind the Gap* series has, without doubt, had a positive impact on grades. It is my fervent wish that the *Mind the Gap* study guides take us all closer to ensuring that no learner is left behind, especially as we celebrate 20 years of democracy.

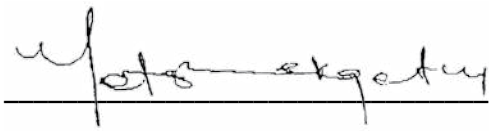
The second edition of *Mind the Gap* is aligned to the 2014 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This means that the writers have considered the National Policy pertaining to the programme, promotion requirements and protocols for assessment of the National Curriculum Statement for Grade 12 in 2014.

The *Mind the Gap* CAPS study guides take their brief in part from the 2013 National Diagnostic report on learner performance and draw on the Grade 12 Examination Guidelines. Each of the Mind the Gap study guides defines key terminology and offers simple explanations and examples of the types of questions learners can expect to be asked in an exam. Marking memoranda are included to assist learners to build their understanding. Learners are also referred to specific questions from past national exam papers and examination memos that are available on the Department's website – www.education.gov.za.

The CAPS editions include Accounting, Economics, Geography, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Sciences. The series is produced in both English and Afrikaans. There are also nine English First Additional Language (EFAL) study guides. These include EFAL Paper 1 (Language in Context); EFAL Paper 3 (Writing) and a guide for each of the Grade 12 prescribed literature set works included in Paper 2. These are Short Stories, Poetry, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Nothing but the Truth* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Please remember when preparing for Paper 2 that you need only study the set works you did in your EFAL class at school.

The study guides have been designed to assist those learners who have been underperforming due to a lack of exposure to the content requirements of the curriculum and aim to mind-the-gap between failing and passing, by bridging the gap in learners' understanding of commonly tested concepts, thus helping candidates to pass.

All that is now required is for our Grade 12 learners to put in the hours required to prepare for the examinations. Learners, make us proud – study hard. We wish each and every one of you good luck for your Grade 12 examinations.



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Dear Grade 12 learner

This *Mind the Gap* study guide helps you to prepare for the end-of-year Grade 12 English First Additional Language (EFAL) Literature exam.

There are three exams for EFAL: Paper 1: Language in Context; Paper 2: Literature; and Paper 3: Writing.

There are nine great EFAL *Mind the Gap* study guides which cover Papers 1, 2 and 3.

Paper 2: Literature includes the study of novels, drama, short stories and poetry. A *Mind the Gap* study guide is available for each of the prescribed literature titles. Choose the study guide for the set works you studied in your EFAL class at school.

This study guide focuses on the 10 prescribed poems examined in Paper 2: Literature. **You will need to study all 10 poems for the exam:**

1. *Sonnet 116* by William Shakespeare
2. *Death be not proud* by John Donne
3. *An elementary school classroom in a slum* by Stephen Spender
4. *Auto wreck* by Karl Shapiro
5. *On his blindness* by John Milton
6. *A prayer for all my countrymen* by Guy Butler
7. *The birth of Shaka* by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali
8. *The serf* by Roy Campbell
9. *Mementos, 1* by WD Snodgrass
10. *Cheetah* by Charles Eglington

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How to use this study guide

There is one chapter for each poem. Each chapter includes a copy of the poem and information about:

- The poet;
- The themes;
- Words you need to know to understand the poem;
- Type and form;
- Line-by-line analysis; and
- Tone and mood.

All the above information is contained in a one-page summary. Use the 10 summaries to help you hold the 10 poems clearly in your mind.

You can test your understanding of each poem by completing the activities, then use the answers to mark your own work. The activities are based on the kinds of questions you will find in the exam.

NB	Pay special attention	hint	Hints to help you remember a concept or guide you in solving problems		Activities with questions for you to answer

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Top 7 study tips

1. Break your learning up into manageable sections. This will help your brain to focus. Take short breaks between studying one section and going onto the next.

2. Have all your materials ready before you begin studying a section – pencils, pens, highlighters, paper, glass of water, etc.

3. Be positive. It helps your brain hold on to the information.

4. Your brain learns well with colours and pictures. Try to use them whenever you can.

5. Repetition is the key to remembering information you have to learn. Keep going over the work until you can recall it with ease.

6. Teach what you are learning to anyone who will listen. It is definitely worth reading your revision notes aloud.

7. Sleeping for at least eight hours every night, eating healthy food and drinking plenty of water are all important things you need to do for your brain. Studying for exams is like exercise, so you must be prepared physically as well as mentally.

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On the exam day

1. Make sure you bring pens that work, sharp pencils, a rubber and a sharpener. Make sure you bring your ID document and examination admission letter. Arrive at the exam venue at least an hour before the start of the exam.

2. Go to the toilet before entering the exam room. You don't want to waste valuable time going to the toilet during the exam.

3. You must know at the start of the exam which two out of the four sections of the Paper 2 Literature exam you will be answering. Use the 10 minutes' reading time to read the instructions carefully.

4. Break each question down to make sure you understand what is being asked. If you don't answer the question properly you won't get any marks for it. Look for the key words in the question to know how to answer it. You will find a list of question words on pages xiv and xv of this study guide.

5. Manage your time carefully. Start with the question you think is the easiest. Check how many marks are allocated to each question so you give the right amount of information in your answer.

6. Remain calm, even if the question seems difficult at first. It will be linked with something you have covered. If you feel stuck, move on and come back if time allows. Do try and answer as many questions as possible.

7. Take care to write neatly so the examiners can read your answers easily.

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Overview of the English First Additional Language Paper 2: Literature exam

In the **Paper 2 Literature** exam, you need to answer questions from two sections. Choose the two sections that you know best:

- Section A: Novel
- Section B: Drama
- Section C: Short stories
- Section D: Poetry

A total of **70 marks** is allocated for Paper 2, which means **35 marks for each section you choose**.

You will have **two hours** for this exam.

Here is a summary of the Paper 2 Literature exam paper:

Question number	Title of novel	Type of question	Number of marks
Section A: Novel *If you choose Section A, answer ONE question. Choose the question for the book you have learnt.*			
1.	*To Kill a Mockingbird*	Contextual	35
2.	*Lord of the Flies*	Contextual	35
3.	*A Grain of Wheat*	Contextual	35
Section B: Drama *If you choose Section B, answer ONE question. Choose the question for the play you have learnt.*			
4.	*Romeo and Juliet*	Contextual	35
5.	*Nothing but the Truth*	Contextual	35
Section C: Short stories *If you choose Section C, answer BOTH questions. You will not know exactly which short stories are included until the exam. TWO stories will be set. Answer the questions set on BOTH short stories.*			
6.1	Short story	Contextual	17 or 18
6.2	Short story	Contextual	17 or 18
Section D: Poetry *If you choose Section D, answer BOTH questions. You will not know exactly which poems are included until the exam. TWO poems will be set. Answer the questions set on BOTH poems.*			
7.1	Poem	Contextual	17 or 18
7.2	Poem	Contextual	17 or 18

NB

- You don't have to answer all the sections in Paper 2.
- Before the exam starts you must know which two sections you are going to answer.
- When the exam starts, find your two chosen sections.
- Make sure to number your answers correctly – according to the numbering system used in the exam paper – for the two sections you've chosen.
- Start each section on a new page.

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What is a contextual question?

In a contextual question, you are given an extract from the poem. You then have to answer questions based on the extract. Some answers you can find in the extract. Other questions will test your understanding of other parts of the poem. Some questions ask for your own opinion about the poem.

What are the examiners looking for?

Examiners will assess your answers to the contextual questions based on:

- Your understanding of the **literal** meaning of the poem. You need to identify information that is clearly given in the poem.
- Your ability to **reorganise** information in the poem. For example, you may be asked to summarise key points.
- Your ability to provide information that may not be clearly stated in the extract provided, using what you already know about the text as a whole. This process is called **inference**. For example, you may be asked to explain how a figure of speech affects your understanding of the poem as a whole.
- Your ability to make your own judgements and form opinions about aspects of the poem. This process is called **evaluation**. For example, you may be asked if you agree with a statement.
- Your ability to respond to the emotional level of a poem. This is called **appreciation**. For example, you may be asked what you would have done in the situation described in the poem. You may be asked to discuss how the writer's style helps to describe the tone and mood of a poem.

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Question words

Here are examples of question types found in the exam.

Question type	What you need to do
Literal: Questions about information that is clearly given in the text or extract from the text	
Name characters/places/things ...	Write the specific names of characters, places, etc.
State the facts/reasons/ideas ...	Write down the information without any discussion or comments.
Give two reasons for/why ...	Write two reasons (this means the same as 'state').
Identify the character/reasons/theme ...	Write down the character's name, state the reasons.
Describe the place/character/what happens when ...	Write the main characteristics of something, for example: What does a place look/feel/smell like? Is a particular character kind/rude/ aggressive ...
What does character x do when ...	Write what happened – what the character did.
Why did character x do ...	Given reasons for the character's action according to your knowledge of the plot.
Who is/did ...	Write the name of the character.
To whom does xx refer ...	Write the name of the relevant character/person.
Reorganisation: Questions that need you to bring together different pieces of information in an organised way.	
Summarise the main points/ideas ...	Write the main points, without a lot of detail.
Group the common elements ...	Join the same things together.
Give an outline of	Write the main points, without a lot of detail.
Inference Questions that need you to **interpret** (make meaning of) the text using information that may not be clearly stated. This process involves thinking about what happened in different parts of the text; looking for clues that tell you more about a character, theme or symbol; and using your own knowledge to help you understand the text.	
Explain how this idea links with the theme x ...	Identify the links to the theme.
Compare the attitudes/actions of character x with character y ...	Point out the similarities and differences.
What do the words ... suggest/reveal about /what does this situation tell you about ...	State what you think the meaning is, based on your understanding of the text.
How does character x react when .... **Describe how** something affected ... **State how** you know that character x is ...	Write down the character's reaction/ what the character did/felt.
What did character x mean by the expression ...	Explain why the character used those particular words.
Is the following statement **true or false**?	Write 'true' or 'false' next to the question number. You must give a reason for your answer.

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Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence (multiple choice question).	A list of answers is given, labelled A–D. Write only the letter (A, B, C or D) next to the question number.
Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing words ...	Write the missing word next to the question number.
Quote a line from the extract to prove your answer.	Write the relevant line of text using the same words and punctuation you see in the extract. Put quotation marks (“ ” inverted commas) around the quote.
Evaluation Questions that require you to make a judgement based on your knowledge and understanding of the text and your own experience.	
Discuss your view/a character's feelings/a theme ...	Consider all the information and reach a conclusion.
Do you think that ...	There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to these questions, but you must give a reason for your opinion based on information given in the text.
Do you agree with ...	
In your opinion, what ...	
Give your views on ...	
Appreciation Questions that ask about your emotional response to what happens, the characters and how it is written.	
How would you feel if you were character x when ...	There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to these questions, but you must give a reason for your opinion based on information given in the text.
Discuss your response to ...	
Do you feel sorry for ...	
Discuss the use of the writer's style, diction and figurative language, dialogue ...	To answer this type of question, ask yourself: Does the style help me to feel/imagine what is happening/what a character is feeling? Why/why not? Give a reason for your answer.

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Literary features found in poems

Diction	The poet's choice of words and how he/she organises them.
Euphemism	A mild or vague expression in place of a word that is more harsh or direct.
First person	The poem is written from the point of view of 'I' or 'we'.
Hyperbole	A deliberate exaggeration. For example, 'a big' plate of food is described as 'a mountainous' plate of food
Irony	A statement or situation that has an underlying meaning that is different from the literal meaning.
Metaphor	A figure of speech that uses one thing to describe another in a figurative way.
Mood	The emotions felt by the reader when reading the poem.
Oxymoron	A combination of words with contradictory meanings (meanings which seem to be opposite to each other). For example, 'an open secret'
Personification	Giving human characteristics to non-human beings.
Pun	A play on words which are identical or similar in sound. It is used to create humour.
Rhyme	Lines of poetry that end in the same sound.
Rhythm	A regular and repeated pattern of sounds.
Sarcasm	An ironic expression which is used to be unkind or to make fun of someone.
Simile	Comparing one thing directly with another. 'Like' or 'as' is used to make this comparison.
Symbol	Something which stands for or represents something else
Theme	Themes are the main messages of a text. There are usually a few themes in each poem.
Third person	The poem is written from the point of view of 'he', 'she' or 'they'.
Tone	The feeling or atmosphere of the poem.
Sound devices:	
Alliteration	A pattern of sounds that includes the repetition of consonant sounds. The repeated sound can be either at the beginning of successive words or inside the word.
Assonance	The vowel sounds of words that occur close together are repeated.
Consonance	A sound that occurs at the end of words that are close together is repeated.
Onomatopoeia	The use of words to create the sounds being described.

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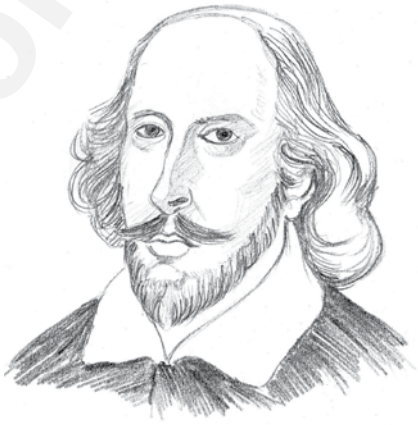
Sonnet 116
by William Shakespeare

Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds was written by William Shakespeare (1564-1616). He lived in England at the time of Queen Elizabeth I and he is one of the most famous English writers. He wrote many plays and over 150 poems. Like this one, most of the poems are sonnets which deal with themes of love, time, and their effect on people and relationships.

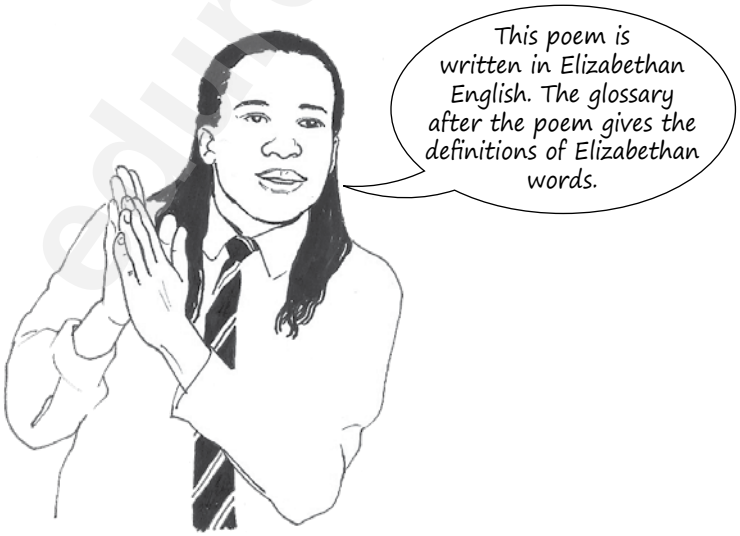


William Shakespeare

1. Themes

The main theme of *Sonnet 116* is **love**. Shakespeare is saying that nothing can stop true love and that it never changes, no matter what happens in life. True love can survive even during life's problems and can guide you through difficult times. Not even time can destroy true love, which lasts forever.

The poet is so sure of what true love is that he says that, if he is wrong, then he has never written anything, including this poem! This is how he concludes his argument that true love is constant and everlasting.



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Sonnet 116
by William Shakespeare

1st quatrain

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.

2nd quatrain

O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

3rd quatrain

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

Rhyming couplet

If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

line 5

line 10

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 1:	**let me not**	don't allow me to
	marriage	union, unity, bond
Line 2:	**admit impediments**	allow obstacles, flaws or anything else to get in the way
Line 3:	**alters**	changes
	alteration	a change
Line 4:	**remover**	person taking (love) away;
	to remove	to take away
Line 5:	**ever-fixèd mark**	permanent, unchanging marker
Line 6:	**tempests**	storms, challenges
	shaken	moved
Line 7:	**wand'ring bark**	ship lost at sea
Line 8:	**worth**	value
	taken	measured
Line 9:	**fool**	servant
Line 10:	**sickle**	a tool used to cut grass;
	compass	range; direction
Line 11:	**brief**	short
Line 12:	**bears it out**	makes it last
	edge of doom	end of the world; end of time; death
Line 13:	**error**	mistake
Line 14:	**writ**	wrote

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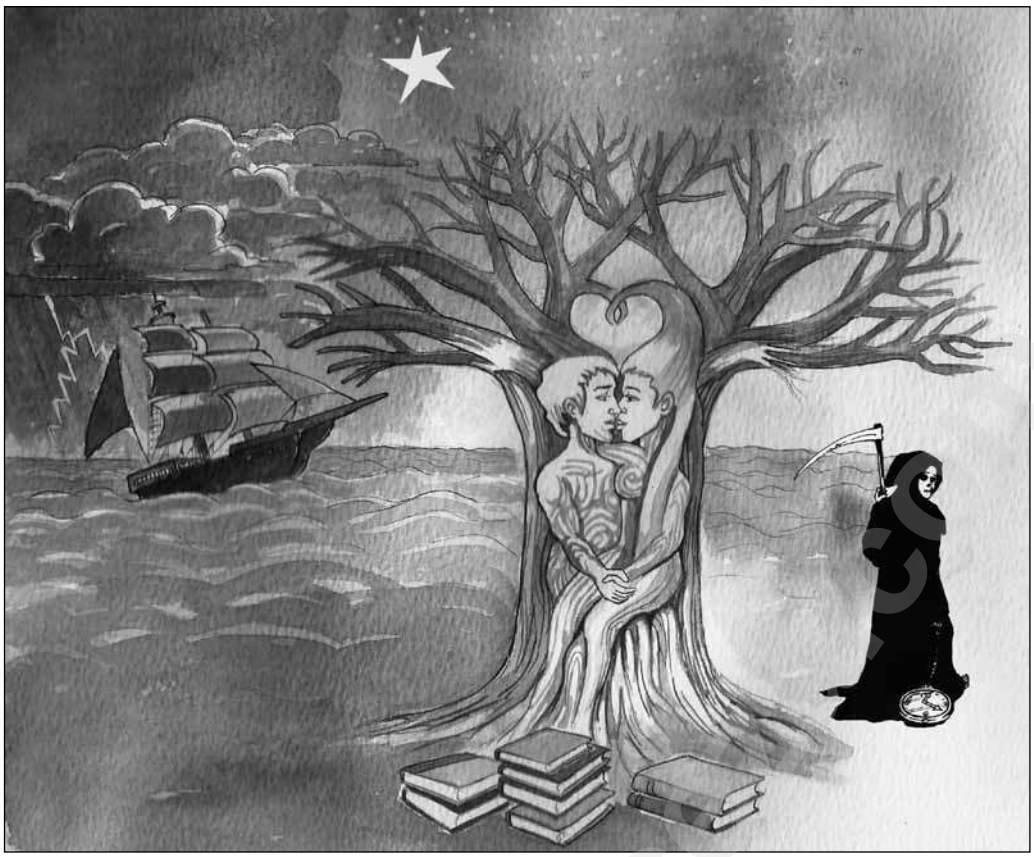

2. Type and form

Sonnet 116 is an Elizabethan sonnet. It has 14 lines in one verse that is made up of:

- Three quatrains of four lines each; and
- A **rhyming** couplet of two lines at the end of the poem.

The rhyming scheme for *Sonnet 116* is abab cdcd efef gg.

vocab

Rhyme: Words at the end of the lines which have the same sound, such as "minds" and "finds".

3. Analysis

First quatrain (lines 1 – 4)

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.

In the first quatrain, the poet suggests what love ***is not***. Nothing should get in the way ("impediments") of people who are united (perhaps by love or marriage) and have the same values ("true minds"). People who have true minds share the same beliefs, values and ideas. They may be close friends or family members, not only lovers or people who are married in an official way.

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He celebrates this kind of love and explains that true love does not change ("alters") when circumstances change ("it alteration finds"). True love stays constant (steady or even) and stable and it does not weaken ("bend") when there are difficult times, or the loved one does not seem to love any more.

The poet emphasises that love which changes or weakens is not true love by repeating "alter" and "alteration"; and "remover" and "remove" - these words suggest things that take love away or change love.

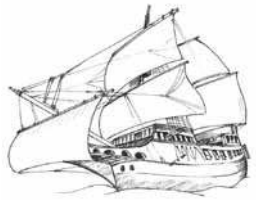
Second quatrain (lines 5 – 8)

O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark — line 5
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

In this quatrain, the poet suggest what love ***is***. The poet explains that he thinks the love of true minds is stable and permanent. His exclamation, "O, no!" indicates how strongly the poet rejects the idea that anything can change true love. The poet then uses **metaphors** based on ships and sailing to tell us what love really is.

In the **first metaphor** the poet says that true love is an "ever-fixèd mark", perhaps like a lighthouse. It stays shining and constant as a guide even during the worst storms ("tempests"). This metaphor tells us that true love is faithful and steady and will help you to manage even the worst of life's problems.

Did you know?



In Shakespeare's day, sailing ships were made of wood. The captain steered the ship by measuring the position of the stars to guide the ship across the sea.

In the **second metaphor**, Shakespeare says that true love is the "star" that guides a ship that has gone off course or got lost ("wand'ring bark"). This star refers to the North Star, which was used by a ship's captain to steer a ship in the right direction as it is a constant star, always in the same place in the sky. He is saying that true love is constant and never changes its nature. It can be trusted to guide you through life, like the North Star guides a "wand'ring bark" or a ship lost at sea.

Shakespeare also says that, although the position of a star can be measured, we cannot know the worth or value of the star. In the same way, the value of true love is something which cannot be measured, so its worth is "unknown" (line 8), although it can give us direction and meaning in life.

Third quatrain (lines 9 – 12)

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come: — line 10
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

In the third quatrain, the poet tells us that such love is ***timeless*** – it cannot be measured and lasts to the end of the world.

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The passing of time has no effect on true love. The use of a capital letter in "Time" tells us that this is **personification**, that Time is a person. Shakespeare is writing about time as if it is a man, so he writes "his" not "its".

However, the **speaker** in the poem says that love is not the "fool" of Time. He says that love is not a servant that has to obey Time's rules and so, although Time destroys youth and beauty (cuts down "rosy lips and cheeks" with his "sickle"), love does not change. The poet says that love will last forever, even until the end of the world ("the edge of doom").

Did you know?

Father Time is also called the Grim Reaper or Death. He carries a sickle to harvest people, as a farm worker cuts grass with a sickle. He destroys our youth and beauty so that we get old and wrinkled.

Rhyming couplet (lines 13 – 14)

If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

After telling us that love does not change (first quatrain), that love gives us guidance (second quatrain) and finally that love never ends (third quatrain), the poet ends the poem with a little joke. He says that if anyone can prove that his views of love are wrong then it would mean that he didn't write anything and that no one has ever loved anyone.

This is a clever argument to end the poem with because we all know that Shakespeare has written – we are studying one of his poems right now – and of course people have loved before, and so what he says about love must be correct.

4. Tone and mood

The tone of the poem is generally **confident**. Shakespeare believes so strongly in love that he does not say love is "like" anything (a simile). Instead, he uses metaphors to say that love IS that thing: love IS a "star" and love IS an "ever-fixèd mark".

In the third quatrain, Shakespeare's tone is **scornful** of Time's "brief hours and weeks" because true love is not affected by time. Time passes and we grow old and die but love does not die.

The tone of the rhyming couplet is **persuasive**. The poet or speaker wants to persuade the reader to agree with his views about true love.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent?

vocab

Scornful: An expression of disgust towards someone or something that is seen as unworthy.

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summary

Sonnet 116 : Let me not to the marriage of true minds
by William Shakespeare

1. Theme

Love is constant and everlasting.

Elizabethan sonnet: 14 lines

Quatrain 1
a
b
a
b

About what love is NOT
— Does not "admit impediments".
— Does not "alter when it alteration finds".
— Does not bend "with the remover to remove".

Quatrain 2
c
d
c
d

About what love IS
— Love is "an ever-fixèd mark".
Metaphor
— Love is the "star" that guides.
Metaphor

Quatrain 3
e
f
e
f

About love as TIMELESS
— "Love's not Time's fool"
Personification: Time is presented as a man.
— "But bears it out even to the edge of doom."
Love lasts even until the end of the world.

Rhyming couplet
g
g

Argues that he's confident he is right.
— "If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd."

2. Type and form

3. Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Confident, scornful, persuasive
- **Mood:** How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 1

Refer to the poem on page 2 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentence by using the words provided in the list below.

Petrarchan; sestet; Elizabethan; couplet; quatrains; octave

This is a typical (1.1) ... sonnet because of the three (1.2) ... and the (1.3) ... that rhymes. (3)

2. Quote a word in the first line which has connotations of love and unity. (1)

3. Refer to the following words in line 1 ("... the marriage of true minds").

   To what do these words refer? (2)

4. Refer to lines 2-4 ("Love is not love ... remover to remove").

   Using your own words, explain the meaning of these lines. (2)

5. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence.

   In line 5, the words "O, no ..." show that the speaker is ...

   A uncertain.

   B arrogant.

   C doubtful.

   D convinced. (1)

6. Refer to line 7 ("It is the star to every wand'ring bark").

   Give the literal meaning of the underlined words. (1)

7. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Quote THREE consecutive words to support your answer.
   It is impossible to measure the value of love. (2)

8. Refer to the following words in line 9 ("Love's not Time's fool").
   Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

9. Refer to lines 13 and 14 ("If this be ... man ever loved").

   How does the poet use the last two lines to make his argument on true love convincing? (2)

10. Do you agree with the speaker's view of love? Explain your answer. (2)

[17]

vocab

Connotations: Words with meanings linked to a key word. For example, the connotations of "morning" are fresh, new, early.

vocab

Consecutive words: Words that directly follow after one another.

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Answers to Activity 1

1. Elizabethan ✓/ quatrains ✓/ couplet ✓ (3)
2. "marriage" ✓ (1)
3. The union/ joining together ✓ of like-minded people/ people who think the same way/people who have the same values. ✓ (2)
4. True love does not change/ is constant ✓ when circumstances change/ when difficulties arise/ when the people change. ✓ (2)
5. D / convinced ✓ (1)
6. A ship that is lost/moving aimlessly or with no direction ✓ (1)
7. True. ✓ "whose worth's unknown" ✓ (2)
8. Personification [or apostrophe] ✓ (1)
9. If what he says about love is not true, then it is also true that he did not write this poem. However, you are reading what he has written. Therefore, he did write this poem and therefore what he says about love is true. ✓✓ (2)
10. Yes, I agree with the poet that love can last forever. People who really love each other can overcome any problems. ✓✓
    OR
    No, I disagree/ do not agree with the poet because these days love is superficial and often marriages do not last. ✓✓ (2)

[17]

hint

In Question 7, one mark will be given if the first part of the answer (True) is correct. To get 2 marks, give the correct answer AND quote the correct three words.

NB

When a question asks for your OWN view or opinion, you must say if you agree or not AND then give a reason for your viewpoint to get 2 marks.

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Death be not proud
by John Donne

This poem was written by John Donne (1572-1631) who lived at the same time as Shakespeare. Donne had an adventurous early life. He travelled by sailing ship on two expeditions to the New World (the United States). He also ran away with his employer's 16-year-old niece, Anne, whom he married, and so he was fired from his job. Donne was a Christian and became an Anglican priest and later the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London.

John Donne

1. Themes

The theme of this poem is **death**. The poet speaks directly to Death, in person, and tells Death not to think that he is important and powerful because Death is really just a kind of sleep – and rest and sleep are pleasant. We all wake from sleep: even people who die will wake from death – in heaven! The poet points out that actually death brings us benefits and that it has no power. There is therefore no reason for people to be afraid of death.

This poem is based on the Christian **paradox** that in order to live forever you have to die. In the Christian belief, physical death is the gateway to eternal or everlasting life in heaven.

The poet makes a clever argument in this poem. His idea is set out like this:

- When we die, it looks as if we are asleep.
- When we sleep, we will eventually wake up.
- If death looks like sleep, then we will also wake up from death.
- If we wake up from death, we cannot be dead.
- Death is destroyed by eternal life.

vocab

A **paradox** is a statement made of two opposite ideas that seems to make no sense, but may be true.

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Death be not proud

by John Donne

Octave

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those, whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be, — line 5
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Sestet

Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men, — line 10
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die!

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 1:	**thee**	you
Line 2:	**mighty**	powerful, strong
	dreadful	terrifying, tragic
	art	are
Line 3:	**thinks't**	think
	dost	does
	overthrow	destroy
Line 4:	**canst**	can
Line 5:	**pictures**	copies, images, representations, likenesses
Line 6:	**flow**	come
Line 8:	**souls' delivery**	souls going to heaven, to God
Line 9:	**Fate**	luck
	chance	accidents
Line 10:	**dwell**	live
Line 11:	**poppy**	drug
	charms	magic spells
	as well	just as well
Line 12:	**stroke**	attack
	swell'st	swell, grow big
Line 13:	**sleep**	death
	wake eternally	live forever

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2. Type and form

The poem is an **Italian** or **Miltonic** sonnet. This is because its 14 lines are made up of:

- An **octave** of eight lines made up of two quatrains; and
- A **sestet** of six lines. The sestet is made up of one quatrain and a **rhyming couplet** at the end of the poem.

The rhyming scheme in this sonnet is abba abba cddc ee.

hint "Octo" (in **octave**) means eight. "Ses" means six, so a **sestet** has six lines.

3. Analysis

First quatrain of the octave (lines 1 – 4)

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those, whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

The speaker talks to Death as if Death was a person. This is a figure of speech called **personification**. By personifying Death, and giving it a human quality – pride – the poet makes death less scary. Death then only has the same power as people like you and me.

The speaker is using another figure of speech here called **apostrophe** – no, not the punctuation mark! Apostrophe is when you speak directly to an absent person or thing as if he or she was standing in front of you.

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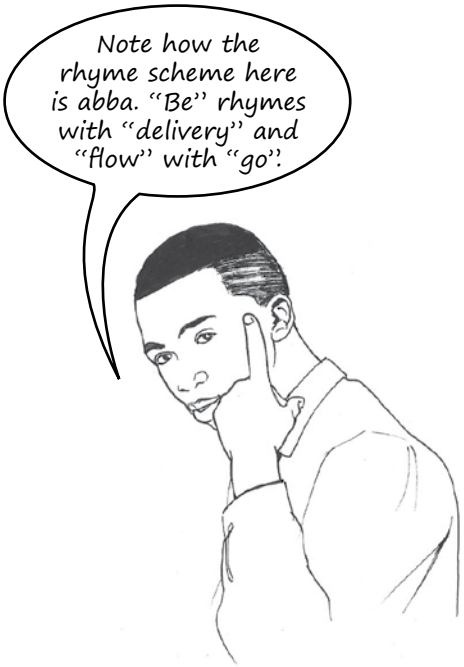
The poet orders Death not to be "proud" (arrogant) because people do not really get defeated ("overthrown") by Death. In fact, Death cannot kill anyone – not even the speaker. The poet explains in the rest of the poem why Death cannot really "kill" anyone.

The poet, however, says that only "some" people consider death "mighty and dreadful" (line 2). In line 3, he goes on to tell Death that people it thinks it has destroyed do not die, and Death cannot kill him, the poet. He mocks Death by pretending to be feel sorry for Death, calling it "**poor** death".

The poet is using the word "poor" in an **ironical** way here, as he does not really pity death.

vocab

Poor can mean financially poor; or someone deserving pity. In this poem, the word "poor" is used scornfully. The poet does not really pity death.



Second quatrain of the octave (lines 5 – 8)

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be, 5
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and souls' delivery.

People who die look like they are resting and sleeping – both rest and sleep are enjoyable (they give us "much pleasure"). Death is just a copy of these pleasant experiences.

The poet continues to mock Death by saying that if sleep is great and death is like a big sleep – then what an even greater pleasure death must be. Even more, the quicker people die, the better for them ("soonest our best men with thee do go" in line 7)!

The poet gives his evidence for this in lines 7 and 8, where he says the "best men", those with true faith, welcome death because it rests their bodies ("bones") and delivers their souls to God.

Third quatrain (sestet and rhyming couplet, lines 9 – 14

Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men, 10
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell.
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die!

The speaker continues to criticise Death. He says that Death does not have the power to kill people on his own. Death is a servant (a "**slave**") to many horrible "masters" such as destiny ("Fate") and accidents ("Chance"), which may kill us. Death also works for "desperate men" – this would be men who may rob and murder. Death also has to live ("dwell") with very nasty companions that will do the actual killing: "poison, war, and sickness" (line 10).

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The poet **personifies** Death as a slave who has no freedom to act on his own. He is used by other forces which cause death. The poet uses capital letters (F and C) for Fate and Chance as if they are important people; and Death is their slave.

In line 12, the poet reminds Death that even simple sleeping drugs (opium, made from the "poppy") and charms ("magic") can make us "sleep" better than Death can ("...better than thy stroke"). The poet asks: if these things do the same work as Death, why is Death is so full of self-importance, "why swell'st thou then?" There is an expression "swell with pride" that describes the feeling of being filled with pride, which gives us an image of a proud, arrogant person pushing his chest out to look big and important! The poet suggests that Death has nothing to be proud of.

hint

Connotations of a word are extra meanings or the associations with that word. By using the word "**slave**", the poet is saying that Death is not free and has no control over his life.

Rhyming couplet (lines 13 – 14)

One short sleep past, we wake eternally, 13
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die! 14

The last two lines of the poem are a rhyming couplet. Although the words "eternally" and "die" do not seem to rhyme – they would have rhymed in the English accent of that time.

Notice that now the speaker uses a small "d" for death in the last line of the poem (line 14). Death is not important anymore and does not get the capital "D" of a proper noun.

4. Tone and mood

The poet's tone in the poem is **scornful** and **mocking** in the way that he gives orders to Death, which is often considered a terrifying mystery. The tone is also **critical** of death.

In the end, the speaker uses a **triumphant** tone because he has won a victory over Death, as Death is conquered and destroyed by eternal life.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

Death be not proud
by John Donne

1. Theme

Death is not a terrifying mystery, but a force without real power.

2. Type and form

Italian or Miltonic sonnet: 14 lines

Octave 8 lines

Quatrain 1
a
b
b
a

— "Death be not proud"
Personification
— Speaking to an absent "person" as if he or she was in front of you.
Apostrophe
— "Poor death"
Irony

Quatrain 2
a
b
b
a

Argument that death has no power:
— Death is just like "rest and sleep".
— Rest and sleep bring us "much pleasure".
— It is best to die "soonest" for the "rest of their bones" and "soul's delivery".

Sestet 6 lines

Quatrain 3 and rhyming couplet
c
d
d
c
e
e

— "Thou art slave to Fate and Chance"
Personification (of Death, Fate and Chance)
— "Poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well"
Death is no more powerful than other things that can make us sleep.

— "And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die!" The small "d" shows that death has been stripped of respect and power.

3. Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Scornful, mocking, triumphant
- **Mood:** How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 2

Refer to the poem on page 10 and answer the questions below.

1. Refer to the following words in line 1 ("Death be not proud"):

   Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

2. Explain why the poet has used this figure of speech. (2)

3. Which three words from the list below could be used to describe Death? (3)

Arrogant; clever; proud; friendly; over-confident; loving

4 Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE?

   Everyone fears Death.

   Quote ONE word from the poem to support your answer. (2)

5. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write down only the words next to the question number.

entertainment; temporary; relaxation; end; look; final

   The poet says that "rest and sleep" are "pictures" of Death, meaning they only (5.1) ... like death. However, people rest and sleep for (5.2) ... (2)

6. Using your own words, write down THREE causes of death stated in the poem. (3)

7. Refer to the following words in line 12 ("why swell'st thou then?") Explain the meaning of these words as they are used in the poem. (1)

8. Refer to lines 10-14. Name two things which have the same effect as Death. (2)

9. Write down the correct **tone** word in brackets for each of the lines below:

   A "Death be not proud for, thou art not so" (lines 1- 2)

   (triumphant/critical/ mocking)

   B "Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men" (line 9) (triumphant/critical/mocking)

   C "And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well, And better than thy stroke" (lines 11-12)

   (triumphant / critical / mocking)

   D "Death, thou shalt die." (line 14)

   (triumphant/critical/mocking) (4)

hint

To explain this figure of speech, think of how and why the poet talks to Death as a person.

NB

Write down either **True** or **False** and then your ONE word answer. Remember that this is a quote so make sure you spell the word exactly as it is in the poem.

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10. In the last two lines (13–14) the speaker's tone is ...

A triumphant and victorious

B submissive and angry.

C sad and disappointed.

D thoughtful and fearful. (1)

11. Discuss the message the poem has for its readers. (2)

[23]

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Answers to Activity 2

1. Personification OR apostrophe ✓ (1)

2. Personification: The poet gives Death human qualities in order to mock/poke fun at/ridicule/laugh at Death/ to show that Death is like an ordinary human/mortal/ not powerful ✓✓
OR
Apostrophe: He addresses Death as if Death is present/ in front of him. ✓✓ (2)

3. arrogant ✓/proud ✓/over-confident ✓ (3)

4. False. "some" ✓✓ (2)

5.1. look ✓ (1)

5.2. relaxation ✓ (1)

6. You are destined to die in a certain way (Fate). ✓
You can die in an accident (Chance). ✓
Your death can be ordered by kings/powerful people. ✓
You can die in a war. ✓
You can be murdered. ✓
You can kill yourself/ suicide. ✓
You can die by taking poison. ✓
You can die from illness/disease. ✓ (3)

7. The poet is questioning/asking why Death is filled with pride/proud/OR why Death is arrogant/pompous/haughty/ swollen with pride. ✓ (1)

8. "poppy" ✓ and "charms" ✓ (2)

9. A critical ✓
B critical ✓
C mocking ✓
D triumphant ✓ (4)

10. A / triumphant and victorious ✓ (1)

11. You should not be afraid to die. ✓
Death has no power. ✓
Death is temporary/does not last forever. ✓
There is life after death. ✓ (2)

[23]

hint: In question 4, a mark is awarded only if BOTH parts of the answer are correct: False and "some".

hint: Any THREE of these answers are acceptable.

hint: Any TWO of these answers are acceptable.

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An elementary school classroom in a slum

by Stephen Spender

Stephen Spender

This poem was written by Stephen Spender (1909-1995). He was a modern English poet and writer.

Much of his writing is about human rights and social justice. He was politically left-wing and was a member of the Communist Party in Britain in the 1930s. He was actively involved in the anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist politics of that time.

Later in life he edited literary magazines and taught at many institutions. He became Professor of English at University College in London in the 1970s.

1. Themes

The two main themes are a **protest** against **social inequality** and against **poor quality education**.

The poet describes some children in a classroom in a very poor area. Most of them look unhealthy and unhappy. The pictures on the walls of the gloomy classroom show an interesting world outside the slum, but the children are trapped in a world of poverty and may never experience a better life unless something is done to change their future.

The poet calls upon the people responsible for education to free these children from their poverty and give them the opportunity to live a better life.

vocab

In the title of the poem, an "**elementary school**" is a primary school (grades 1 to 7). A "**slum**" is a very poor area of a city or town with few facilities or services.

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An elementary school classroom in a slum
by Stephen Spender

Stanza 1

Far far from gusty waves, these children's faces. 1
Like rootless weeds, the hair torn around their pallor.
The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-
seeming boy, with rat's eyes. The stunted, unlucky heir
Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease, 5
His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class
One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream
Of squirrel's game, in the tree room, other than this.

Stanza 2

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head,
Cloudless at dawn, civilised dome riding all cities. 10
Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley. Open-handed map
Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these
Children, these windows, not this world, are world,
Where all their future's painted with a fog,
A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky, 15
Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Stanza 3

Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, the map a bad example
With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal –
For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes
From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these children 20
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.
All of their time and space are foggy slum.
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

Stanza 4

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor, 25
This map becomes their window and these windows
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,
Break O break open, till they break the town
And show the children to green fields and make their world
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues 30
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.

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words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Stanza 1		
Line 1:	**gusty**	windy
Line 2:	**weeds**	unwanted plants
	pallor	pale, unhealthy skin colour
Line 4:	**stunted**	undeveloped
	heir	receiver
Line 5:	**reciting**	repeating
	gnarled	twisted, crooked
Line 6:	**dim**	almost dark, badly lit
Line 7:	**unnoted**	unnoticed
Line 8:	**squirrel**	small, tree-climbing animal
Stanza 2		
Line 9:	**donations**	gifts (usually for charity)
Line 10:	**dawn**	sunrise
	dome	curved shape; Shakespeare's head
Line 11:	**Tyrolese**	Austrian tyrol (mountains)
	open-handed	generous
Line 12:	**awarding**	giving
Line 14:	**sealed**	closed up
	lead	dull, grey
Line 15:	**capes**	land going out into the sea
Stanza 3		
Line 19:	**slyly**	secretly, sneakily
	cramped	small, crowded
Line 20:	**fog**	thick mist
	slag heap	coal mine dump
Line 21:	**peeped**	looked shyly
Line 22:	**blot**	mark
	doom	bad future
Stanza 4		
Line 25:	**governor, inspector**	people in charge of running schools
Line 27:	**catacombs**	underground burial chambers for the dead
Line 30:	**azure**	bright blue
Line 31:	**white leaves**	books
	green leaves	nature

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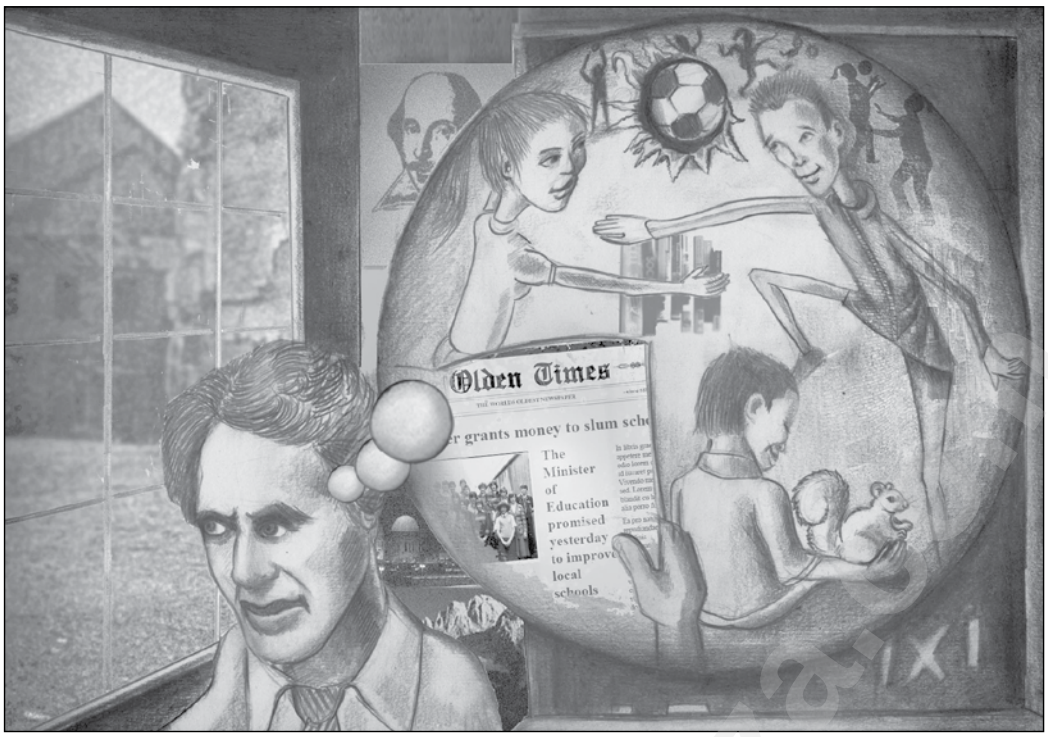

2. Type and form

This poem is divided into four stanzas of eight lines each. It is written in an informal style with no words that rhyme at the ends of the lines, which is typical of modern poetry.

This is known as **free verse**.

3. Analysis

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 8)

Far far from gusty waves, these children's faces.
Like rootless weeds, the hair torn around their pallor.
The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-
seeming boy, with rat's eyes. The stunted, unlucky heir
Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease, 5
His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class
One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream
Of squirrel's game, in the tree room, other than this.

In stanza 1, the poet describes some of the children in the classroom. The opening lines of the poem are not complete sentences and have an unusual word order:

> Far far from gusty waves these children's faces
> Like rootless weeds, the hair torn round their pallor. (lines 1 and 2)

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In ordinary English, the first two lines would be written: "These children's faces are far, far from gusty waves and they look like rootless weeds...." By changing the word order, the poet repeats "Far far" to start the poem. This emphasises the poet's frustration about how far the children's environment is from what it should be. His **tone** is angry. The words "gusty waves" (line 1) suggest wind and sea – a healthy, fresh and beautiful place, unlike the gloomy slum they are living in.

In a **simile**, the poet compares the children to "rootless weeds" (line 2). Weeds are small, unwanted plants. The word "rootless" gives us an even more powerful image of how weak the children are: plants cannot grow without roots to take in water and nutrients, and without roots, they do not even seem to belong in one place in the ground. The simile "like rootless weeds" suggests these children are thin, weak and underfed, but also that they do not have a place in the world. The children's "pallor" (line 2) makes them look pale and sickly, while the **metaphor** "torn hair" (line 2) suggests that their hair is messy and they are not well cared for.

vocab

Hyperbole: An overstatement used for emphasis. Here, the boy is not really as thin as a piece of paper.

The poet goes on to describe some of the children in the class. One girl is tall for her class, but instead of standing tall and proud, she hangs her head ("weighed-down head" in line 3). This suggests she is thin and her head feels too heavy for her body, or that she feels depressed and is not concentrating on the lesson. A boy is "paper-seeming" (line 3 and 4). This **metaphor** suggests that he is as pale and thin as a piece of white paper. The poet uses **hyperbole** here to emphasise how thin the boy is.

The **metaphor** "rat's eyes" (line 4) paints a picture of little eyes moving quickly around, like a rat's – perhaps always looking for danger or a way to survive. Some rats have red eyes, so perhaps the boy has an eye disease, or has been crying. The image of this boy is of a thin, pale, frightened, unhealthy child.

A third boy suffers from a disease he has inherited from his father that has left him undeveloped ("stunted") with "twisted bones" (line 5). To "recite" is to repeat something and learn it off by heart. The poet uses **irony** by saying the boy "recites" his "disease", instead of his schoolwork. The poet could be suggesting that the child will repeat the disease by passing it on to his own children one day. The emphasis is on the repetition of disease and ill health.

We are also given the impression that the children are taught to learn things off by heart, without really understanding what they are learning about.

In the final three lines of this stanza, the poet introduces a **contrast**. The last child mentioned, sitting at the back of the dull, poorly-lit room, is different from the others and looks younger than they do. "Sweet and young" (line 7) suggests he is innocent and has not yet been as badly affected by slum life as the other children and still has dreams of something better. Instead of listening to the lesson, he is dreaming of playing in a different place, somewhere outside in nature ("tree room"). A squirrel is a little animal with bright eyes and a bushy tail that runs freely up and down trees. The child perhaps imagines playing as freely as a squirrel in a beautiful place.

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Stanza 2 (lines 9 – 15)

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head,
Cloudless at dawn, civilised dome riding all cities. 10
Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley. Open-handed map
Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these
Children, these windows, not this world, are world,
Where all their future's painted with a fog,
A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky, 15
Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

In the second stanza, the poet describes the classroom. The colour of the classroom walls is "sour cream" (line 9). The **connotations** of this are of cream that has gone bad, which suggests the walls are dull and not very clean.

The walls are decorated with what the poet calls "donations" (line 9) – which are gifts to the school, but these gifts may not improve the children's lives. **Ironically**, these gifts suggest a world that the children may never be able to experience because of their poverty. The speaker uses a bitter **tone** when he tells us that these children have a life which is a contrast to these pictures. Their world is dirty, polluted, grey and without much freedom.

Look at what is on the walls and note the **irony** of these "donations":

- **A picture of Shakespeare:** he represents the world of culture, of theatres and plays that, ironically, the children may never see. The phrase "cloudless at dawn" (line 10) suggests a new day, a new life, and contrasts with the grey skies of the slum outside the classroom window. "Civilised dome" (line 10) may refer to Shakespeare's bald head in the shape of a dome. It could also refer to buildings with domes in cities that suggest other cultures and faraway places.
- **A poster of the Tyrol:** The Tyrolean mountains in Austria have beautiful valleys that are green and filled with wild flowers in summer. Cows graze and wear bells around their necks. Many tourists travel there on holiday, but these children may never get a chance to do that.
- **A map of the world:** This seems "open-handed" (generous), as if it offers the children the whole, exciting world with its wonderful opportunities, but most of them may never leave the slum in which they live.

vocab

Irony: A statement with an underlying meaning different from its surface meaning.

The poet's **tone** is sad when he says, "these windows, not this world, are world" (line 13). "These windows" refer to the classroom windows that look out on the slum. They do not look out on "this world", which is the wonderful world shown in the pictures and the map. Instead, the windows "are [their] world"; in other words, the children's world is the slum that they see through the windows.

The speaker goes on to describe the slum outside the classroom and what it means for the lives of the children. The "narrow" street suggests that the area is built up and crowded. It is "sealed" (line 15) or closed in by the grey, cloudy, heavy ("lead") sky. The words "lead", which is a heavy grey metal, and "sealed" make it seem almost as if the children are trapped in a lead coffin. The **alliteration** of the "s" sound that links the words "street/sealed/sky" adds to the trapped, closed-in feeling.

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As he did at the start of the poem, the poet uses the **repetition**, "Far far ..." (line 16) to emphasise how the children are cut off from nature and the beautiful world beyond the slum. The **metaphor** "stars of words" (line 16) is interesting. The stars are beautiful and represent dreams, great ambitions and things that are bright and fine. "Stars of words", therefore, make us think not only of a beautiful night sky, but also of the wonderful ways words can be used: words express wisdom and knowledge, they can inspire us, they can empower us. But perhaps these children have no experience of words used in this way.

Notice that in this stanza, the word "world" is repeated four times, each time with a slightly different meaning or **connotation**.

Stanza 3 (lines 17 – 24)

Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, the map a bad example
With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal –
For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes
From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these children 20
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.
All of their time and space are foggy slum.
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

In this stanza, the poet uses an indignant **tone**. His anger about injustice increases when he thinks about the children's future.

"Wicked" (line 17) seems a very strange word to use to describe a great and inspiring writer like Shakespeare, and how, we may wonder, can a map be "a bad example" (line 17) ? We are answered in the next line. Great art and literature, maps of the world, together with a life of travel and adventure (ships) in warm, sunny places belong to a life these children may never have – unless they turn to crime to escape from their poverty. The poet's diction (his choice of words, such as "wicked/bad") and the strong rhythm of these lines show how strongly he feels. The poet's unhappiness is shown again in the next two lines when he describes what the future holds for these children. Their homes are "cramped holes" (line 19) and their lives are dull ("fog") and without a bright future ("endless night").

Lines 20 to 24 paint a tragic picture of the children's future. If you have ever seen a place where coal is mined, you will have seen the slag heaps which are huge dumps of black waste from the coal mines. The children in the poem do not literally live on a slag heap (although their slum may be close to one) but this strong **metaphor** tells us that their lives are not pleasant, and are without joy or hope.

The poet uses **personification** in "wear skins peeped through by bones" (line 20) to emphasise how thin the children are. Their bones are "peeping" or looking through their skin. This is also an example of **hyperbole** as the bones would not actually be sticking out through the skin. The children who wear the broken glasses cannot even see properly – "With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones" (line 21). This **simile** may refer to the children's future

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as well as their physical condition. Is the future they see ahead of them as broken as their glasses? They have nothing good to look forward to as "All their time and space are foggy slum" (line 23).

The last line of stanza 3 shows how angry the poet feels about the future to which these children are condemned. He speaks in a direct, angry and accusing **tone** to us and all those people in authority. He says that we may as well condemn the children to endless unhappiness and paint the "map" of their future with a picture of a huge slum, "as big as doom" (line 24).

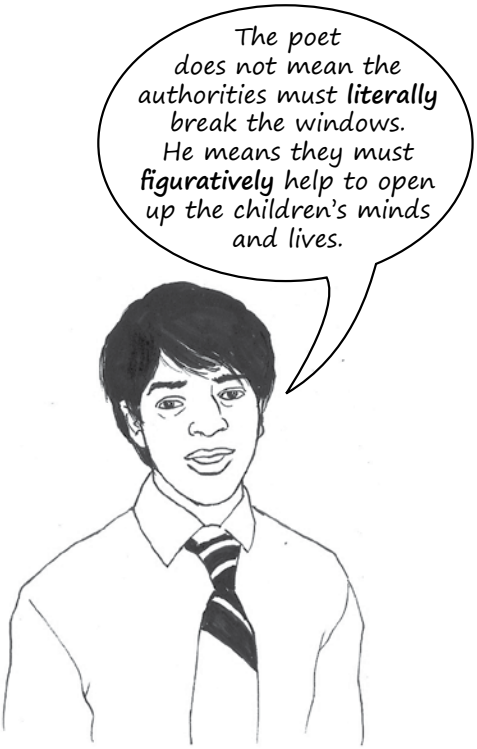
You met the word "doom" in the Shakespeare sonnet, when it meant 0the end of time/the world, the Day of Judgement. Here "doom" has the connotation of being condemned to suffering and death from which there is no escape. Notice the rhythm of this line, with five short, strong, heavy words following one another, almost like beats of a drum - "So blot their maps with slums as big as doom".

Stanza 4 (lines 25 – 32)

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor, 25
This map becomes their window and these windows
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,
Break O break open, till they break the town
And show the children to green fields and make their world
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues 30
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.

In the last stanza, the poet introduces hope to a hopeless situation. He calls on those in authority to change these children's lives and give them a better future. He calls on the school governor (many South African schools have governing bodies), teachers, school inspectors and visitors to take action. To express his excited tone about what he wants to happen, the poet has written this stanza as one long sentence that builds to a **climax**. However, to make it easier to discuss, it will be divided into two.

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor, 25
This map becomes their window and these windows
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,
Break O break open, till they break the town



The first word, "Unless" (line 25), offers the authorities an alternative to "blot[ting] their maps with slums as big as doom". Instead, the "map" on the classroom wall should no longer be a "temptation" to steal, but become an offer of real opportunities for the children. It should be a "window" (line 26) to all the world has to offer. The authorities must, figuratively, break open the windows for the children and offer them a different future.

At present they are imprisoned as if they were in a grave ("catacomb"). The poet emphasises the need to free the children from this future by his urgent **tone**. He repeats "break o break" (line 28) and the excited exclamation "o"; he wants the children to be able to escape their dull and lifeless future and even the town itself.

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And show the children to green fields and make their world
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues 30
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.

In the last four lines, the poet's **tone** is a passionate plea for the authorities to give the children a different life and a better environment. He wants them to enjoy the green countryside and nature, to play freely and explore the sea and the beach ("run azure on gold sands") – in other words, they need to experience an unlimited world. He wants them to discover the joy of reading books, which are a source of knowledge, delight and wisdom. He uses the metaphor "their tongues run naked" (line 30 and 31), which suggests drinking up the contents of books the way we drink water if we are thirsty.

The poet wants them to show the same enthusiasm for books and knowledge that are relevant and make sense to them. Here the poet makes it clear that it is only through a good education and a better environment that the children will have the opportunities that at present they do not have. He wants them to have access to "white" leaves (a leaf also means a page, so white leaves are the pages of books) and "green leaves" (nature, the wider world) so that they will have a different future.

The poem reaches its **climax** in the last line with a powerful **metaphor**: the new "history" of their lives should be written in the "language of the sun" (line 32). The sun is the source of life, warmth, brightness, energy. These are the qualities that should be part of these children's lives.

notes

Contrasts

Notice all the **colours** used in the final stanza: azure (bright blue), gold, white, green, and the colour suggested by the sun. Consider how these contrast with the colours suggested by the images used earlier in the poem: "pallor", "sour cream", "fog", "lead", "holes", "endless night", "slag heap", "catacombs".

How does this contrasting group of images show two different kinds of life? The earlier colours are dull and gloomy, lifeless, even deathly, like the lives of the children in the slum; the later ones are bright and beautiful, the way their lives ought to be – a movement from darkness into light.

4. Tone and mood

In stanza 1, the tone is **angry** and **frustrated** because of the hardship the children face.

In stanza 2, the speaker uses a **bitter** and **sad** tone when he contrasts the pictures on the classroom wall with the hard realities the children face.

In stanza 3, the tone is **indignant** and **accusing** about the injustice the children face in the future.

In stanza 4, the tone is **excited** and **urgent** about the need to improve the children's situation. The final tone is a **passionate** plea to do so.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

An elementary school classroom in a slum
by Stephen Spender

1. Theme

A **protest** against **social inequality** and against **poor quality education**.

2. Type and form

Free verse: No formal rhyme scheme

Stanza 1 8 lines
- "Like rootless weeds"
  Simile
- "hair torn around their pallor"
  Metaphor
- "The paper-seeming boy, with rat's eyes"
  Two metaphors; hyperbole
- "At back of the dim class
  One unnoted, sweet and young"
  Contrast

Stanza 2 8 lines
- "On sour cream walls"
  Connotations of rot
- "Donations" of Shakespeare's picture, poster, map
  Irony
- "A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky"
  Alliteration (repeated "s")
- "stars of words"
  Metaphor

Stanza 3 8 lines
- "slag heap"
  Metaphor
- "wear skins peeped through by bones"
  Personification; hyperbole
- "With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones"
  Simile

Stanza 4 8 lines
- Written as one long sentence
  Creates poem's climax
- Windows must "Break, O break open"
  Figurative (not literal)
- "language of the sun"
  Metaphor

3. Tone and mood

Tone: Moves from **angry**, **frustrated**, **bitter**, **sad**, **indignant** and **accusing**; to **excited**, **urgent** and **passionate**.

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 3

Refer to the poem on page 19 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write down only the words next to the question number (1 - 3).

Good; primary; children; resources; high; poor

The setting (background) of the poem is a (1) ... school in a (2) ... area. There are very few (3) ... in the classroom. (3)

2. Using your own words, describe the children in the classroom. State THREE points. (3)

3. Refer to lines 6–8.

In your OWN words, say how this child is different from the rest of the children in his class. (1)

4. Refer to stanza 2.

How does the speaker feel about the "donations"? Give a reason for your answer. (2)

5. Refer to line 15 ("A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky").

5.1. Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

5.2. Explain why the poet has used this figure of speech. (2)

6. Refer to stanza 3.

Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Quote TWO consecutive words to support your answer.

The children's homes are large and comfortable. (2)

7. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:

In stanza 4, the speaker's tone shows that he is ...

A commenting critically.

B pleading passionately.

C complaining bitterly.

D demanding forcefully. (1)

8. Refer to stanza 4.

Name ONE experience the speaker wishes the children to have. (1)

9. In your view, how does the speaker (poet) feel about the children? Using your OWN words, give TWO reasons for your answer. (3)

[19]

hint Use your OWN words here: do not quote directly from the poem. For 3 marks, give three points.

NB When you are asked to give a reason, the reason must be based on the poem.

NB When asked for your view, the answer requires your emotional response and understanding of the poem. For 3 marks, make ONE point about the speaker's feeling (1 mark) and then give TWO reasons (2 marks).

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Answers to Activity 3

1. 1 = primary ✓; 2 = poor ✓; 3 = resources ✓ (3)

2. They are malnourished/ underfed/ very thin. ✓
They are pale. Their hair is untidy. ✓
Some children are handicapped/ did not grow properly/ are too small for their age. ✓ Some have darting, suspicious, hungry eyes. ✓ The girl's head seems too big for her body. ✓ The boy has red eyes. ✓ Some have diseases/ inherited diseases. ✓
They have broken glasses. ✓ (3)

hint: Any THREE of these answers are acceptable.

3. He is a dreamer. ✓/ He has an active imagination. ✓/ He is unassuming. ✓/ He is almost invisible. ✓/ He looks younger/ more innocent. ✓/ He is not affected by his circumstances as much as the others. ✓ (1)

hint: Any ONE of these answers is acceptable.

4. He is against the donations because they show a world that the children have no experience of. ✓/The donations may tempt the children to steal/ their circumstances will not allow them to experience what the donations offer. ✓ (2)

5.1. Metaphor ✓ (1)

5.2. He compares their circumstances to a lead sky/ a narrow street. ✓✓
OR
The poet suggests that the children are trapped/ caught/ cannot escape and that they are heavily burdened/ very poor/ live in bad circumstances. ✓✓ (2)

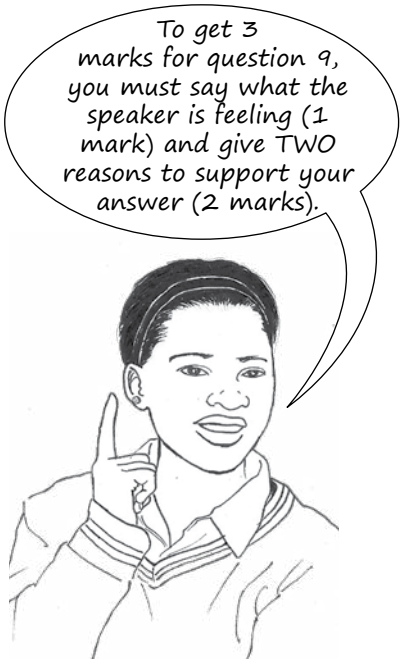
6. False. "cramped holes" ✓✓ (2)

7. pleading passionately ✓ (1)

8. He wishes them to get out of the slum. ✓
OR
He wishes them to experience nature/a beach/green fields. ✓
OR
He wishes them to read/experience literature/be exposed to books/good education. ✓ (1)

9. He feels sorry for them. ✓
AND
He describes the conditions in which they live/ their appearance vividly./ He objects to the so-called donations./ He is concerned that they might resort to stealing./ He appeals to the authorities to make a difference/ to intervene/ to help/ to save the children. ✓
OR
He is unsympathetic/ he does not care. ✓
AND
He is merely making a social point/criticising a bad education system./ His description of the children is cold and detached/ unemotional./ This is just a typical protest poem.✓ (3)

[19]



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Auto wreck
by Karl Shapiro

Karl Shapiro

Auto wreck was written by Karl Shapiro (1913-2000). He was an American poet who began writing poetry when he was fighting in the Second World War (1939 – 1945). He sent his poems back to America, where his fiancée had them published. He wrote *Auto wreck* in 1941, during the war.

He is famous for writing poetry about ordinary things such as flies, cars, supermarkets and this car crash. Shapiro was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1945 and was the American Poet Laureate in 1946 and 1947.

1. Themes

The main theme of the poem is **death**, and the **uncertainty of life.**

The poem shows how uncertain and insecure life can be. None of us knows when and how we will die. The people in the cars were probably not thinking at all about life and death when suddenly the crash happened. In a moment, their lives have been changed by horrible injuries, or have been taken away altogether. The poet has no reasonable explanation for this.

hint An "auto wreck" is how Americans refer to a car crash.

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Auto wreck
by Karl Shapiro

Stanza 1
Its quick soft silver bell beating, beating,
And down the dark one ruby flare
Pulsing out red light like an artery,
The ambulance at top speed floating down
Past beacons and illuminated clocks 5
Wings in a heavy curve, dips down,
And brakes speed, entering the crowd.

Stanza 2
The doors leap open, emptying light;
Stretchers are laid out, the mangled lifted
And stowed into the little hospital. 10
Then the bell, breaking the hush, tolls once,
And the ambulance with its terrible cargo
Rocking, slightly rocking, moves away,
As the doors, an afterthought, are closed.

Stanza 3
We are deranged, walking among the cops 15
Who sweep glass and are large and composed.
One is still making notes under the light.
One with a bucket douches ponds of blood
Into the street and gutter.
One hangs lanterns on the wrecks that cling, 20
Empty husks of locusts, to iron poles.

Stanza 4
Our throats were tight as tourniquets,
Our feet were bound with splints, but now,
Like convalescents intimate and gauche,
We speak through sickly smiles and warn 25
With the stubborn saw of common sense,
The grim joke and the banal resolution.
The traffic moves around with care,
But we remain, touching a wound
That opens to our richest horror. 30

Stanza 5
Already old, the question Who shall die?
Becomes unspoken Who is innocent?
For death in war is done by hands;
Suicide has cause and stillbirth, logic;
And cancer, simple as a flower, blooms, 35
But this invites the occult mind,
Cancels our physics with a sneer,
And spatters all we knew of denouement
Across the expedient and wicked stones.

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words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 14)		
Line 2:	**ruby**	red
	flare	bright light warning of danger
Line 3:	**pulsing**	throbbing
	artery	main blood vessel
Line 5:	**beacons**	lighted signs or traffic lights
	illuminated	lit up
Line 9:	**stretchers**	beds for carrying the injured
	mangled	badly injured
Line 10:	**stowed**	packed away
	little hospital	ambulance
Line 11:	**hush**	quiet
	tolls	sound a bell makes
Line 12:	**cargo**	load of victims of the crash
Line 14:	**afterthought**	something remembered later
Stanza 2 (lines 15 – 21)		
Line 15:	**deranged**	very upset, confused, disturbed
Line 16:	**composed**	calm
Line 18:	**douches**	washes away
	ponds	large pools
Line 20:	**wrecks**	crashed cars
	cling	stick to
Line 21:	**husks**	outside covering
	locusts	large insects like grasshoppers
Stanza 3 (lines 22 – 30)		
Line 22:	**tourniquets**	bandages wrapped very tightly to cut off blood supply and so stop bleeding
Line 23:	**splints**	something stiff that is tied against a broken bone to stop it moving
Line 24:	**convalescents**	people recovering from illness
	intimate	close
	gauche	awkward
Line 25:	**sickly**	weak
Line 26:	**stubborn**	determined
	saw	wise saying
Line 27:	**grim**	gloomy
	banal	ordinary, of little importance, stereotyped
	resolution	conclusion, decision

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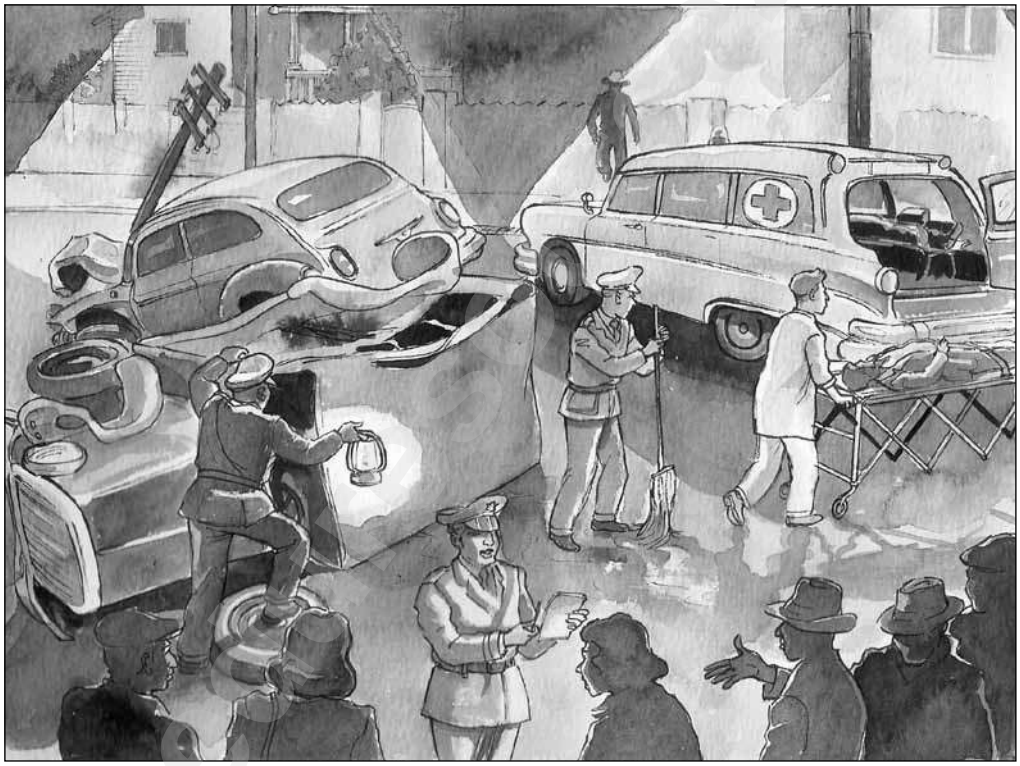
words to know

Stanza 4 (lines 31 – 39)		
Line 32:	**innocent**	not guilty
Line 34:	**suicide**	killing oneself
	stillbirth	baby born dead
	logic	reason
Line 36:	**occult**	magic, the supernatural
Line 37:	**cancels**	stops
	physics	science
	sneer	mocking look
Line 38:	**spatters**	splashes
	denouement	ending of a story that explains everything
Line 39:	**expedient**	useful
	stones	the road



2. Type and form

This is a **descriptive** poem that deals with thoughts and feelings, so it could be classed as a lyric poem.

The poem is written in **free verse**, a form of poetry that has no set rhyming pattern. The structure is informal: lines and stanzas may be of different lengths and usually there is no regular use of rhyme, or even no rhyme at all.

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3. Analysis

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 7)

Its quick soft silver bell beating, beating,
And down the dark one ruby flare
Pulsing out red light like an artery,
The ambulance at top speed floating down
Past beacons and illuminated clocks 5
Wings in a heavy curve, dips down,
And brakes speed, entering the crowd.

These lines describe the arrival of the ambulance at the scene of the car crash (auto wreck). In the 1940s, when this poem was written, ambulances had loud bells, not sirens as they have today. The first few words create a pleasant feeling with the description of the ambulance siren as a "soft silver bell". Notice how the alliteration of the 's' gives a gentle sound. The repetition of "beating, beating" to describe the strokes of the bell is a harsh **contrast**.

vocab

Flare: A light that a ship sends out, like a firework, to show that it is in danger and needs help.

Then the poet refers to the "dark" of the night and the red "flare" (line 1) as the red light on top of the ambulance approaches. The use of the word "dark" instead of "night" helps to make the scene feel more grim and full of danger.

The poet then shocks us out of any comfortable feelings we have by using the **simile** "Pulsing out red light like an artery" in line 3 to describe the light. The flashing light is compared to blood shooting out ("pulsing") from a blood vessel. This comparison makes us feel that the accident may involve serious injuries, even death. The ambulance speeds along, passing the lights of the signs and clocks on buildings in an ordinary street. The poet compares the ambulance that races to the accident to a large bird coming down to land in the **metaphor** "Wings... dips down" (line 6). The vehicle brakes and slows to a stop among the crowd of bystanders who always gather at the scene of an accident.

Stanza 2 (lines 8 – 14)

The doors leap open, emptying light;
Stretchers are laid out, the mangled lifted
And stowed into the little hospital. 10
Then the bell, breaking the hush, tolls once,
And the ambulance with its terrible cargo
Rocking, slightly rocking, moves away,
As the doors, an afterthought, are closed.

These lines describe how the accident victims are loaded into the ambulance and driven away. The poet shows the speed and urgency of the paramedics with the **personification** of the doors that "leap" or jump open, the way, probably, that the paramedics jump quickly out of the ambulance.

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Many words the poet uses in stanza 1 – "quick", "top speed", "brakes speed", "leap" – help to give a **sense of emergency** and haste to the scene. The scene is lit up by the light from inside the ambulance and we see that the victims are extremely badly injured as they are described as being "mangled" (line 9). The word "stowed" (line 10) means "packed away" and could suggest that these people are hurriedly packed into the ambulance as if they are just things or bodies, not living people.

vocab

Mangled: Twisted and broken.

The **metaphor** "little hospital" (line 10) tells us that the ambulance is equipped to care for the injured. The poet now uses the word "tolls" (line 11) to describe the ambulance bell. This reminds us of a funeral, when the church bell is "tolled" and we suspect that some of the victims may be dying or even dead. This idea is supported when the poet refers to the victims, describes the injured people in the ambulance as "terrible cargo" (line 12).

The ambulance drives off before the doors are closed. This also gives a sense of urgency to the scene as it needs to hurry to save lives. The extended tolling bells also remind us of a funeral; and the "closing" doors suggest that lives may be also be lost ("closed" in line 14). The ambulance now almost becomes a hearse, a vehicle that transports the dead.

Stanza 3 (lines 15 – 21)

We are deranged, walking among the cops 15
Who sweep glass and are large and composed.
One is still making notes under the light.
One with a bucket douches ponds of blood
Into the street and gutter.
One hangs lanterns on the wrecks that cling,
Empty husks of locusts, to iron poles.

The crowd is still wandering around at the scene. "Deranged" literally means 'mentally disturbed', which shows how much the accident has upset the onlookers. Note that the poet uses the informal word "cops" instead of 'police'. In **contrast** to the onlookers, who are very upset, the policemen are calm as they carry out their duties. Could this be because the police are trained to be calm in an emergency and are used to accident scenes? One policeman washes the blood away with water ("douches"), another makes notes and a third one hangs warning lights ("lanterns") on the remains of the crashed cars.

The **hyperbole**, "ponds of blood" (line 18), indicates that much blood has been spilled and tells us how badly the victims have been hurt – but notice how easily the signs of pain and suffering are removed with buckets of water. The broken wrecks of the cars are wrapped around the street poles.

The **metaphor** comparing the wrecked cars to "empty husks of locusts" (line 21) shows how badly the cars are damaged. The images of the husk and locust suggest the torn and broken metal of the cars. Locusts are also very destructive insects. They can eat and destroy crops very quickly; in the same way that an accident can happen quickly and cars can become wrecks.

vocab

Husk: The dried-out covering on a plant like a mealie.

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Stanza 4 (lines 22 – 30)

Our throats were tight as tourniquets,
Our feet were bound with splints, but now,
Like convalescents intimate and gauche,
We speak through sickly smiles and warn 25
With the stubborn saw of common sense,
The grim joke and the banal resolution.
The traffic moves around with care,
But we remain, touching a wound
That opens to our richest horror.

This stanza focuses on the feelings and reactions of the onlookers. The poet uses medical **metaphors** to describe the way they feel. Their throats feel as if they are tightly tied up by tourniquets. The shock and horror of the accident makes them unable to move freely, as if their bones have been broken and tied to splints to keep them from moving. These medical metaphors suggest that the onlookers, too, have been hurt (but in their minds, not their bodies). The **metaphor** "convalescents" (line 24) shows them slowly beginning to recover from the shock, but their smiles are "sickly" and false as they try to hide their horror. They try to make contact ("be intimate") with one another in an awkward ("gauche") way.

Some "warn/ With the stubborn saw of common sense" (line 26) – perhaps they are talking about how one should drive more carefully; others make "grim jokes" (line 27). Still others make a "banal resolution", saying stereotypical things and perhaps using **clichés** such as, 'You never know when your turn [to die] is coming', or decide that they themselves will drive more carefully in future.

vocab

Oxymoron: Deliberately puts two words with opposite meanings together. "Grim" means horrible or frightening, which is not something we associate with jokes. "Jokes" have the connotation of laughter and fun.

There are a number of **oxymorons** in stanza 3. The onlookers make "grim jokes" (line 27) and they cannot stop thinking about and looking at the accident. It fills their minds with "richest horror" (line 30). We can understand how the accident fills them with horror: the victims could have been themselves or their loved ones, and the accident fills them with the fear of death or dreadful injury.

Stanza 5 (lines 31 – 39)

Already old, the question Who shall die?
Becomes unspoken Who is innocent?
For death in war is done by hands;
Suicide has cause and stillbirth, logic;
And cancer, simple as a flower, blooms, 35
But this invites the occult mind,
Cancels our physics with a sneer,
And spatters all we knew of denouement
Across the expedient and wicked stones.

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In the last stanza, the poet thinks about the mystery of death and its causes. None of us knows how or when we will die, or who will die next: this is the "old ... question" that is in the minds of the onlookers. But this reminds them of another silent question: "Who is innocent?" (line 32). This **rhetorical question** asks who is responsible for the accident and why those particular people should have been the victims. The poet – and the onlookers – cannot answer the question. Death in an accident like this one does not seem to have a reasonable explanation and is confusing to ordinary people.

vocab

Rhetorical question: A question that doesn't really need an answer.

The poet thinks there are reasons for other forms of death that we can understand: people kill one another in war; they kill themselves because of depression or despair; babies are born dead for medical reasons. Diseases like cancer are shown by the **simile** comparing the way cancer grows inside you to the way a flower blooms (line 35).

The poet feels the only explanation is an "occult" one: only fate – or perhaps God – can explain death in an accident like this. We like to think we can explain everything through science and reason ("physics"), but such accidents make our science useless and mock it ("cancels our physics with a sneer" in line 37). We like to think that life should be like a story in which everything is explained at the end (the "denouement"), but an accident like this is different, and has no easy explanation.

In the final **metaphor** the poet shows us that the idea of a "denouement" is destroyed, "spattered" like the blood of the victims all over the road. The description of the road ("stones") is, as we all know, useful ("expedient"), but, being the scene of the accident, it is also personified as "wicked" (line 39) perhaps because without roads and cars there would be no car accidents.

4. Tone and mood

In stanzas 1, the tone is **urgent** and **matter-of-fact** as the cleaning up of the accident is described.

In stanza 2, 3 and 4, the tone is **confused** and **horrified** as the spectators realise how terrible the accident was.

In stanza 5, the tone is **confused** and **uncertain** at the uncertainties of life and death.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

Auto wreck
by Karl Shapiro

1. Theme

Death and the uncertainty of life.

2. Type and form

Free verse:
- No formal rhyme scheme
- Stanzas of different lengths

— "soft silver bell"
Alliteration (repeated "s")
— "Pulsing out red light like an artery"
Simile
— "Wings in a heavy curve, dips down"
Metaphor

— "The doors leap open"
Personification
— "quick", "top speed", "brakes speed"
Create **sense of emergency**
— "little hospital"
Metaphor

— "ponds of blood"
Hyperbole
— "empty husks of locusts"
Metaphor

— "Our throats were tight as tourniquets"
Metaphor
— "Like convalescents"
Simile
— "grim jokes"
Oxymoron

— "Who is innocent?"
Rhetorical question
— "And cancer, simple as a flower, blooms"
Simile
— "expedient and wicked stones"
Personification

3. Tone and mood

Tone: Urgent, matter-of-fact, confused, horrified, fearful, uncertain

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 4

Refer to the poem on page 31 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write only the words next to the question number (1.1–1.3)

police van; accident; dead; ambulance; break-down; injured

This poem describes how the (1.1) ... rushes to the scene of the (1.2) ... The (1.3) ... are picked up and taken to hospital. (3)

2. Refer to stanza 1.

2.1. At what time of the day does this incident happen? (1)

2.2. In lines 4-6 ("The ambulance at ... and illuminated clocks") the ambulance is compared to a bird. Quote TWO separate words that support this idea. (1) (2)

3. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write only the answer (A-D).

The word "mangled" in line 9 tells us that ...

A The vehicles are badly damaged.

B Some of the bystanders are very upset.

C The policemen are emotionless.

D The accident victims are seriously injured. (1)

4. Refer to lines 15 and 16 ("We are deranged ... and composed").

Quote TWO separate words that show the difference in the reactions of the speaker and the policemen. (2)

5. Refer to line 25 ("We speak through sickly smiles ...").

Explain why the onlookers have "sickly smiles". (2)

6. Refer to stanza 4.

Using your own words, name TWO things that the onlookers are concerned about. (2)

7. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below.

solution; confuses; reason; unnatural; clarifies; logical

In the last stanza, the speaker argues that there is always a (7.1) ... for Suicide, while stillbirth is (7.2) ... However, a car crash (7.3)... the minds of ordinary people. (3)

8. Explain why the poet mentions war, suicide, stillbirth and cancer in a poem about a road accident. (2)

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hint
In questions 9 and 10, you are asked for your own opinion. Support your view with a reason.

9. The poem was first published in 1941. Do you think it is still relevant today?

Discuss your view. (2)

10. Has this poem changed your understanding of the causes of road deaths? Discuss your view. (2)

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Answers to Activity 4

1.1. Ambulance ✓

1.2. Accident ✓

1.3. Injured ✓ (3)

2.1. At night / in the evening. ✓ (1)

2.2. "floating"; "wings"; "dips" ✓✓ (2)

3. D/the accident victims are seriously injured. ✓ (1)

4. "deranged" ✓ and "composed" ✓ (2)

5. It is a pretence/ a coping mechanism/ false appearance. ✓

To hide their true feelings/ horror ✓ (2)

6. Who has died/ who will die (next)/ who is responsible for this/ other accidents. ✓✓ (2)

7.1. Reason ✓

7.2. Logical ✓

7.3. Confuses ✓ (3)

8. All these are logical reasons for death. ✓

He is able to understand the cause of death for each of these, but not for road accidents./ No logical reasons are given for road accidents. ✓ (2)

9. Yes. Road accidents are still very common/many lives are still lost because of road accidents. ✓✓
OR
No. There are many measures in place to reduce accidents. It is easy to establish the cause of accidents nowadays. ✓✓ (2)

10. Yes, road deaths have definite causes, e.g. carelessness of drivers and pedestrians. ✓✓
OR
No, sometimes road deaths cannot be explained because they are often beyond human control. ✓✓ (2)

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hint
Any TWO of the above answers to question 5 and 6 are acceptable.

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On his blindness
by John Milton

On his blindness was written by John Milton (1608-1674). He was a deeply religious English poet. He studied at Cambridge University. As a young man he travelled around Europe and learnt many European languages.

In his later life, there was a civil war in England between King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell and his supporters, who wanted England to become a republic. Milton supported Cromwell and became very politically active. He had to go into hiding when the new king, King Charles II, came into power.

At the age of 44, Milton went blind. Most of his best-known poems were written after this. He composed poems in his head and recited them to his daughters so they could write them down.

John Milton

1. Themes

The main themes in this poem are **serving God**, **blindness** (disability) and **using one's talents**.

The poet struggles with the fact that he is no longer able to see. He is depressed that he may not be able to serve God by using his talent as a writer. The answer comes to him that God has many followers to do his work and that accepting his blindness and being patient ("stand and wait") is also serving God

Did you know?

This poem is based on the parable of the talents in the Bible – Matthew 25, verses 14-30.

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On his blindness
by John Milton

Octave

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present — line 5
My true account, lest He returning chide,
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent

Sestet

That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best — line 10
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

Did you know?

The title of this poem was not written by Milton. It was given to the poem much later by Bishop Newton, who was referring to Milton's blindness. That is why it is called "On his blindness", rather than "On my blindness".

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 1:	**consider**	think about
	light	ability to see
	spent	finished/used up
Line 2:	**ere**	before (old English)
	wide	wild (old English)
Line 3:	**talent**	ability / skill
Line 4:	**lodged**	kept in a safe place/ placed
	more bent	more determined; wanting more to do something
Line 5:	**therewith**	with that
Line 6:	**account**	report/ record/ explanation
	chide	scold/ show anger/ blame
Line 7:	**doth**	does
	exact	expect/ demand
	day-labour	work
	light denied	sight taken away
Line 8:	**fondly**	foolishly
Line 9:	**murmur**	quiet complaint
Line 11:	**mild**	gentle
	yoke	the rope and wood collar which goes around the neck of an ox to pull a cart
	state	position/ situation
Line 12:	**bidding**	request/ command
Line 13:	**post o'er**	travel over (old English)

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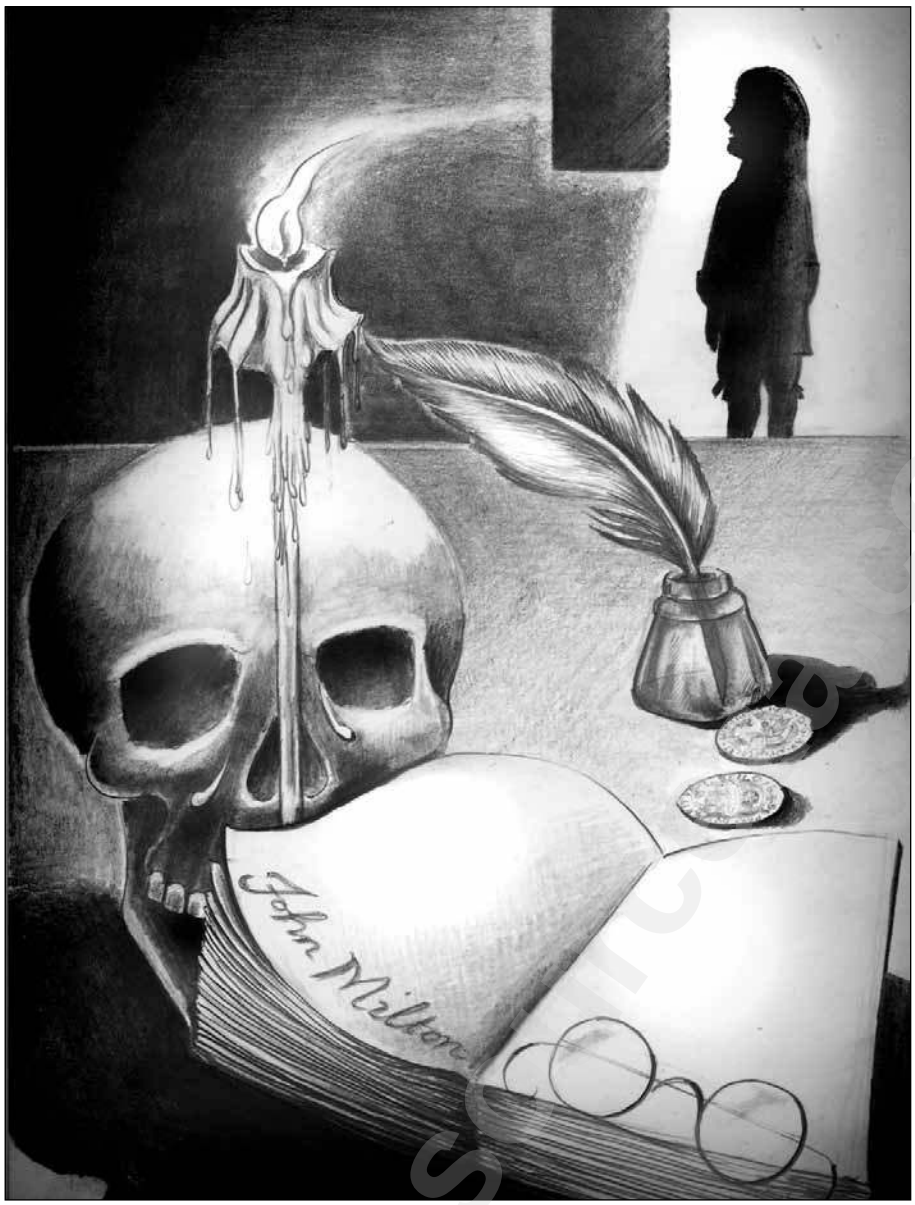

2. Type and form

The poem is an **Italian** or **Miltonic** sonnet. This is because its 14 lines are made up of:

- An **octave** of eight lines made up of two quatrains. This is where the problem is presented; and
- A **sestet** of six lines. This is where the problem is resolved.

The rhyming scheme in this sonnet is abba abba cdecde.

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3. Analysis

The octave (lines 1 – 8)

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present 5
My true account, lest He returning chide,
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask.

Did you know?

A **"talent"** was a coin in the time of the Bible. Jesus used the idea of a 'talent' as something valuable, a skill given by God. To use one's talent or skill was a way of serving God. Hiding one's 'talent' would be an insult to God.

In the octave, the **problem** is presented. The speaker feels depressed when he thinks ("consider" in line 1) about his problem – the problem is that he is going blind "ere half my days" – before he is even half way through his life. He has one great gift from God, a "**talent**", which has been "lodged" (given to him) to use but it is "useless" (line 4) because he cannot see to write any more.

The poet uses a **metaphor** to refer to his eyesight. He calls it his "light" (line 7). This is an effective comparison because our eyes are important. They are one of the ways we get to understand our world. Light is important – light allows us to see clearly. Light also represents God and the sun and has connotations of brightness and happiness. This **contrasts** with the life without light – the "dark world" in line 2.

The poet (or speaker) describes his problem in the octave in one long sentence that ends in the middle of line 8. In this sentence, he lists all the things he is **worried** about and what may happen as a result of his blindness. He is **frustrated** because the talent God has given him ("lodged with me") is "useless" (line 4). He is also frustrated because his soul is absolutely "bent" (determined) on serving his "Maker" (God) (lines 4-5) and he cannot do this if he cannot see.

He is fearful and worried because he knows that God has given him this talent so it would be "death to hide" it (line 3). Milton wants to serve his Maker and use his writing talent so that at the end of his life he can present a good "account" (record of his work) "lest" (in case) God would "chide" (become cross with) him for not using the talent to serve Him (line 6).

The poet is also **confused**. He says that if God did become angry with him he would ask God how God could demand "day-labour" (work) but at the same time make him blind ("light denied") and therefore unable to work. Although the poet is frustrated, fearful and a little angry, it is important to note that he remains humble when he speaks to God: he calls God his "Maker", he is "bent" (wanting / determined) on serving God and he realises that he asks the question foolishly ("fondly" in line 8) because God has a plan we may not know.

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The sestet (lines 9 – 15)

But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best 10
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

The sestet is where the problem set out in the octave is **resolved**. The speaker begins to answer the question in line 8 starting with the word "But":

But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies… (lines 8 and 9)

"Patience" (which is a good human quality of being able to wait) seems to appear to him **personified** almost like an angel from God (in a human form). Notice how Patience is named with a capital 'P' – like a proper noun. When Patience appears to him, it is as if the poet's own mind speaks to him and reassures him.

Patience speaks to stop the poet's "murmur" (complaints) and explains that God does not need man's work: people serve God best when they "bear his mild yoke" (obey his gentle commands/ carry a small burden). Patience goes on to explain to the poet that God is so powerful ("His state is kingly" – lines 11 and 12) and that there are "thousands" of others who can serve him in many other places and in many different ways.

The poet finally understands that he does not have to write and perform to serve God if he is not able to do so, because people also serve God just by accepting what happens – "who only stand and wait" (line 14). He realises there are other ways to serve God.

4. Tone and mood

In the octave of this sonnet, the speaker goes through many feelings and the tone reflects each of them: **frustrated**, **fearful**, **worried** and **confused**.

In the sestet, the tone changes. It becomes more **accepting** and **gentle**.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

On his blindness
by John Milton

1. Theme

The main themes are **serving God, blindness** (disability) and **using one's talents**.

2. Type and form

3. Tone and mood

Miltonic sonnet:
14 lines

Octave:
8 lines
a
b
b
a
a
b
b
a

— "When I consider how my light is spent"
Problem of blindness
— "And that one talent which is death to hide"
Problem of being unable to serve God with his talents
— "Light denied"
Metaphor
— "my light is spent…in this dark world"
Contrasts

Sestet:
6 lines
c
d
e
c
d
e

— "But Patience, to prevent that murmur, soon replies"
Personification; **resolving** the problem
— "They also serve who only stand and wait"
Resolving the problem

Tone: In the octave it is **frustrated**, **fearful**, **worried** and **confused**. In the sestet, it is **accepting** and **gentle**.
Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 5

Refer to the poem on page 42 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write only the words next to the question number (1.1–1.3)

ballad; sonnet; problem; solution; cause; result

This poem is a Miltonic (1.1) ... The octave gives the reader the (1.2) ... and the sestet gives the reader the (1.3) ... (3)

2. Refer to lines 1 and 2 ("When I consider ... world and wide")

Quote TWO **contrasting** words that best describe the poet's concern. (2)

hint: The **contrasting** words have opposite meanings to each other.

3. Refer to line 1.

3.1. Quote a word from the first line which Milton uses in place of "eyesight". (1)

3.2. Why do you think he uses this word? (2)

4. Refer to lines 3 and 4 ("And that one ... Soul more bent").

Why does the poet consider his talent to be useless? (2)

5. Refer to lines 6 and 7 ("My true account ... labour, light denied?").

5.1. What is the poet's fear in these lines? (1)

5.2. Why does he have this fear? (1)

6. Refer to line 8 ("I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent").

6.1. Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

6.2. Explain why the poet uses this figure of speech. (2)

7. How does the poet's mood, or how do his feelings change in the course of the poem?

Choose two words from the box below to complete this sentence:

joy; acceptance; frustration; blind

At the start of the poem the poet feels 7.1... but at the end of the poem the poet experiences 7.2... (2)

8. Refer to lines 10 and 11 "Who best/Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best".

Choose the correct word in brackets:

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8.1. "his/him" are pronouns referring to (God/ the poet). (1)

8.2. "they" is a pronoun referring to (blind people/ all people). (1)

8.3.1. What figure of speech has been used in these lines?

A Simile

B Metaphor

C Personification. (1)

8.3.2. Explain the figure of speech by choosing the correct answer to complete the sentence below.

The speaker is comparing the "mild yoke" that God puts on us to:

A donkey pulling a cart

A small burden or job

A kind joke (1)

9. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write only the answer (A–D).

The word which best describes the poet's feeling in lines 9-14 ("That murmur, soon ... stand and wait") is:

A acceptance.

B anger.

C depression.

D joy. (1)

10. Refer to the last 4 lines of the poem.

Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and quote TWO consecutive words to support your answer. (2)

The poet feels that our burdens are not heavy.

hint

The last two questions must be your own opinion, based on whether your initial answer was YES or NO.

11. Consider the poem as a whole.

11.1. Do you feel sorry for the poet? Discuss your view. (2)

11.2. Do you think a disabled person should be expected to perform at the same level as an able person? Discuss your view. (2)

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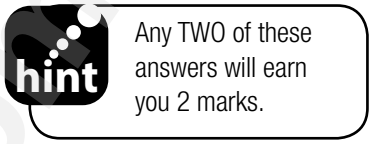
Answers to Activity 5

1.1	Sonnet ✓	
1.2	Problem ✓	
1.3	Solution ✓	(3)
2.	"Light" ✓ and "dark" ✓	(2)
3.1	"Light" ✓	(1)
3.2	Joy/ hope/ clarity/ visibility/ warms/ shining/ inspiration ✓✓	(2)
4.	The poet's talent is that he can write and he will not be able to use this talent if he is blind. ✓✓ OR He is unable to see. Therefore, he cannot write poetry/ use his gift. ✓✓	(2)
5.1	He is afraid that God will punish him/ not be satisfied with what he has done. ✓	(1)
5.2	He has not used the talent that God gave him./ He did not use his talent well./ He did not do a full day's work. ✓	(1)
6.1	Personification ✓	(1)
6.2	Personification: It becomes the voice of reason/ his conscience. ✓✓ OR Patience becomes a person who is answering his question. ✓✓ OR He personifies his thoughts in order to accept his burden. ✓✓	(2)
7.1	Frustration ✓	
7.2	Acceptance ✓	(2)
8.1	"His"/ "him" are pronouns referring to God. ✓	(1)
8.2	"They" is a pronoun referring to all people. ✓	(1)
8.3.1	Metaphor ✓	(1)
8.3.2	The speaker is comparing the "mild yoke" to a small burden or job. ✓	(1)
9.	A/acceptance ✓	(1)
10.	True. "Mild yoke". ✓✓	(2)
11.1	Yes. He has a talent and he cannot use it. ✓✓ OR No. I admire him for accepting his blindness. ✓✓	(2)
11.2.	Yes. Disabled people often perform better than those without disabilities and tend to feel insulted if you make allowances for them. ✓✓ OR No. You have to make concessions to accommodate disabled people as they have barriers to overcome. ✓✓	(2)
		[28]



Any TWO of these answers will earn you 2 marks.

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A prayer for all my countrymen
by Guy Butler

Guy Butler

This poem was written by Guy Butler (1918-2001). He was born and grew up in the Karoo. Butler was a professor of English at Rhodes University from 1952 to 1987.

He helped South African English literature achieve recognition and argued for integrating European and African elements in writing. When he wrote poetry in English he gave his writing an African feel.

Much of his poetry reflects his concerns about the problems and difficulties of life in South Africa during the time of apartheid. This poem was written in 1987 during the darkest days of apartheid and meditates on racial conflict. It is a prayer for unity.

1. Themes

As the title suggests, the theme is that **South Africans need God's help to escape the tragedy of apartheid**.

The poet says most people cannot see an end or solution to South Africa's problems (under apartheid) or imagine life after apartheid has ended. He asks God to make sure that once the horrors of apartheid have ended, people will behave and speak in such a way that they will keep (and live up to) their faith in Him.

The poet then says that, in spite of all their suffering, some people have been able to remain kind and good, to smile bravely through their troubles and to think clearly. This gives him hope that there will be a better future.

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A prayer for all my countrymen
by Guy Butler

Stanza 1

Though now few eyes
can see beyond
this tragic time's
complexities,
dear God, ordain — line 5
such deed be done,
such words be said,
that men will praise
Your image yet
when all these terrors — line 10
and hates are dead:

Stanza 2

Through rotting days,
beaten, broken,
some stayed pure;
others learnt how, — line 15
to grin and endure;
and here and there
a heart stayed warm,
a head grew clear.

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 1:	now	referring to apartheid times
Line 2:	beyond	further than
Line 3:	tragic	extremely sad
Line 4:	complexities	difficulties, problems, conflicts
Line 5:	ordain	order, make something happen/also religious term meaning holy order
Line 6:	deed	action
Line 9:	Your	referring to God
Line 12:	rotting	bad/corrupt
Line 14:	pure	good/innocent
Line 16:	grin	smile
	endure	cope with, accept, put up with
Line 19:	clear	open, thinking clearly

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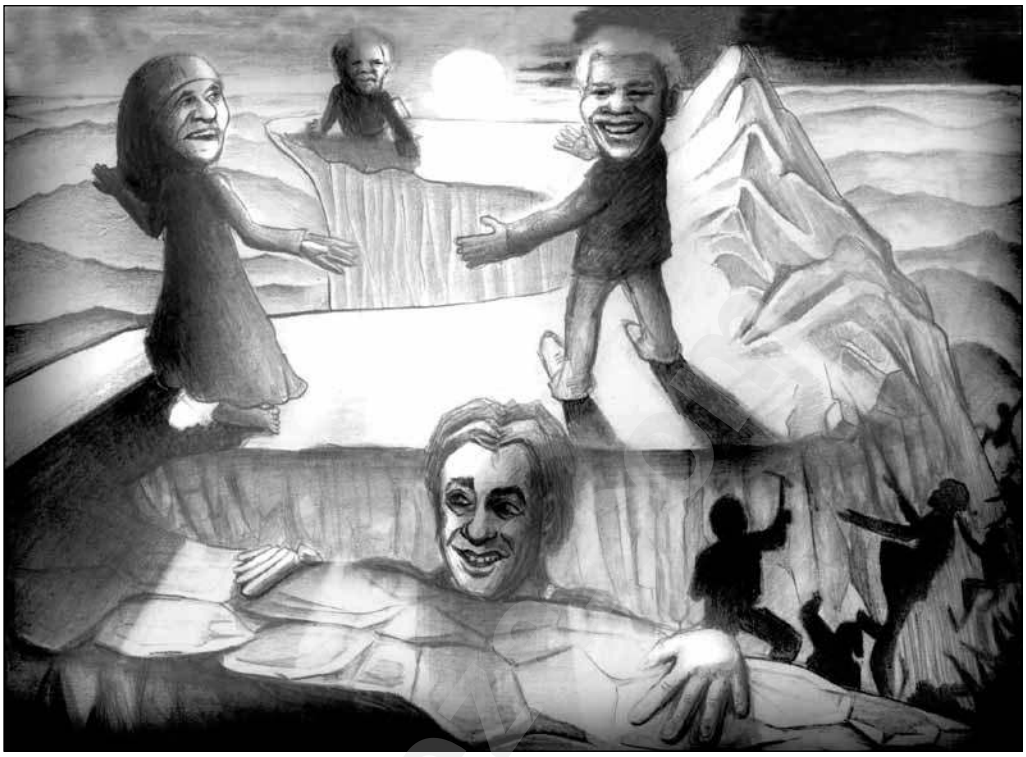

2. Type and form

There are two stanzas in this poem:

- The **first stanza** has 11 lines and in it the poet asks for God's help.
- The **second stanza** is shorter (8 lines) and tells us that some people have stayed good in spite of injustice and suffering.

vocab

Syllable: The sound of a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) when pronouncing a word.

The lines in the poem are short. Most have 4 syllables, although one has 3 and another has 5 **syllables**. The short lines add to the effect of a prayer and also simplify and make each phrase stand out, since the poet believes that God knows his thoughts and that there is no need to explain them.

In the first stanza, there is one **full rhyme** ("said"/"dead"), but many **half rhymes**. Half rhymes are words that almost rhyme but do not quite rhyme, which often give a poem a rather sad feeling as they are less musical. (Look at "ordain" / "done" or "yet' / "dead".)

In the second stanza there is one full rhyme: "pure" / "endure" which is more pleasant to listen to and links the more positive ideas contained in these words.

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3. Analysis

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 11)

Though now few eyes
can see beyond
this tragic time's
complexities,
dear God, ordain 5
such deed be done,
such words be said,
that men will praise
Your image yet
when all these terrors 10
and hates are dead:

This stanza contains the poet's prayer to God to save the people of our country. It is written as one long sentence.

In the four opening lines, the first half of the sentence tells us of the situation about which the poet is writing. The problems ("complexities" in line 4) of South Africa are so great that only a few of the people who suffer can imagine a time when apartheid will be over. Notice that the word "complexities" is in a line of its own (line 4), emphasising the size of the problems facing the country. Using what you have learnt about apartheid, you can decide why the poet calls it a "tragic time" (line 3).

Notice how the **alliteration** of the "t" sound in "tragic time's" emphasises the sadness. The image here is depressing, but look at the first word of the poem. It begins with the word "Though" (line 1), meaning that even though few people can see past the time of apartheid a time will come when it ends. This suggests that, even with all the suffering, hope is possible.

In the remaining seven lines of stanza 1, the poet tells us what he is praying for. He addresses God in a prayerful and loving **tone**, even **desperately**, when he says "dear God". The word "ordain" (line 5) is interesting here – the poet asks God to command or order what needs to happen, but "ordain" also has a religious meaning. (A priest is "ordained" when he is allowed to work as a priest.) This suggests that that what God "ordains", or makes happen, is good and holy. It also conveys a sense of future promise.

The use of **repetition** in "such deeds / such words" (lines 6 and 7) shows us how important the things are that the poet prays for. He prays that men will retain enough kindness to remain capable of speaking and acting with humanity (ubuntu), and not in ways that would cause them to lose all faith in God.

Once the struggle to end apartheid is over, he hopes that people will have retained enough human kindness and faith in God ("praise Your image yet" in lines 8 and 9) to enable them to make a better society possible for all. The use of the word "yet" (line 9) refers again to his hope that people will, in the future, go back to following in God's image. Perhaps he is suggesting that human beings are not capable of understanding God, so they create

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an image of Him for themselves. He might also be referring to the verse in Genesis which says that people are created in the image of God.

The "hates" and "terrors" (lines 10 and 11) refer to the negative effects of the evil system of apartheid. The last line of this stanza (line 11) contains the poem's only use of **personification**. The words "are dead" suggest that the poet does believe that apartheid will end, that he has hope.

The poet uses very few punctuation marks, so the lines flow in a simple way, suggesting that the words arise spontaneously in the poet's consciousness or mind. The colon (:) at the end of the first stanza makes us pause; we expect the second stanza to complete his thoughts.

The poem is very simply written, with very few figures of speech such as similes or metaphors. The simple **diction** (choice of words) makes it suitable for a prayer and emphasises the poet's sincerity – the prayer comes from his heart.

Stanza 2 (lines 12 – 19)

Through rotting days,
beaten, broken,
some stayed pure;
others learnt how 15
to grin and endure;
and here and there
a heart stayed warm,
a head grew clear.

In this stanza, also written as one long sentence, the poet says that in spite of the harsh, cruel times, some people have still stayed good, brave and kind.

Note that for the first time in the poem there are pauses, indicated by the **punctuation** (the use of commas and semi-colons at the end of the lines). The poet lists examples of what people have experienced.

The first line in stanza 2 contains the poem's only **metaphor**. Apartheid is compared to something that is rotten; it is a morally corrupt and evil system. "Rotting" (line 12) also has **connotations** of being forced to live in a poor, miserable area with no resources or services, and even of the decaying bodies of the people killed because of apartheid. It also suggests that the apartheid system is no longer fresh, but is old and rotting and it is time to throw it away.

The people were "beaten, broken" (line 13) as a result of the physical violence done to them. But people were also "beaten, broken" in spirit as a result of the injustice and cruelty of apartheid. Notice the use of the sound device in line 13 – the **alliteration** of "b" in "beaten, broken", a harsh sound that echoes the heavy sound of blows falling on a body.

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But in spite of their suffering, some people "stayed pure" (line 14): they remained good and were not made angry or bitter by the system. "Pure" also has a religious **connotation**, suggesting that these people were innocent of any corruption and trusted in God.

Other people learnt to bear their suffering bravely and with a smile ("grin and endure" in line 16) and did not feel sorry for themselves. Some remained kind and warm-hearted, while still others learnt to think about the situation clearly and wisely: their heads "grew clear" (line 19). People with clear minds, the ability to think clearly and rationally, were necessary if a solution to the problems was to be found and a better future built.

As some people have been able to rise above their problems and suffering, the poet feels hopeful that a better future will be possible.

4. Tone and mood

The general tone of the poem is **reverent**, **sincere** and **hopeful**, as it is a prayer.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

A prayer for all my countrymen
by Guy Butler

1. Theme

South Africans need God's help to escape the tragedy of apartheid.

2. Type and form

Free verse:
— Most lines are short with 4 syllables
— Two full rhymes in the poem
— Many half rhymes

Stanza 1
11 lines
— Written as one long sentence
— "tragic time"
Alliteration (repeated "t")
— "such deeds / such words"
Emphasises importance of prayer
— "when all the terrors and hates are dead"
Personification

Stanza 2
8 lines
— "Through rotting days"
Metaphor
— "beaten, broken"
Alliteration (repeated "b")

3. Tone and mood

Tone: Reverent, sincere and hopeful.

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 6

Refer to the poem on page 51 and answer the questions below.

1. What is the "tragic time" referred to in line 3? (1)

2. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write down only the words next to the question number (2.1-2.3).

America; people; South Africa; pardon; prayer; men

This poem is written as a (2.1) ... for all the (2.2) ... of (2.3) ... (3)

3. Refer to line 1 ("Though now few eyes").

To whom do the "few eyes" belong? (1)

4. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:

In line 4, the word "complexities" means ...

A hardships and shortages.

B hardships and answers.

C answers and solutions.

D problems and difficulties. (1)

5. Refer to lines 5-9 ("dear God ordain, ... Your image yet").

Explain why the poet wants his countrymen to behave as described in these lines. (2)

6. Refer to lines 10 and 11 ("when all these terrors/and hates are dead").

Use ONE word to describe how the **speaker** feels about the future. (1)

7. Refer to the poem as a whole and give TWO examples of alliteration used. (2)

8. Refer to the second stanza.

Using your own words, describe THREE different ways in which people reacted at that time. (3)

9. Refer to the second stanza.

Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE?

Quote a line to support your answer.

The speaker was one of the few people who enjoyed the period of time described in this poem. (2)

10. At the present time in our history do you think the poet's prayer has been answered? Discuss your view. (2)

[18]

hint

The "**speaker**" refers to the poet.

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Answers to Activity 6

1. Apartheid ✓ (1)

2.1. Prayer ✓

2.2. People ✓

2.3. South Africa ✓ (3)

3. The people or comrades who can see beyond the suffering. ✓ (1)

4. D / problems and difficulties ✓ (1)

5. He wants them to act and speak responsibly in a way that will be acceptable to God and will set an example to others. ✓✓ (2)

6. Hopeful/ positive/ optimistic ✓ (1)

7. "tragic time's" ✓

"deed be done" ✓

"beaten, broken" ✓

"some stayed pure" ✓ (2)

8. Some did not change/ some remained loyal. ✓

Some pretended to cope/ be happy/ grinned and endured. ✓

Some were balanced in their outlook/ remained hopeful/clear-headed and warm-hearted. ✓

Some became clear-headed/ rational. ✓ (3)

9. False. "Through rotting days" ✓✓ (2)

10. Yes, some people have remained warm-hearted and clear-headed according to stanza two. These people help people in need. ✓✓
OR
No, reconciliation and forgiveness are not truly evident even after 1994. There is still a lot of racial prejudice. ✓✓ (2)

[18]

hint Any three of these answers in question 5, 7 and 8 are acceptable.

hint To get full marks for this answer you need to answer both parts of the question. Answer "yes" OR "no" and give a reason for your answer.

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The birth of Shaka
by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

The birth of Shaka was written by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali. Mtshali was born in KwaZulu-Natal in 1940. He travelled to Johannesburg as a young man of 18 and many of his poems are based on life in Soweto. He has won many awards for his poetry and was one of the first black poets to be published in both Zulu and English.

Some of his poetry criticises the way black people were forced to live during apartheid, but other poems, such as *The birth of Shaka*, are intended to remind black people of their proud culture and history.

Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

1. Themes

The theme is **the power of African culture**. It is something Africans must feel proud of. The poet praises Shaka's power and strength as well as his wisdom. The poet's intention was to remind the Zulu people of their proud heritage at a time when they were being oppressed and made to feel worthless during apartheid.

Did you know?

The Zulu king Shaka was born in 1787 and was assassinated by his half-brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana, in 1828. He was the son of a chief and his mother was called Nandi. His parents were not married. As a boy he was often mocked because he "had no father".

Shaka was a great warrior. He developed the Zulu tribe into a mighty nation. During his reign some of the first white settlers arrived from England and landed in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. His half-brother Dingane became king after murdering Shaka, but he reigned for only 10 years until he was defeated by white Afrikaners at the Battle of Blood River in 1838.

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The birth of Shaka
by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

Stanza 1
His baby cry
was of a cub
tearing the neck
of the lioness
because he was fatherless. line 5

Stanza 2
The gods
boiled his blood
in a clay pot of passion
to course in his veins.

Stanza 3
His heart was shaped into an ox shield line 10
to foil every foe.

Stanza 4
Ancestors forged
his muscles into
thongs as tough
as wattle bark line 15
and nerves
as sharp as
syringa thorns.

Stanza 5
His eyes were lanterns
that shone from the dark valleys of Zululand line 20
to see white swallows
coming across the sea.
His cry to two assassin brothers:

Stanza 6
'Lo! you can kill me line 25
but you'll never rule this land!'

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 2:	cub	baby lion
Line 3:	tearing	biting, wounding
Line 4:	lioness	female lion, Shaka's mother Nandi
Line 5:	fatherless	he did not live with his father
Line 8:	passion	very strong feeling
Line 9:	course in his veins	run or flow in his veins
Line 11:	foil	stop
	foe	enemy

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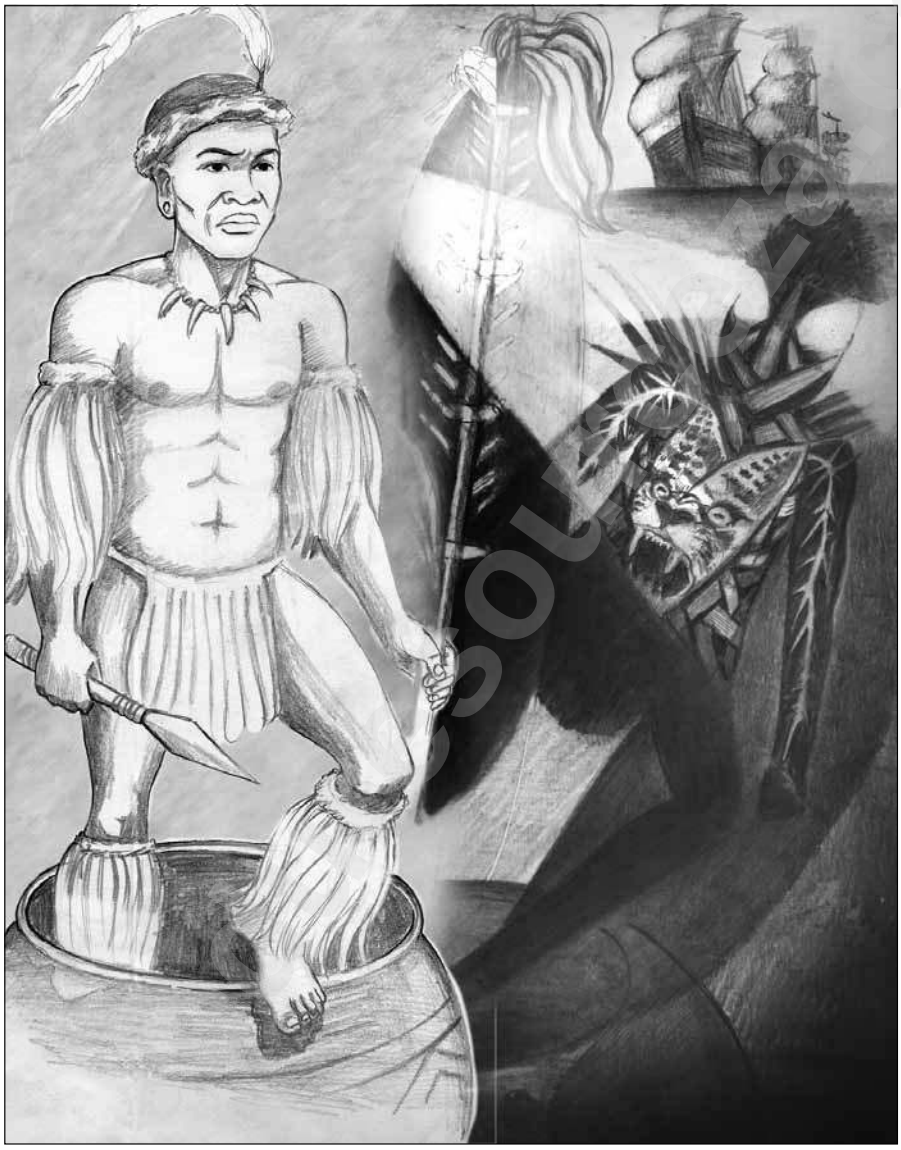
words to know

Line 12:	forged	made
Line 14:	thongs	leather strips
Line 15:	wattle bark	outside covering of a wattle tree
Line 18:	syringa	tree with big, sharp thorns
Line 19:	lanterns	lamps you can carry
Line 21:	swallows	birds that fly to Europe every year
Line 23:	assassin	person who kills to take over political power
Line 24:	lo!	look!, see!



2. Type and form

This poem is a modern **praise poem** or izibongo.

It has six stanzas. They all have different line lengths and have no rhyming words.

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3. Analysis

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 5)

His baby cry
was of a cub
tearing the neck
of the lioness
because he was fatherless. 5

The lion is known as the "King of the Beasts" because of its strength, fierceness and power. It is also a dangerous animal.

The **metaphor** comparing the cry of baby Shaka to that of a baby lion tells us that he was born to be a powerful, fierce and dangerous leader. The metaphor also tells us that his cry was so fierce that it tore the neck of its mother, the lioness (line 3).

This fierceness is a contrast to how a baby would normally behave towards its mother and may foreshadow how fierce Shaka would become later. It may suggest that Shaka was aggressive towards his mother, Nandi, because his parents were not married and he grew up without a father. For example, Shaka's behaviour as a baby gives us a clue to how he will behave when he is a grown man.

Stanza 2 (lines 6 – 9)

The gods
boiled his blood
in a clay pot of passion
to course in his veins.

This **metaphor** tells us that Shaka was not just an ordinary person but someone special, whose nature was made by the gods, which means they gave him some supernatural powers, beyond ordinary human life. In the metaphor, Shaka's blood is being compared to something specially cooked by the gods.

"Passion" (line 8) refers to very strong feelings such as love or hatred. If you are passionate about something you are very enthusiastic about it and put great energy into it. This **metaphor** tells us of Shaka's energy, enthusiasm and devotion to his work as a warrior (great soldier) and leader, as well as his anger. The poet tells us a "clay pot" (line 8) was used when making Shaka's "blood boil", to emphasise his African cultural roots.

vocab

The expression "my blood boils" means to be very angry.

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Stanza 3 (lines 10 – 11)

His heart was shaped into an ox shield 10
to foil every foe.

A shield is used to protect yourself from injury, which tells us that in war Shaka would not be hurt but, in fact, would defeat his enemies. This **metaphor** also tells us he was protective of his people and was strong-hearted, meaning he was brave and determined.

We are reminded of how Shaka represents Zulu culture, as Zulu shields were made from the skin of an ox. Notice the **alliteration** of "foil ... foe" (line 11) which emphasises that he defeated his enemies.

Stanza 4 (lines 12 – 18)

Ancestors forged
his muscles into
thongs as tough
as wattle bark 15
and nerves
as sharp as
syringa thorns.

Shaka's strength did not come only from the gods but also from the ancestors. This is another reminder of African culture, in which the ancestors are believed to guide and help their descendants (family members who come after them). In this **metaphor** we are told the ancestors "forged" (line 13) Shaka's muscles. Metals such as iron and steel are shaped by being "forged" – heated until they are very hot and can be beaten or forced into different shapes. This suggests that Shaka was extremely strong, both physically and mentally.

The **simile** "thongs as tough/ as wattle bark" (lines 14 and 15) also shows how tough and strong Shaka was, as his muscles were like leather and mentally he was strong and determined. The poet then uses another simile, comparing his nerves to the sharp thorns of a syringa tree. In English, if you say someone is "sharp" you mean they are clever and do not miss anything. In addition, sharp thorns can hurt you, so as well as being clever, Shaka was also cruel.

Stanza 5 (lines 19 – 23)

His eyes were lanterns
that shone from the dark valleys of Zululand 20
to see white swallows
coming across the sea.
His cry to two assassin brothers:

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This is a very interesting stanza that shows Shaka's wisdom, understanding and ability to see into the future.

Shaka's eyes are compared to "lanterns" (line 19) that light up the darkness. Here darkness suggests that the Zulu people did not know what their future would be. But Shaka was able to see what the arrival of the "white swallows" (line 21) would mean for his people. Swallows are birds that migrate, moving from Europe to Africa to escape the cold winters.

In this **metaphor**, the "white swallows" refer to the white settlers (both the British and, originally, the Afrikaners), who came from Europe and who sailed by ship to Africa; they would settle and take over what was then called Natal. As well as referring to the settlers, "white swallows" could also remind us of the white sails of a sailing ship, in which the settlers travelled in those days.

vocab

Prophetic: Having knowledge of the future.

Note that up to this point the **tone** of the poem has been one of admiration and praise. Now the tone is more quiet and **prophetic,** as if Shaka can see far into the future.

Stanza 6 (lines 25 – 26)

'Lo! you can kill me 25
but you'll never rule this land!'

This stanza is Shaka's "cry" to the two half-brothers who murdered him.

These lines are also Shaka prophesying what will happen to his country in the future. The land will be taken over by the white settlers and the Zulu people will be ruled by them. These lines are the **climax** of the poem.

The **diction** (poet's choice of word) is unusual here when Shaka exclaims, "Lo!" This is an old-fashioned word meaning "Look! See!". It is used in the old English translation of the Bible, which makes Shaka sound like a prophet.

The tone changes again now. He speaks to his brothers in a **tone** of strong defiance as he warns them that they will not achieve much by killing him as the land will be taken over by the settlers.

4. Tone and mood

The poem begins with a tone of **admiration** and **praise**. In stanza 5, it changes to become more **quiet** and **prophetic**. In the final stanza, the tone becomes **defiant**.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

The birth of Shaka
by Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali

1. Theme

The theme is the **power** and **pride** of African culture.

2. Type and form

Modern praise poem or izibongo:
- Stanzas are different lengths
- No rhyming words

Stanza 1
- "His baby cry / was of a cub"
  Metaphor

Stanza 2
- "The gods /boiled his blood /
- In a clay pot of passion"
  Metaphor
- "clay pot"
  African culture

Stanza 3
- "His heart was shaped into an ox shield"
  Metaphor
- "ox shield"
  African culture
- "foil every foe"
  Alliteration (repeated "f")

Stanza 4
- "his muscles into / thongs as tough as wattle bark / and nerves as sharp as syringa thorns."
  Simile
- "Ancestors"
  African culture

Stanza 5
- "His eyes were lanterns"
  Metaphor
- "white swallows"
  Metaphor

Stanza 6
- "Lo!"
  Diction: Biblical; suggests Shaka is a prophet
  Climax of poem

3. Tone and mood

Tone: At first **admiring** and **praising**; becomes **quiet** and **prophetic** in Stanza 5; ends **defiant**.

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answers.

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Activity 7

Refer to the poem on page 60 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write down only the words next to the question number (1.1 - 1.3).

mourned;	cruel;	warrior;	praised;	father;	loving

In this poem Shaka, the Zulu king, is (1.1) ... . He was a (1.2) ... man, but a brave (1.3) ... (3)

2. Refer to lines 1 and 2 ("His baby cry/was of a cub ...").

2.1. Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

2.2. Explain why the poet has used this figure of speech. (2)

3. Refer to lines 3 and 4 ("tearing the neck/of the lioness").

To whom does the word "lioness" refer? (1)

4. Refer to stanza 2.

4.1. In your own words, explain how the gods created Shaka. (1)

4.2. State ONE of Shaka's characteristics suggested by the use of the words "clay pot". (1)

5. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:

In line 11, the words "to foil every foe" mean to ...

A free every prisoner.

B betray every enemy.

C stop every enemy.

D kill every prisoner. (1)

6. Refer to lines 12 and 13 ("Ancestors forged his muscles ...").

What does the use of the word "forged" in these lines tell the reader about Shaka's physical abilities? (2)

7. Refer to stanza 4.

Quote TWO separate words to prove that Shaka was both physically and mentally strong. (2)

8. Refer to stanza 5.

Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Quote a line to support your answer.

Shaka could see what was going to happen in the future. (2)

hint In **your own words** means write down your own understanding of what the poem tells us. Do not quote from the poem.

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9. In the first five stanzas the tone of the speaker shows admiration. Describe the tone in the last stanza (lines 24–25) (1)

10. What, in your view, are the qualities of a good leader? (2)

[19]

Answers to Activity 7

1. 1.1. Praised ✓

1.2. Cruel ✓

1.3. Warrior ✓ (3)

2.1. Metaphor ✓ (1)

2.2. It compares baby Shaka to a lion cub. ✓✓
OR
To show that although Shaka was still a (newborn) baby, but he was already displaying a fierce/ vicious nature. ✓✓ (2)

3. Shaka's mother OR Nandi ✓ (1)

4.1 They gave him an emotional/ passionate nature.
OR
They used a clay pot to boil his blood. ✓ (1)

4.2. He was only human/ fragile/ not perfect. ✓
OR
Like a clay pot, he represented/ contained traditional values. ✓
OR
A clay pot represents strength and could mean that the ancestors/gods made him strong. ✓ (1)

5. C / stop every enemy ✓ (1)

6. Steel/ metal is normally forged by heating and then shaping it. ✓✓
OR
This tells the reader that Shaka is very strong and has exceptional strength. ✓✓ (2)

7. "Tough" ✓, "sharp" ✓ (2)

8. True. "His eyes were lanterns" ✓✓ (2)

9. It becomes one of sadness. ✓/ It becomes a warning/ threatening/ prophetic/ defiant. ✓ (1)

10. A good leader must have vision/ foresight/ must have a good reputation. ✓✓
OR
A good leader must not be concerned about popularity/ must not be afraid of being firm. ✓✓ (2)

[19]

hint
Any ONE of these answers to question 9 will earn you 1 mark.

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The serf
by Roy Campbell

Roy Campbell

The serf was written by Roy Campbell (1901-1957). Campbell was born in Durban and moved to Europe in his later life. He was a fluent Zulu speaker. Campbell was critical of the white colonial rulers of South Africa because he felt that they were arrogant and would not accept any ideas except their own.

1. Themes

The theme of the poem is **power** and **oppression**.

The poet watches a poor farm worker (a **serf**) ploughing a field. This ploughman is doing harsh work under difficult conditions. He has no power to change his life or job and works patiently and slowly. This man was once the proud warrior of a great tribe that lived on this land. Now he works on land belonging to a rich farmer.

The poet suggests that this worker's close relationship to the land and his slow patience will mean that one day the land will belong to him again and he will defeat the powerful people who have taken his land.

vocab

Serf: The lowest level of farm worker in medieval Europe (5th – 15th century). Serfs were treated like slaves.

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The serf
by Roy Campbell

Octave

His naked skin clothed in the torrid mist
That puffs in smoke around the patient hooves,
The ploughman drives, a slow somnambulist,
And through the green his crimson furrow grooves.
His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain, — line 5
Long by the rasping share of insult torn,
Red clod, to which the war-cry once was rain
And tribal spears the fatal sheaves of corn,

Sestet

Lies fallow now. But as the turf divides
I see in the slow progress of his strides — line 10
Over the toppled clods and falling flowers,
The timeless, surly patience of the serf
That moves the nearest to the naked earth
And ploughs down palaces, and thrones, and towers.

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 1:	**torrid**	very hot, scorching heat
Line 3:	**drives**	pushes forward like a machine
	somnambulist	a person who walks while asleep
Line 4:	**green**	refers to the grass
	crimson	deep purplish red
	furrow	a line cut in the soil
	grooves	a long narrow cut into the soil
Line 5:	**plain**	a field
Line 6:	**rasping**	scraping, scratching
	share (also called a ploughshare)	a tool for making furrows or grooves in the soil so that seeds can be planted
	insult	abuse, humiliation
Line 7:	**clod**	a lump of soil, clay or mud
Line 8:	**sheaves**	stems of maize or corn
Line 9:	**fallow**	empty, no crops planted
Line 10:	**strides**	long steps or paces
Line 12:	**surly**	bad-tempered, rude

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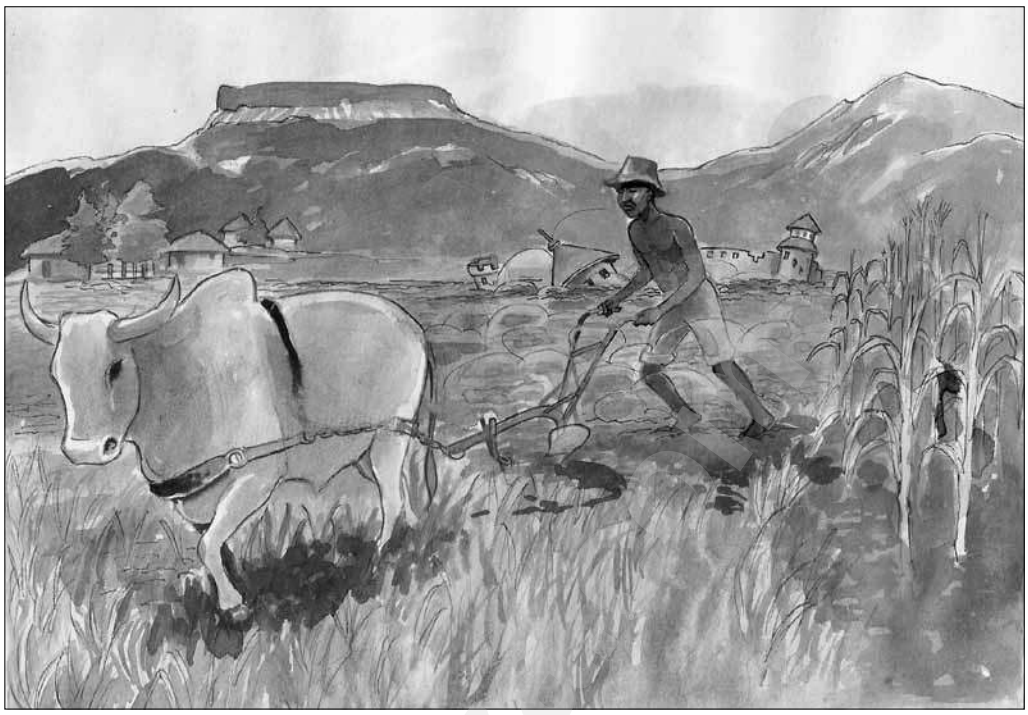

2. Type and form

hint

In exam questions, "form" is sometimes called the "style" or "type" of poem. All three terms describe the layout of the poem on the page.

The form of this poem is a Miltonic sonnet (also known as a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet). It has 14 lines made up of:

- An **octave** of eight lines (which describes the problem).
- A **sestet** (six lines at the end of the poem which give the solution).

The rhyme scheme is abab abab ccdeed.

3. Analysis

Octave (lines 1 – 4)

His naked skin clothed in the torrid mist
That puffs in smoke around the patient hooves,
The ploughman drives, a slow somnambulist,
And through the green his crimson furrow grooves.

The octave introduces the **problem** of the poem as he describes the hard life of the serf. The poet uses a **metaphor** to describe the ploughman. In line 1, the ploughman is "clothed" in a "torrid mist". There is so much dust coming from the feet of the animal pulling the plough that it is compared to a "mist" (a cloud) which makes it hard to see the ploughman. The dust is also compared to clothes as it falls onto his skin (line 3).

The poet says that the ploughman is a "slow somnambulist" (line 3). He compares the way the ploughman walks to the way people walk when they

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are asleep – slowly, as if they are in a dream. This is emphasised by the use of **alliteration** – the repeated "s" sounds in the words. The "s" sound also appears for emphasis in line 10, "the slow progress of his strides".

The green grass of the field turns "crimson" (red) as the ploughshare cuts a line, "grooves", into the earth and turns the red soil to the top of the "furrow" (line 4). The poet's use of "green" in line 4 is an example of **metonomy.**

vocab

Metonomy: A figure of speech in which a thing or a concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something associated with it in meaning. Here, the poet uses the word "green" to refer to the grass.

Octave (lines 5 – 8)

His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain, 5
Long by the rasping share of insult torn,
Red clod, to which the war-cry once was rain
And tribal spears the fatal sheaves of corn,
Lies fallow now.

The problem presented in the first 4 lines of the octave continues as the poet explains that, not only is the ploughman poor and doing hard labour, he is also broken-hearted and sad. "His heart" is hurt ("torn") "Long by the rasping share of insult" (lines 5-6). These insults would have been all the horrible things done to the ploughman and his people – losing his land, being forced to work like a slave, losing his pride.

In two **metaphors** (lines 5-6), "His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain/Long by the rasping share of insult torn", the action of ploughing through the soil is compared to wounding. It cuts the ground and the red soil which is brought up by the plough is the colour of blood. The ploughman's heart is compared to the ground that he ploughs – his heart has been hurt and wounded by "insult" (line 6). This **metaphor** compares the ploughman's heart to the red soil.

Now that his heart is sad, it is empty, without feeling. In line 9 (the first line of the sestet), his heart is compared to a field which "lies fallow now" (line 9) with no crops planted. The poet also uses a **metaphor** to explain how the ploughman was once a great warrior – the cries of war that were good for his heart are compared to rain, which is good for the "clod" (soil), in which seeds will be planted, and once, instead of "sheaves" of corn (line 8), this man had spears.

The poet uses an **oxymoron**, "fatal sheaves" in line 8. The word "sheaves" has connotations of growth and health; while the word "fatal" means resulting in death. This may mean that the planting of crops caused the end of a way of life for the warriors who used to hunt for their food.

vocab

Oxymoron: Combines two words that seem to contradict or oppose each other.

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Sestet (lines 9 – 14)

But as the turf divides
I see in the slow progress of his strides 10
Over the toppled clods and falling flowers,
The timeless, surly patience of the serf
That moves the nearest to the naked earth
And ploughs down palaces, and thrones, and towers.

In the octave, the poet has told us the problem: the ploughman is tired, oppressed, working on land he does not own, and no longer a mighty warrior.

In the sestet, he now gives us the **solution** to this problem. As he watches the grass ("turf") cut through by the blade of the ploughshare, the poet has a vision of the future. He believes that the slow, steady, patient "strides" (line 10) of the ploughman, who belongs to the land and to nature (the "naked earth"), will defeat his oppressors and break down their symbols of wealth and power: "palaces, and thrones, and towers" (line 14). The serf will one day be free again and own the land he works on.

The poet uses another **oxymoron** in line 10 – "surly patience". Surly means bad-tempered or rude; and seems to be the opposite of "patience", which means to quietly wait and endure what you are experiencing.

Note the **alliteration** used in line 11: "falling flowers". The "f" sound emphasises how steadily and certainly the serf walks forward — towards making history turn to favour his people again.

4. Tone and mood

In the octave, the tone is **despairing** and **depressing** as it describes the hard labour and losses of the serf. The tone changes to become more **urgent** and **hopeful** in the sestet.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

The serf
by Roy Campbell

1. Theme

Power and oppression.

2. Type and form

Miltonic sonnet:
14 lines

Octave:
8 lines
a
b
a
b
a
b
a
b

Octave: Lines 1 - 4
— "His naked skin clothed in the torrid mist"
Metaphor
— "slow somnambulist"
Alliteration (repeated "s")
— "green"
Metonomy

Octave: Lines 5 - 8
— "His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain"
Metaphor
— "Long by the rasping share of insult torn"
Metaphor
— "And tribal spears the fatal sheaves of corn"
Metaphor
— "fatal sheaves"
Oxymoron

Sestet:
6 lines
c
c
d
e
e
d

Sestet: Lines 9 - 14
— "surly patience"
Oxymoron
— "falling flowers"
Alliteration (repeated "f")

3. Tone and mood

Tone: In the octave: **despairing** and **depressing**; in the sestet: **urgent** and **hopeful**.

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 8

Refer to the poem on page 69 and answer the questions below.

hint The key word here is **hot**. Look for a synonym (a word that has the same meaning) for "hot" in the first line of the poem to answer the question.

1. Refer to lines 1-4 ("His naked skin ... crimson furrow grooves").

   Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and quote a SINGLE word to support your answer.

   The serf is forced to work in very hot conditions. (2)

2. In your own words, explain the meaning of line 4. (2)

3. Refer to lines 5–6 ("His heart, more ... of insult torn").

3.1. Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

3.2. Explain why the poet uses this figure of speech. (2)

4. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence.

   In line 6 the words "rasping share of insult" refer to the ...

   A Ploughshare breaking the earth.

   B Serf wounding the earth.

   C Inhuman treatment of the serf.

   D Serf insulting his master. (1)

5. Refer to the last six lines of the poem ("Lies fallow now ... thrones, and towers").

   Discuss the speaker's warning in these lines. State TWO points. (2)

6. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write only the words next to the question number (6.1–6.3)

owner; labourer; ploughs; oppression; harvest; freedom

   This poem is about a farm (6.1) ... who (6.2) ... the earth. The serf represents patient revolutionaries whose sacrifice is responsible for human (6.3) ... (3)

7. Consider the poem as a whole. Do you feel sorry for the serf? Discuss your view. (2)

8. Give TWO reasons why the title "The serf" is a suitable one for this poem. (2)

9. Is this poem a South African poem? Quote two consecutive words from the poem to support your answer. (2)

10. The word "naked" is used twice in the poem. Complete the sentence below quoting phrases from the poem.

    The word naked has been used negatively to show that the serf is poor because he has only his "naked...(10.1) " and it has been used positively to show that he belongs to the land and to nature the "naked...(10.2)" (2)

hint You must give either a "Yes" or "No" answer and then give a reason to back up your view.

[21]

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Answers to Activity 8

1. True, "torrid". ✓✓ (2)

2. The "green" grass is turned over as the ploughshare is pushed through it and the red colour of the soil is turned to the top. ✓✓ (2)

3.1. Metaphor ✓ (1)

3.2. His heart is being compared to a red clod/ soil. ✓✓
OR
The poet shows that both his heart and the earth are damaged/ broken. ✓✓
OR
The poet shows that the field is being damaged and his heart is broken/he has been hurt. ✓✓ (2)

4. C / inhuman treatment of the serf. ✓ (1)

5. The speaker is warning the oppressors, the rich people in power at the time, that their wealth and power will be broken down and the serf will slowly defeat the oppressors and be free. ✓✓
OR
A revolution is coming because the labourers will revolt. ✓✓
OR
Danger is coming because the labourers will revolt. ✓✓ (2)

6.1. labourer ✓

6.2. ploughs ✓

6.3. freedom ✓ (3)

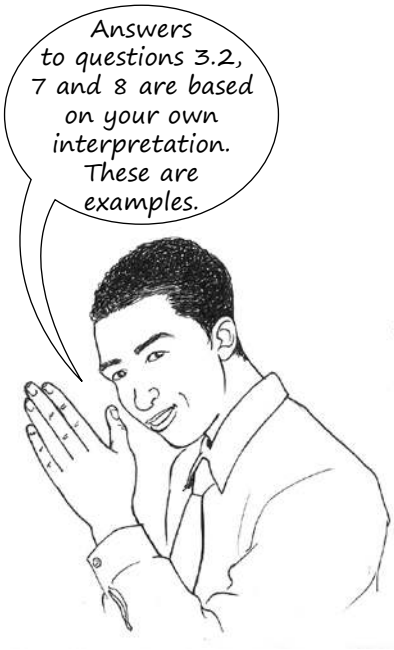
7. YES, because he is tired ("somnambulist") and it is hot ("torrid")/ he is poor ("naked") and his heart is dry and sad (like a field without 'rain'). ✓✓
OR
NO, he is patient ("surly patience") and freedom will come to him one day and he will overthrow the oppressors ("break down palaces") and have his land again. ✓✓
OR
NO, many people earn a living in a hard way. He should be grateful he has a job. ✓✓ (2)

8. Serfs were poor and this worker has only a "naked skin"/ They were farm workers and he "ploughs" the field. ✓✓
OR
It is appropriate because "serf" means that you are owned by your master and subjected to hard labour, just as the serf in the poem is subjected to hard labour. ✓✓
OR
He is not allowed to leave/ seen as a possession/ not paid for his hard work. ✓✓ (2)

9. Yes. "tribal spears" ✓✓ (2)

10. The word "naked" has been used negatively to show that the serf is poor because he has only his "naked skin" ✓ and it has been used positively to show that he belongs to the land and to nature, the "naked earth" ✓. (2)

[21]



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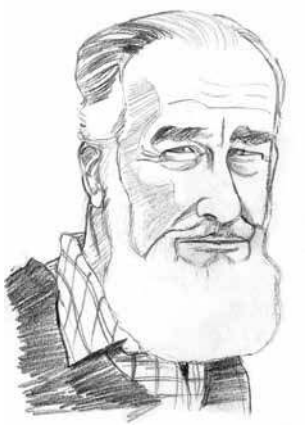
Mementos, 1
by W.D. Snodgrass



W.D. Snodgrass

This poem was written by W.D. Snodgrass (1926-2009). He was an American poet who won a number of prizes for his work. He also wrote essays and was an academic who taught at several US universities, finally retiring in 1994.

He is best known for writing very personal poems about his own life and loves. His poems are often about the pain of life that we do not show to one another when we meet in our busy lives: the pain of love lost, divorce, death, unsatisfying jobs and dreams which are not achieved.

Snodgrass wrote another poem, called *Mementos, 2*, which is why this poem is called *Mementos, 1*.

1. Themes

The theme of this poem is **memory**, and the power that **mementos** (such as photographs) have to bring back feelings and memories from the past.

The poet is looking through a collection of old papers when he comes across a photograph of his ex-wife. After his first shock, he feels glad for a moment. It was taken at their first dance and she looked young and very pretty. He remembers how that picture had helped him cope with his fear during the war, but then he feels bitter as he remembers how their marriage failed and ended in divorce.

However, he puts the photograph back to look at it again one day, which may mean that he still has some feelings for his wife. In this poem, he addresses his words to "you" — referring to the person in the photograph.

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Mementos, 1
by W.D. Snodgrass

Stanza 1
Sorting out letters and piles of my old
Canceled checks, old clippings, and yellow note cards
That meant something once, I happened to find
Your picture. *That picture.* I stopped there cold,
Like a man raking piles of dead leaves in his yard — line 5
Who has turned up a severed hand.

Stanza 2
Still, that first second, I was glad: you stand
Just as you stood – shy, delicate, slender,
In that long gown of green lace netting and daisies
That you wore to our first dance. The sight of you stunned — line 10
Us all. Well, our needs were different, then,
And our ideals came easy.

Stanza 3
Then through the war and those two long years
Overseas, the Japanese dead in their shacks
Among dishes, dolls, and lost shoes; I carried — line 15
This glimpse of you, there, to choke down my fear,
Prove it had been, that it might come back.
That was before we got married.

Stanza 4
Before we drained out one another's force
With lies, self-denial, unspoken regret — line 20
And the sick eyes that blame; before the divorce
And the treachery. Say it: before we met. Still,
I put back your picture. Someday, in due course,
I will find that it's still there.

words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:

Line 2:	**canceled checks**	old cheques that have been paid up, no longer of value
	clippings	cuttings from newspapers and magazines
Line 4:	**cold**	frozen, still
Line 5:	**raking**	using a rake to collect leaves
Line 6:	**severed**	cut off from the body
Line 8:	**delicate**	small
	slender	slim, thin
Line 9:	**gown**	dress
	lace netting	delicate fabric
	daisies	small flowers

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words to know

Line 10:	stunned	amazed
Line 12:	ideals	ideas of perfection / can also mean beliefs, goals
Line 13:	the war	reference to World War 2
Line 16:	glimpse	sight (the photo)
	choke	hold back
Line 19:	drained	emptied
	force	energy, life
Line 20:	self-denial	give up something, deny yourself something you want
	regret	feel sorry
Line 22:	treachery	disloyalty, unfaithfulness
Line 23:	in due course	later on

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2. Type and form

This poem is of the type known as **confessional** poetry, in which the poet confesses or shares very personal and private thoughts and feelings. In this case, he shares his memories of and feelings about his first marriage.

One of the formal elements in the poem's structure is that there are four stanzas of six lines each and the lines are similar in length.

The poet uses some **rhyme**, but in no set pattern. For example, look at "old" and "cold" in stanza 1, or "force, divorce and course" in the last stanza.

He also uses **half-rhymes**, which are words that almost rhyme, but not quite. For example, look at "years / fear" in stanza 3.

3. Analysis

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 6)

Sorting out letters and piles of my old
    Canceled checks, old clippings, and yellow note cards
That meant something once, I happened to find
    Your picture. That picture. I stopped there cold,
Like a man raking piles of dead leaves in his yard 5
    Who has turned up a severed hand.

This stanza describes the poet's reaction to finding an old photograph of his ex-wife. He is sorting out old papers, probably to throw away what he no longer needs. There are "**Canceled checks**" which are old cheques that have been paid and returned by the bank.

There are also pieces cut out from old newspapers or magazines that had interested him at the time, and old note cards which have turned yellow with age. Note how the words "canceled / old/ yellowed" (line 2) tell us that these papers have been there for a very long time; they had been important to him ("meant something") long ago.

Suddenly he finds a photograph of his ex-wife; perhaps he had forgotten about it, for he is shocked. Notice the short, sharp **punctuation** in line 4, with two full stops in four words: "Your picture. *That picture*. I stopped there cold". The short phrases and full stops make us stop short so that we experience the shock that the poet feels when he sees the picture. The italics used in "*That picture*" are for emphasis. We realise that he knows this photograph and it is a special picture of someone who was once very important to him.

The poet's use of the word "cold" in line 4 helps to describe his shock at seeing the picture. He then explains how he feels with a horrifying **simile**: he feels like someone innocently tidying up his garden when he finds, among the dead leaves, a "severed hand" (lines 4 and 5).

hint

Note that "**Canceled checks**" is American spelling; we would write "cancelled cheques".

hint

Font means the type of print or writing used. There are three main font types: standard, bold and italics. Bold is used for emphasis. *Italics* are also used for emphasis and for words which come from another language.

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Stanza 2 (lines 7 – 12)

Still, that first second, I was glad: you stand
Just as you stood – shy, delicate, slender,
In that long gown of green lace netting and daisies
That you wore to our first dance. The sight of you stunned 10
Us all. Well, our needs were different, then,
And our ideals came easy.

This stanza describes the poet's memories of the time when the photograph was taken. In spite of the shock, the poet feels glad for a moment as it brings back a happy memory. The photograph was taken of his ex-wife at the first dance they had gone to together and she looked very beautiful in a lovely green lace dress with little daisies on it. Everyone there admired her ("stunned/ Us all." – line 10 and 11). In the 1940s people often went to dances, so their first dance suggests they had not been going out together for very long. At that time she was shy, small and slim, perhaps a little uncertain of herself.

The poet must also have been very young, about 18 years old. He reflects that when they were young, they had simpler needs and less complicated expectations of each other, and of life itself, perhaps. Their "ideals came easy" (line 12): young people are usually more idealistic and hopeful about what they believe and about their goals in life.

hint

In the Second World War the Americans fought against the Japanese in the Pacific, and the poet joined the American navy in 1944, when he was about 18.

Stanza 3 (lines 13 – 18)

Then through the war and those two long years
Overseas, the Japanese dead in their shacks
Among dishes, dolls, and lost shoes; I carried 15
This glimpse of you, there, to choke down my fear,
Prove it had been, that it might come back.
That was before we got married.

Now the poet remembers how this photograph had helped him cope with his fear during the two years he had spent at war.

By describing the two years as "long" (line 13), the poet tells us that this was a difficult and unhappy time. He saw the horrors of war in which not only soldiers but also Japanese civilians (ordinary people) suffered. He refers to Japanese people lying dead in their "shacks" amid the ordinary belongings of their everyday lives: "dishes, dolls and lost shoes" (line 15). In writing of this, the poet shows little emotion, unlike the feelings he expresses when he describes finding the photograph or the failure of his marriage.

He carried the photograph with him in the war as the "glimpse" (line 16) of her gave him comfort. A "glimpse" is a quick look at something. This does not mean that he took only quick looks at the picture. Rather, the picture itself is just a "quick look" at the real person.

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The photograph helped him to push back ("choke back") his fear and reminded him of a happy time in his life; it gave him hope that that he might find that happiness again. Notice the **metaphor** "choke" (line 16). When you choke, something is stopping your breathing, and so "choking" something down suggests that this is not an easy or comfortable thing to do. The poet ends this stanza by saying with a bitter **tone** that the photograph comforted " ... before we got married" (line 18).

Stanza 4 (lines 19 – 24)

Before we drained out one another's force
With lies, self-denial, unspoken regret 20
And the sick eyes that blame; before the divorce
And the treachery. Say it: before we met. Still,
I put back your picture. Someday, in due course,
I will find that it's still there.

In this stanza, the poet recalls the breakdown of the marriage and the unhappiness this brought.

The first line continues the thought of the last line of stanza 3. Once they were married they "drained out one another's force" (line 19). In this **metaphor** the poet compares the way they took away each other's enthusiasm for life ("force") to the way water drains out of a pipe. When a pipe, or bath, is drained, it is left empty, and they were emptied of happiness. Notice that the poet says we – they were both to blame for their unhappiness.

The poet says the causes of this were the lies they told each other, and their self-denial (line 20). "Self-denial" suggests sacrifice. Perhaps they both felt they had given up dreams or things they wanted to do for the other person's sake and then resented it and felt bitter about it. Both felt "regret" (line 20) – felt sorry – but did not say so; their feelings remained "unspoken" (line 20). The poet does not say what they regretted.

They blamed each other for their unhappiness with "sick eyes" (line 21). Their eyes were not literally "sick"; this is a **metaphor** suggesting that their feelings were reflected in their eyes – they felt anger and dislike and their eyes showed how each blamed and accused the other, neither taking responsibility for what they were doing to their marriage. Eventually they got divorced. The poet refers to their '"treachery" (line 22); perhaps this was their betrayal of the ideals they used to have, or perhaps they were unfaithful or deliberately hurt each other in other ways.

He addresses his ex-wife directly when he writes: "Say it: before we met" (line 22). This line may have many meanings. The poet may mean that they were happy before they met. It could also mean that each had not known what sort of person the other would turn out to be.

However, he does not throw the picture away, but puts it back to look at again some other time. There are a number of possible reasons why he keeps the photograph:

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- At a later date he may feel differently about these memories.
- He still cannot cope with the hurt, but may be able to deal with it better in the future.
- In spite of painful memories of marriage, the photograph still reminds him of a time when he and his ex-wife were happy and in love.
- He has not come to terms with the divorce yet.
- He still has feelings for his ex-wife.

The poet's bitterness and pain are expressed in the first four lines, but the last two lines of the poem have a more gentle tone as he decides to keep the picture.

4. Tone and mood

Overall, the poem has a **conversational** tone, as though the poet were talking directly to his ex-wife.

However, the tone changes through the poem. The tone is one of **horror** when he first discovers his ex-wife's picture, and changes to a **happy** tone as he remembers good times with her. The tone becomes **bitter** and **sad** as he remembers the war and the breakdown of their marriage. The final lines, though, have a **hopeful** tone.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

Mementos, 1
by WD Snodgrass

1. Theme

The theme is **memory**, and the power of **mementos** to bring back past feelings and memories.

2. Type and form

Confessional poem:
— Each stanza has 6 lines
— Rhymes and half-rhymes

Stanza 1
— "Your picture. *That picture*. I stopped there cold,"
Sharp punctuation
— *"That picture."*
Italics for emphasis
— "Like a man raking piles of dead leaves in his yard
Who has turned up a severed hand."
Simile

Stanza 2
— "stunned/Us all."
Expression for amazed

Stanza 3
— "to choke down my fear"
Metaphor

Stanza 4
— "drained out one another's force"
Metaphor
— "sick eyes"
Metaphor

3. Tone and mood

Tone: Overall, it has a **conversational** tone. It shifts through the poem from one of **horror**; to a **happy** tone; to a **bitter** and **sad** tone; and ends on a more **gentle** and **hopeful** tone.

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 9

Refer to the poem on page 77 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below.

stunned; mother; shocked; disappointed; ex-wife; glad

The speaker is sorting out old papers when he finds a photograph of his (1.1) ... Initially, he is (1.2) ... but then he is (1.3) ... to find it as it brings back old memories. (3)

2. Refer to line 4 ("Your picture. *That picture*. I stopped there cold,").

Explain why the words "That picture" are written in a different font (letter type).
(1)

3. Refer to lines 4–6 ("I stopped there ... a severed hand.").

3.1. Identify the figure of speech used here.

3.2. Explain why the poet has used this figure of speech. (2)

4. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence.

In line 10, the word "stunned" suggests that the girl was ...

A gorgeous.

B scary.

C motionless.

D happy. (1)

5. Refer to lines 11–12 ("Well, our needs ... ideals came easy.").

Using your own words, say what the speaker and his wife's lives were like when they were young. (1)

hint: You must not quote from the poem here, but write down your own words based on what you understand from these lines.

6. Refer to stanza 3. (3)

6.1. Quote THREE separate words to show that not only soldiers were affected by the war.

6.2. Explain what the photograph meant to the speaker during the war. (1)

7. Refer to the last stanza.

7.1. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Give a reason for your answer.

The speaker's wife was responsible for the breakdown of their marriage. (2)

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7.2. What does the speaker's decision to keep the photograph reveal about him? (1)

8. In the first stanza, the tone of the speaker is one of shock. What is the tone in the last stanza? (1)

9. After reading this poem, do you think it is a good idea to use old photographs as a way of remembering the past? Discuss your view. (2)

[18]

Answers to Activity 9

1.1. Ex-wife ✓

1.2. Shocked ✓

1.3. Glad ✓ (3)

2. It emphasises/shows the importance of the photo/It shocks him./It refers to a particular picture of relevance/ significance. ✓ (1)

3.1. Simile ✓ (1)

3.2. Finding this photograph is as shocking/unexpected as finding a severed hand in your garden. ✓

4. A /gorgeous ✓ (1)

5. Simple/carefree/uncomplicated ✓ (1)

6.1. "shacks" ✓

"dishes" ✓

"dolls" ✓ (3)

6.2. It helped him cope with his fears/it helped him to choke down his fears. ✓ (1)

7.1. False.

Both of them were responsible. ✓✓
OR
They drained one another's force. ✓✓ (2)

7.2. He is not ready to let go./The photograph still has meaning for him./He has not come to terms with the divorce yet./He still has feelings for his ex-wife. ✓ (1)

8. The tone becomes gentler/accepting/agreeable/forgiving. ✓ (1)

9. Yes, people need real objects like photographs to remember the past. ✓✓
OR
No, memories should not depend on objects such as photographs. ✓✓ (2)

[18]

hint: You must give a reason for your answer to question 7.1 to get 2 marks.

hint: This answer is based on your own opinion. These are examples of correct answers.

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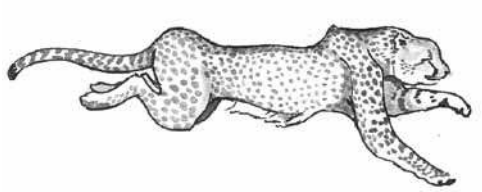
Cheetah
by Charles Eglington



Did you know?

The cheetah is the world's fastest land animal – it can reach speeds of up to 96 kilometres per hour!

This poem was written by Charles Eglington (1918-1971). Eglington was born in Johannesburg and graduated from Wits University. He spent his life working in the media as a newspaper journalist, a translator and also in radio. Many of his poems are about animals.

1. Themes

The main themes in this poem are that **appearances can be misleading**; and that **in nature only the strongest survive**.

The poet tells the story of an ordinary event among wild animals in nature – a hunter catching its prey. In the first part of the poem, the poet describes a young cheetah lying relaxed in the long grass of the bushveld, while a herd of buck grazes nearby. The buck do not know that the cheetah is close by.

The big cat is waiting for darkness before hunger makes it go out and hunt. Then the cheetah races forward towards the herd, which smells it and begins to run in panic. The chase is like a lottery, as the buck do not know which one of them will be caught. The cheetah leaps on one unlucky buck and kills it. (Cheetahs knock their prey down, jump on it and then bite its neck to kill it.)

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Cheetah
by Charles Eglington

Stanza 1
Indolent and kitten-eyed,
This is the bushveld's innocent
The stealthy leopard parodied
With grinning, gangling pup-content.

Stanza 2
Slouching through the tawny grass
Or loose-limbed lolling in the shade,
Purring for the sun to pass
And build a twilight barricade.

Stanza 3
Around the vast arena where,
In scattered herds, his grazing prey
Do not suspect in what wild fear
They'll join with him in fatal play;

Stanza 4
Till hunger draws slack sinews tight
As vibrant as a hunter's bow;
Then, like a fleck of mottled light,
He slides across the still plateau.

Stanza 5
A tremor rakes the herds: they scent
The pungent breeze of his advance;
Heads rear and jerk in vigilant
Compliance with the game of chance.

Stanza 6
In which, of thousands, only one
Is centred in the cheetah's eye;
They wheel and then stampede, for none
Knows which it is that has to die.

Stanza 7
His stealth and swiftness fling a noose
And as his loping strides begin
To blur with speed, he ropes the loose
Buck on the red horizon in.

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words to know

Definitions of words from the poem:		
Line 1:	indolent	lazy
Line 2:	innocent	harmless
Line 3:	stealthy	quiet, sneaky, secret, dangerous
	parodied	copy in a funny way
Line 4:	grinning	smiling
	gangling	long-legged, awkward, clumsy
	pup-content	happy
Line 5:	Slouching	moving casually, relaxed
	tawny	yellowish-brown
Line 6:	loose-limbed	with relaxed legs
	lolling	lying back, relaxing
Line 7:	purring	sound made by a happy cat
Line 8:	twilight	early evening
	barricade	barrier, wall
Line 9:	vast	very big
	arena	stadium, sports field
Line 10:	scattered	spread out
	grazing	eating grass
	prey	something or somebody who is being hunted
Line 11:	do not suspect	have no thoughts, do not expect
Line 12:	fatal	ending in death
Line 13:	slack	loose
	sinews	tough fibres that tie muscles to bone
Line 14:	vibrant	full of life, energy
	bow	weapon used to shoot arrows
Line 15:	fleck	tiny spot
	mottled	patches of light and dark, full of shadows
Line 16:	slides	moves smoothly, swiftly, quietly
	plateau	flat raised ground
Line 17:	tremor	shaking, shiver
	rakes	moves through
	scent	smell
Line 18:	pungent	strong smell
	advance	moving towards them
Line 19:	rear	lift quickly
	jerk	pull up quickly
	vigilant	watchful, senses danger
Line 20:	compliance	giving in to, obeying the rules

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words to know

Line 22:	centred	in the middle of, focused, given attention
Line 23:	wheel	turn
	stampede	run away in terror and panic
Line 25:	swiftness	quickness
	fling	throw
	noose	circle of rope
Line 26:	loping	running
	strides	big steps
Line 27:	blur	look unclear and fuzzy
Line 28:	horizon	far distance

2. Type and form

This is a **narrative poem** that tells the story of how the cheetah hunts its prey.

The poem has a formal structure (the way it is set out) with seven stanzas of four lines each (quatrains) that have a regular pattern of **rhyme** (abab).

Each of the seven stanzas tells a different part of the story. Some stanzas focus on the cheetah, others on the buck. In the last stanza, the two come together when the cheetah catches a buck. The poem's structure (the form) and the hunt described in the poem (the content) are closely linked in an effective way.

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3. Analysis

Stanza 1 (lines 1 – 4)

Indolent and kitten-eyed,
This is the bushveld's innocent
The stealthy leopard parodied
With grinning, gangling pup-content.

In stanza one, the poet describes the cheetah as seeming to be harmless. The poet uses imagery as if he is describing a harmless young animal – the cheetah looks "innocent". The **metaphor** "kitten-eyed" (line 1), compares the cheetah's big eyes to those of a sweet kitten. The poet feels the leopard is a more impressive-looking animal and that the cheetah is a "parody" (or funny copy) of a leopard.

Both the leopard and the cheetah are big cats that have spots, but where the leopard is described as "stealthy" (line 2), which suggests it is secret and dangerous, the cheetah seems to smile in a rather silly way. The **metaphor** "pup-content" (line 4) compares it to a happy (and harmless) puppy.

The word "gangling" means it has long, loose legs that make it seem rather awkward and clumsy. The words for baby animals like "kitten" and "pup" suggest it is young, as does "gangling", as teenage animals (including people) often seem to have long, thin bodies before they grow older, stronger and more muscular.

Stanza 2 (lines 5 – 8)

Slouching through the tawny grass 5
Or loose-limbed lolling in the shade,
Purring for the sun to pass
And build a twilight barricade.

The cheetah moves lazily and casually ("slouching" in line 5) through the grass or lies back, ("lolling" in line 6) in the shade during the day. Notice how the **alliteration** links the words "Loose-limbed lolling" in line 5, emphasising how relaxed the animal is.

The big cat purrs like a happy house cat as it waits patiently for the sun to set. Again, this makes the cheetah seem harmless, as cats purr when they are relaxed and content. At twilight it is growing dark and the **metaphor** "barricade" (line 8) compares the darkness to a wall or barrier that will hide the cheetah when it hunts. Barricades are often built across streets during wars or riots, so the poet's **diction** (choice of words) creates a more uneasy **tone** with the use of "barricade".

Up to now, the herd of buck and the cheetah seem relaxed. By including the word "barricade", the poet introduces tension at the end of the stanza. The barricade interrupts the relaxed **tone**.

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Stanza 3 (lines 9 – 12)

Around the vast arena where,
In scattered herds, his grazing prey 10
Do not suspect in what wild fear
They'll join with him in fatal play;

The tension in the poem grows. The poet sets the scene for the hunt. The huge grasslands ("vast arena" line 9), the herds of buck that are spread about ("scattered") as they graze and have no idea that there is a cheetah nearby waiting to kill one of them, its "prey" (line 10). In this stanza, the poet uses an **extended metaphor** which is carried on in the first and last lines of the stanza. The hunt is compared to a game that is played to the death in an "arena". This game or "fatal play" (line 12) is an oxymoron, because "play" suggests a game, but "fatal" means deadly, so this game will end in a death.

This creates a visual image (a picture we can see in our minds) of the games in the Coliseum, the great sports stadium of ancient Rome, when spectators enjoyed watching men fight with swords and the loser was often killed. As we read, we feel fearful for the unsuspicious buck that do not know of the danger that is coming. We begin to sympathise with the "wild fear" (line 9) they will feel when the cheetah begins its chase. Notice how vividly and strikingly the poet's diction in "wild fear" conveys the panic the buck are going to feel. The uneasy **tone** becomes stronger now.

Stanza 4 (lines 13 – 16)

Till hunger draws slack sinews tight
As vibrant as a hunter's bow;
Then, like a fleck of mottled light, 15
He slides across the still plateau.

This stanza describes the cheetah as it attacks. The animal now changes from a harmless-seeming young animal into a dangerous predator (hunter) as it begins its chase. Unlike the ancient Romans, for whom killing was a sport, the cheetah hunts only to eat and survive.

When it starts to think about hunting its body changes from relaxed to tense. The poet uses a **simile** that compares it to a bow. When an archer (who shoots with bow and arrow) gets ready to shoot the arrow, he pulls back the string of the bow very tightly so that the arrow will shoot forward with great speed and power. In the same way, when the cheetah is hungry and ready to hunt, it tenses all the muscles in its body ("slack sinews tight" in line 13). As it jumps forward, the cheetah's body bends in a curve like a bow and it is no longer "slack" (relaxed) but "vibrant" – filled with energy and life.

The poet uses a **simile** "like a mottled fleck of light" (line 15) to describe the cheetah's speed, as its spotted body moves as fast as a flashing spot

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of light. It moves so smoothly and quickly that it seems to "slide" across the flat ground (line16). Notice how the **alliteration** of the hissing "s" sound in "slide/still" emphasises its speed. The cheetah's movement is purposeful, controlled and confident.

Stanza 5 (lines 17 – 20)

A tremor rakes the herds: they scent
The pungent breeze of his advance;
Heads rear and jerk in vigilant
Compliance with the game of chance. 20

The poet now describes the reaction of the herd. The buck catch the strong ("pungent") smell of the cheetah, perhaps carried to them on the wind. They all shiver ("tremor") with fear (line 17). The **metaphor** "rakes" describes the way the shiver of fear ("tremor") runs through the herd the way a rake (a garden instrument like a very big fork) can sweep along the ground.

All moving together at the same time, the buck at once raise their heads and become tense and watchful. In a **metaphor** the poet compares the buck to people taking part in a "game of chance" (line 20). They have no choice but "compliance" – they have to fit in with the rules of the "game" in which they know that any one of them might be attacked and killed by the cheetah. Unfortunately for the buck, the rules of nature are that some animals have to die so that others can survive.

Stanza 6 (lines 21 – 24)

In which, of thousands, only one
Is centred in the cheetah's eye;
They wheel and then stampede, for none
Knows which it is that has to die.

Of all the thousands of buck, the cheetah sets his eyes on only one. All his attention is on one buck. The buck all turn round quickly, they "wheel" and "stampede" (line 23) to get away. When herd animals (such as cows, horses or buck) are afraid, they stampede – the whole herd runs away in a mass panic. Their movement is uncontrolled. They know one of them will die, but do not know which of them the cheetah has chosen to kill.

The **rhyming** of "eye" (line 22) and "die" (line 24) links these two words to emphasise that the buck has no chance of escape. The buck is in the cheetah's sight.

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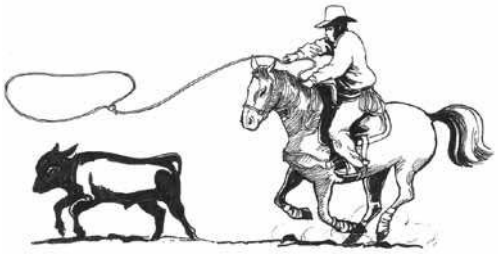
Stanza 7 (lines 25 – 28)

His stealth and swiftness fling a noose 25
And as his loping strides begin
To blur with speed, he ropes the loose
Buck on the red horizon in.



In this last stanza, the poet returns to describing the cheetah. He again uses an **extended metaphor**, this time of a cowboy using a **lasso**.

The silent speed ("stealth and swiftness" in line 25) with which the cheetah runs towards the buck is compared to the rope and noose flying through the air. The cheetah's long steps ("loping strides" in line 26) begin to go so fast that you cannot see the animal clearly; you see only a blur. The cowboy metaphor is continued when the cheetah leaps on the buck's back to knock it to the ground, as this is compared to the rope pulling the animal in. The horizon is described as "red" (line 28). This could refer to the red of the setting sun but it also suggests that the land itself is stained with the blood of the dead buck.

Note that stanzas 6 and 7 are part of a continuous **run-on line** – this helps to suggest that the cheetah is gaining speed and its movements are not interrupted as it chases its prey.

There is a **contrast** between the description of the harmless looking cheetah in the first two stanzas and the dangerous hunter in the later stanzas.

vocab

Lasso: A long rope with a loop at the end called a noose. To catch a cow, the cowboy throws the rope so that the loop falls round the animal's neck so that he can pull it in.

vocab

Run-on line: The meaning runs on from one line to the next, without being broken by punctuation.

4. Tone and mood

The tone of the poem is **relaxed**, like the cheetah, at the start. It becomes more **urgent** and **tense** as the poem progresses, starting with the **uneasy** tone at the end of stanza 3. The tone of **danger** increases later in the poem as the poet describes the hunt.

The **mood** of a poem is how it makes the reader feel. How does this poem make you feel? For example, happy, sad, angry, or indifferent.

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summary

Cheetah
by Charles Eglington

1. Theme

The main themes are that **appearances can be misleading**; and that in **nature**, only the strongest survive.

2. Type and form

Narrative poem:
— Each stanza has 4 lines
— Rhyme scheme abab

Stanza 1
— "kitten-eyed"
Metaphor
— "pup-content"
Metaphor

Stanza 2
— "loose-limbed lolling"
Alliteration (repeated "l")
— "And build a twilight barricade."
Metaphor

Stanza 3
— "The vast arena where …
They'll join with him in fatal play;"
Extended metaphor
— "fatal play"
Oxymoron

Stanza 4
— "As vibrant as a hunter's bow;"
Simile
— "like a mottled fleck of light"
Simile
— "He slides across the still plateau"
Alliteration (repeated "s")

Stanza 5
— "A tremor rakes the herds"
Metaphor
— "Compliance with the game of chance…
… for none" (lines 20 - 23)
Extended metaphor

Stanza 6
— "… for none / Knows which it is that has to die."
End of extended metaphor (see stanza 5 above)

Stanza 7
— "His stealth and swiftness fling a noose…
He ropes the loose / Buck on the red horizon in."
Extended metaphor (lines 25 - 28)

3. Tone and mood

Tone: A **relaxed** tone at first, but the tone changes to **urgent, tense** and **uneasy**.

Mood: How does this poem make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Always give reasons for your answer.

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Activity 10

Refer to the poem on page 87 and answer the questions below.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below.

young; snarling; awkward; old; smiling; graceful

The poet says that the cheetah is (1.1) ... but it has (1.2) ... movements and it appears to be (1.3) ... (3)

2. What does the word "indolent" in line 1 tell you about the cheetah? State TWO points. (2)

3. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence.

In line 3 the speaker's tone shows that he feels ...

A the cheetah is better than the leopard.

B the leopard is better than the cheetah.

C the cheetah and the leopard are the same.

D the cheetah is quieter than the leopard. (1)

4. Refer to the words "twilight barricade" in line 8.

4.1. Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

4.2. Explain why the poet uses this figure of speech. (2)

5. Which ONE WORD in stanza three shows that purpose of the hunt is to find food? (1)

6. Quote two **consecutive** words in this stanza that contradict each other (oxymoron), and suggest that the hunt is not really a "game"? (2)

hint: **Consecutive** words means words next to each other.

7. Refer to line 14 ("And vibrant as a hunter's bow").

7.1. Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)

7.2. Explain why the poet has used this figure of speech. (2)

8. Refer to line 20 ("Compliance with the game of chance").

Do you think the use of the word "compliance" is suitable? Discuss your view. (2)

hint: These answers are based on your own opinion. Give reasons for your view.

9. What message does this poem have for you? (1)

[18]

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hint
The words chosen must make sense in the sentence as a whole.

Answers to Activity 10

1.1. Smiling/young/graceful/awkward ✓

1.2. Awkward/graceful ✓

1.3. Young/smiling ✓ (3)

2. The cheetah is lazy/inactive/idle ✓✓ (2)

3. B / the leopard is better than the cheetah. ✓ (1)

4.1. Metaphor ✓ (1)

4.2. Night/darkness will become his shield from his prey ✓✓
OR
Night/darkness will conceal/hide him from his prey ✓✓
OR
Night /darkness will contain his prey ✓✓ (2)

5. "prey" ✓ (1)

6 "fatal play" ✓✓ (2)

7.1. Simile ✓ (1)

7.2. The poet compares the cheetah to a hunter's bow. When it is hunting, the cheetah has the speed and force of a hunter's bow and arrow. ✓✓
OR
To show that the cheetah is as fast/quick as a hunter's bow (arrow) ✓✓ (2)

hint
These are open-ended answers. The reasons given here are examples of correct answers.

8. Yes, when one sees no way out of a fatal situation, one gives in and accepts one's fate. ✓✓
OR
No, although the herd knows that one of them is to be killed, they still try and escape. ✓✓
OR
No, one does not simply accept one's fate when facing danger/ death/ There's always a chance of survival if one tries to escape. ✓✓ (2)

hint
Any ONE of these answers will earn you 1 mark.

9. Cruelty of nature ✓

Survival of the fittest ✓

Appearances can be misleading ✓

The cycle of life/predators only kill for food ✓

In every situation in nature there is a killer and a victim. ✓ (1)

[18]

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