**AQA Power and Conflict Poetry**

* GCSE English Literature
* Snapshot Revision Notes
* Mr Wise
* E1



**Ozymandias**,by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1818)

1. The once ‘vast’ statue of Ozymandias is now just a ‘colossal wreck’
2. The ruins remind us that power, even for a self-proclaimed ‘King of Kings’, is transient
3. In one sense, the words on the pedestal are ironic because there is nothing left to make others ‘despair’
4. However, in another, they provide a warning that all rulers will eventually share the same fate
5. The most striking image is the ‘boundless and bare’ desert, which hints at the enduring power of the natural world

**London**,by William Blake (1792)

1. The city of London is characterised by images of claustrophobia, oppression and violence
2. The inhabitants are miserable and their faces are marked with ‘weakness’ and ‘woe’
3. The sounds of the city reflect this sense of misery: the infants ‘cry’, the soldiers ‘sigh’ and the harlots ‘curse’
4. The ‘blood’ on the palace walls hints at the possibility of a revolution (like the one in France that began in 1789)
5. Blake presents London as existing in a state of moral, physical and political turmoil

*Extract from* **The Prelude**,by William Wordsworth (1799)

1. The speaker of the poem (probably Wordsworth himself) embarks on journey, both literally and metaphorically
2. At first, the speaker is struck by the beauty of the ‘glittering’ and ‘sparkling light’ on the lake
3. However, a contrast soon emerges between the ‘little boat’ and the ‘huge peak’
4. The landscape becomes threatening and the speaker is soon in a ‘grave’ and ‘serious’ mood
5. The speaker seems both troubled and fascinated by the sensation of feeling so insignificant

**My Last Duchess**,by Robert Browning (1842)

1. The Duke’s monologue is initially characterised by overt gestures of flattery and politeness
2. However, it soon becomes clear that he is possessive and demanding
3. The syntax of the monologue becomes increasingly fragmented as the focus shifts to the Duchess’s behaviour
4. The Duke’s admits that he ‘gave commands’ to stop her ‘smiles’, which implies that he ordered her murder
5. The final image of Neptune ‘taming a sea-horse’ reflects the Duke’s desire to control those around him

**The Charge of the Light Brigade**,by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1854)

1. Tennyson praises the heroism of the cavalrymen (i.e. the Light Brigade) who fought in the Battle of Balaklava
2. He highlights that they were vastly outnumbered as they rode ‘into the Valley of Death’
3. The reference to the ‘blunder’d’ command suggests a disastrous miscommunication
4. The distinctive rhythm of the poem reflects the powerful, decisive galloping of the horses
5. The structure follows the dramatic movement of the cavalrymen as they are ‘stormed at with shot and shell’

**Exposure**,by Wilfred Owen (1918)

1. Owen describes the physical and mental trauma caused by frontline fighting as he and others experienced it
2. The poem begins with the anticipation of conflict as the silence is disturbed by ‘successive flights of bullets’
3. The freezing temperatures are presented as being just as deadly as the enemy soldiers
4. Owen contrasts the ‘iced winds’ and ‘pale flakes’ with the ‘dark-red jewels’ of the fires at home
5. The temporary shift to the third-person perspective conveys the impression of being totally lost in thought

**Storm on the Island**,by Seamus Heaney (1966)

1. The poem opens with a collective statement of intent from the islanders to endure the coming storm
2. Heaney uses military metaphors to convey its power – ‘blast’, ‘pummels’, ‘salvo’, ‘bombarded’
3. The weather is presented as a formidable, dangerous and unpredictable force
4. The landscape of the island is sparse and exposed, but the community have adapted to survive
5. The poem is perhaps an allegory for the on-going political troubles in Northern Ireland that began in the 1960s

**Bayonet Charge**,by Ted Hughes (1957)

1. Hughes immediately places the reader on the frontline in a scene that is characterised by chaos and confusion
2. The intensity of the imagery in the first stanza emphasises the violent reality of combat
3. The imagery then takes on a hallucinatory quality as the solider struggles to make sense of the situation he is in
4. The movements of the solider are clumsy and desperate – ‘stumbling’, ‘lugged’, ‘plunged’
5. Faced with such horrors, the solider loses his ‘human dignity’ as fear and panic overwhelm him

**Remains**,by Simon Armitage (2008)

1. The title of the poem refers to both the literal remains of the looter and the trauma that clearly still remains
2. The speaker alludes to ‘another occasion’ at the start of the poem, which implies acts of violence are common
3. The brutality of the shooting contrasts with the speaker’s casual narration of the details
4. The looter’s body is ‘carted off in the back of the lorry’ and disposed of unceremoniously
5. The ‘bloody hands’ are an allusion to *Macbeth* and help to convey the speaker’s enduring feelings of guilt

**Poppies**,by Jane Weir (2005)

1. Poppies are a universal symbol of remembrance and a reminder to the speaker of the risks her son will take
2. Weir’s use of enjambment helps to create the impression of an open and emotionally complex inner monologue
3. The ‘blackthorns’ metaphor used to describe the hair of the speaker’s son has connotations of religious sacrifice
4. In contrast, the ‘treasure chest’ simile emphasises the great sense of adventure that awaits him
5. The speaker continues to feel conflicted, but ultimately accepts the inevitability of her son’s departure

**War Photographer**,by Carol Ann Duffy (1985)

1. The red light in the darkroom that ‘softly glows’ connotes blood and mortality, and creates a sombre tone
2. ‘All flesh is grass’ is a reference from the Bible that emphasises the fragile and transient nature of human life
3. Duffy creates a contrast between the safety of rural England and the ‘hundred agonies’ suffered by those abroad
4. The close focus on the ‘stranger’ and his ‘wife’ provide a vivid and disturbing insight into the effects of war
5. Duffy challenges our typically indifferent, desensitised responses to media coverage of global conflicts

**Tissue**,by Imtiaz Dharker (2006)

1. The poem opens with a vibrant and beautiful image of ‘light’ that conveys a sense of optimism for the future
2. As the poem progresses, light is described different ways – it ‘shines’, it is ‘luminous’ and there is ‘daylight’
3. Light has strong symbolic significance: it is associated with life and growth, and also truth (think: enlightened)
4. It ‘shines through’ the borderlines of maps and is able to ‘break through capitals and monoliths’
5. In the same way that light changes, so does paper and ‘living tissue’, and this process of transformation is positive

**The Emigrée**,by Carol Rumens (1993)

1. The speaker of the poem appears to be in exile whilst ‘tyrants’ run the country
2. Contrasts between light and darkness are established to emphasise positive and negative perspectives
3. The speaker’s memories are vividly associated with sunlight and colour
4. The speaker’s native language has been ‘banned’, but it remains unforgotten
5. The personification of ‘my city’ highlights the intense emotional connection felt by the speaker

**Checking Out Me History**,by John Agard (2005)

1. The poem opens with a contrast between ‘Dem’ (the educational establishment) and ‘me’ (the speaker)
2. The metaphor of a ‘bandage’ is used to emphasise the intentional denial of cultural and historical knowledge
3. The speaker argues that the Eurocentric historical narratives taught in schools exclude more global perspectives
4. The speaker combines anger with an emphatic celebration of great historical figures like Toussaint L’Ouverture
5. The rejection of Standard English and the use of free verse help to create a powerfully authentic voice

**Kamikaze**,by Beatrice Garland (2013)

1. The samurai sword evokes the concepts of honour and loyalty
2. The pilot, as he looks down from his plane, is struck by the beauty and vitality of the natural world
3. The imagery is characterised by vibrant colours and dynamic movements – ‘flashing’, ‘silver’, ‘swivelled’
4. In contrast, the tuna is ‘dark’ and ‘dangerous’ and is perhaps representative of Emperor Hirohito
5. The consequences of the pilot’s decision to fly back are severe, but the speaker avoids making judgements

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| [Ozymandias](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/look-on-my-works-ye-mighty-ozymandias-statue-found-in-mud) (Statue discovered) | [London](https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/looking-at-the-manuscript-of-william-blakes-london) (Manuscript of the poem) | [The Prelude](https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics) (The Romantics) |
| [My Last Duchess](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/19/poetry1) (Robert Browning) | [Charge of Light Brigade](https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-charge-of-the-light-brigade-making-poetry-from-war) (Crimea) | [Exposure](https://www.bl.uk/people/wilfred-owen) (Wilfred Owen) |
| [Storm on the Island](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-13930435) (Obituary) | [Bayonet Charge](https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/ted-hughes-and-war) (Hughes and war) | [Remains](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4MfZkFyhYf9wSKy3TgHkR3S/poems-for-the-lost-simon-armitage-remembers-ww1) (Armitage and WW1) |
| [Poppies](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/03/wearing-poppy-pledge-peace-sanitise-war-remembrance) (Remembrance) | [War Photographer](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/feb/03/don-mccullin-giles-duley-photography-retrospective-tate-interview) (Don McCullin) | [Tissue](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/may/03/hunt-next-poet-laureate-imtiaz-dharker-carol-ann-duffy) (Poet Laureate) |
| [The Emigrée](https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/carol-rumens) (Carol Rumens) | [Checking Out Me History](https://www.bl.uk/windrush/articles/close-readings-of-john-agards-checking-out-me-history-flag-and-half-caste) (Poem) | [Kamikaze](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/11/the-last-kamikaze-two-japanese-pilots-tell-how-they-cheated-death) (Kamikaze pilots) |