Unit 2: Poetry Across Time

Section A: Study of a poetry cluster (from Moon on the Tide: All poems under Conflict). The question will be from a choice of two and will expect students to compare two poems.
Exam: 36 marks; time 45 minutes.

Section B: Response to unseen poem. This is a skills based question using techniques studied in Section A.
Exam: 18 marks; time 30 minutes.
Typical Question from Conflict

Compare how the results of war are shown in Futility and one other poem from the section.

Or

Compare how attitudes to conflict are shown in The Charge of the Light Brigade and one other poem from the conflict section.
Read the following poem and answer the question that follows:

Poem written out here. (read and annotate it quickly before you start to write).

What do you think the poet is saying about....(discuss the themes ideas of the poem)? How does the poet present his ideas? (Language, structure, form etc)
Assessment: what must my answers include?

• Confident/exploration of the poems
• Analytical detail with quotation
• Analysis of language, structure and form
• Exploration of ideas and themes
• Analysis making **comparisons.**
• Evaluation/analysis of **comparisons.**

Answers must attempt each of the above.
Advice on exam

The exam for this unit is very prescriptive – examiners will be looking to give marks for each of the skills from the previous slide. From the outset (first paragraph) with your answer, try to ensure that you make some comment on language, structure (eg: how poems are set out on page), use 1 or 2 quotations, make at least one/two comparisons and, identify a theme. This will ensure that you are hitting a good grade and cannot lose marks.
Analysing poetry

When writing about any poem, here is a recognised method of procedure for the analysis:

• Read the poem at least twice and make detailed notes line by line concentrating on what the content is saying.

• From here, try to identify the themes that the poet is concerned with or the issues. Is it about war, or relationships, or nature, or places or, some form of emotion such as love?
Analysis continued

From the themes you have established you should then be able to identify the purpose of the poem. What is the poet trying to tell the reader/listener through the poem?

This should lead to consideration of the mood, atmosphere or feeling being evoked by the poem. Is he/she being happy, sad, astounded by nature, ironical about the horrors of war, reflective on a relationship, cold-hearted and matter of fact about a scene they are describing? etc
Analysis continued

From the atmosphere/mood, you should then look at how the language used reflects this. Here you need to look at the following techniques and be able to comment about the effects the writer is trying to create through them:

Alliteration, simile, metaphor, sibilance, onomatopoeia, personification, pathetic fallacy etc there are many others.
Analysis continued

Next, consider the form of the poem: is it lyrical, a narrative, descriptive, a sonnet, blank verse. How are the stanzas laid out? How many? Is there a shape to the poem? How many lines to the stanza/poem?

Can you identify a rhyme pattern or a rhythm? Do the end syllables rhyme at all? Has enjambement been used at all.

What are the effects of all of the above?
Finally...

At the end of your analysis you need to answer the question as to whether the poet has been successful with the poem? Can you understand and state why it is effective? Can you comment upon how successful the poem’s language has been in conveying an idea or a message?
In analysis and your writing you need to be aware of the acronym PETER. This will help you to make points and build your essay:

P  make a point about the poem
E  find evidence from the text (quotation/s)
T  give the correct Term used eg metaphor
E  evaluate the quote/term in terms of meaning
R  repeat by moving on to your next point.
You can also use the acronym STRIVE for analysis:

SUBJECT matter

THEMES

RHYME/RHYTHM

IMAGERY

VOCABULARY

EVIDENCE/EFFECTIVENESS
Working with the Anthology Guide

Remember we have the Pearson: AQA Working with the Anthology Teacher’s Guide (Digital). This can be loaded on your computer.

This has a variety of activities, advice etc on every poem in the Anthology, including comparative work.
Flag
John Agard

The poem is about the power of a national flag. It is presented as a conversation between a naive questioner and a more sceptical responder. One of the characters asks questions about the flag and the other character responds, explaining that the flag has the power to make people fight wars and die.

Form: question/answers; some rhyming.
Structure: each stanza asks about a flag; symbol of patriotism; final stanza has cynical answer.
Language: repetition, powerful commands; sarcastic/ironic language; use of informal questions; words of warfare/patriotism. Symbolism of the flag revealed in different ways (verbs: fluttering, unfurling, rising, flying, flag.
Final lines challenge the reader by making the commands sound easy, but sarcastic. You have to ignore your moral sense to be patriotic – this is what others have done in the past.
Answer the following questions:
1. What does a flag represent?
2. What is the form of the poem (think question/answer)?
3. How does the word power relate to the poem?
4. Is there a rhyme scheme used?
5. Pick out some of the verbs (action words) used and comment on why these could have meaning.
6. What is meant by the line: ‘..the guts of men grow bold.’
7. What does the flag inspire men to do? Why?
8. What does the line mean: cloth/that will outlive the blood you bleed’? (use of personification)
9. What effect does the alliteration ‘blood you bleed’ have?
10. Why is the word ‘coward’ used in the poem?
11. What does the last line mean: ‘blind your conscience to the end’?
12. What are your own thoughts/ideas on the poem’s effectiveness?
Out of the Blue by Simon Armitage

U Tube: documentary on ‘jumpers’ – 9 minutes; reading of poem, ideas. This poem was written as a commemoration to the 9/11 terrorist attack on the New York Twin Towers in 2001.

The poem is narrated by a victim of the World Trade Centre terrorist attacks in 2001. One of the lasting television images is of a man waving a white handkerchief from a room high up in the Tower (appealing for help). The heat from the fire around him must have been horrendous.

www.utube9/11TheFallingMan
Form, structure and language

• Form: elegy/lament – mournful poem or song; no regular rhythm; regular rhyming (creates a gentle, sad, but helpless tone). Enjambement gives the idea of falling.

• Structure: poem ends with urgency, desperation; poem structured in the form of a tower – anticipates the tragedy; narrator victim.

• Language: verbs – present continuous ‘ings’ it makes victim seem helpless – out of control; metaphors – heat; camera perspective.

• Despair; horror – victims hurling themselves off building; huge scale of tragedy.
The victim is describing being in one of the burning buildings. He addresses someone watching the scene on television. He pleads for help, but it is impossible – the only possible outcome is death.

One of the disturbing, recorded features of the attack was to see many people leaping from the building to escape the scorching flames. They have become known as ‘jumpers’:

‘Appalling/that others like me/should be wind-milling, wheeling, spiralling, falling’.

This is an extremely emotional poem with the poet focusing upon this one victim.
1. How do we know the poem relates to someone watching television?
2. The form is an elegy/a lament to someone who has died; how is this reflected in the poem?
3. What changes do you notice as the poem progresses?
4. What is the significance of the 2 questions asked?
5. The writer uses a number of verbs in the ‘present continuous’ (ings) what is the effect of this? Give examples.
6. Why is it significant that the narrator is waving a white shirt?
7. What aspects of the poem inspire sympathy and emotion?
8. How does the poem link to the media coverage of the event?
9. What effect does the poet wish to create by addressing the reader directly as you?
10. Pick out 3 key quotations that you feel would be good examples of the writer’s use of language.
11. Comment on the last line in the poem. Think about the word flagging.
12. Why is the poem called ‘Out of the Blue’? What levels of meaning could you interpret?
This poem is based upon a battle and capture of a wood in July 1916, during the Battle of the Somme.

The poem is in seven three-line stanzas and is in narrative form (story like).

The poem immediately delves into strong imagery of war, with recounts of how farmers found the remains of dead bodies years after when ploughing fields. This links the cycle of farming to the cycle of war. Note the word ‘blade’ and its connotations.
Continued

The second stanza continues with a list of human debris – deliberate shocking of reader. (bone, shoulder blade, finger, skull – as if every day objects.)

There is no set rhyme or rhythm – to relate to the fragmented body parts. Notice the use of alliteration: plate, blade, blown, broken and bird’s which make the reader hold on to the horrible images.

There is enjambment between stanza 2 and 3 – no punctuation – concluding the link between the objects of war that are now returned to the land, as if normal. Notice the unavoidability of the slaughter ‘walk, not run’.
continued

Stanza 4 shows the land as the guard – ‘like a wound working a foreign body.’ The battle is a wound and an infection that will be healed and end the pain. Closure.

The next stanzas reflect on the horrors of war – the bodies found linked together. Notice the expressive and sad imagery used – death uniting all classes and backgrounds.

Notice the horrific images: ‘socketed heads tilt back’ and ‘jaws...’ truly gruesome finds.

The poem ends as it starts with their jaws appearing like singers who had no voice and were simply ordered into battle and death.
Form, structure and language

• Form: third person – sense of detachment; tercets – three line stanzas; long sentences with enjambement – reflective/sad.
• Structure: builds up chronologically in five stanzas; images of the past occur throughout the poem.
• Language: personification – the earth; similes and metaphors – rural farmland; ghostly images; archaeology/natural images.
• Mournful poem, calm, sad; understated horror; grotesque detail; memories; horrors of war.
Key themes: Conflict, wounds, physical and emotional scars.

Questions (answer with quotations):

1. How does the poet link what has happened in the present to what happened in the war?
2. How does he provide this link and what language does he use?
3. What poetic devices are used in the poem to help convey the vivid images? Illustrate
4. What lessons do you think the poet offers about the horrors of war and how these men died?
5. What are the central images of the poem and how do they link to the poem’s purpose/meaning/message?
6. How does the poet create a sense of place and time in the poem? Expand your answer to include how effective you feel it is.
This poem is five stanzas of six lines, is a ballad. It is a narrative telling the story of the poet’s experiences of being in Baghdad, Iraq. Each stanza begins in the same way and ends with a summative comment. Palestine Street is a busy street that has seen a number of high-profile bombings/attacks over the years. An insurgency hot spot.

It begins with a funeral taking place (very familiar). There are many references to the five senses, particularly smelling (need for flowers). Notice the contrast between the glass coffin/flowers and the man who died of poisonous gas.
The Yellow Palm

Stanza two is the call to prayer and the mosque with the face of pain and conflict – war. Notice the contrast between the gold of the mosque and the blood of war – an uneasy co-existence.

The third stanza shows the two blind beggars being given money: associated with the Imperial Guard of Saddam Hussein and the Americans who challenged his ‘Mother of all wars.’

The next stanza focuses on the river Tigris, symbolising the distance between east and west, war and peace, Christian and Muslim.

In the final stanza he sees a cruise missile – notice the contrast. Notice the poem ending with the symbolic reference to the beggar child – innocence in the background of war. Born into conflict with new technology. Did the allied forces bring the promise freedom.

Themes: conflict, poverty, difference, journey, trying to keep the normality of life.
Form, structure, language

• Form: first person ballad; regular rhyming.

• Structure: each stanza linked to the next through associations; emphasis on a long street full of different things, like the poem; use of repetition of first lines – idea of movement.

• Language: vivid description; range of colours suggest natural beauty against background of human violence and distress; senses – range of first person verbs shows narrator using all his senses – makes street feel real and vibrant.

• Political ideas; confusion; innocence and beauty; violence in society; detached perspective draws the reader to own conclusions.
Questions

• The poem is about a physical journey as well as an emotional one. How is this shown in the poem?
• The overall theme of conflict is shown in this poem by its consequences. How does the poet use language to reflect this?
• The poem is visual and uses images that appeal to the ‘senses’. How do these images contribute to the success of the poem?
• Why is the poem called The Yellow Palm and what is its significance?
• How is a sense of geography shown in the poem?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENSE</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>EFFECT</th>
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The Senses
Terms and Places

• Palestine Street
• Lilac Stems
• Mosque
• Meuzzin
• Imperial Guard
• Tigris
• Barbarian
• Armistice
• Cruise Missile

Describe each of these terms from the poem.
The Right Word
By Imtiaz Dharker

• This is a brief and simple poem where the poet uses the metaphor of a door to talk about the many threats that exist in society today. By simply using a different label they can justify different causes.

• The poem is just over 20 lines long with a mixture of different lines in the stanzas. It employs a repeated theme of the idea of somebody being outside the door.

• Semantics: the study of word meanings: how similar/same words can hold different connotations, eg: terrorist/freedom fighter.
Form, structure and language

• Form: first person; no rhyme or rhythm – lack of harmony/uncertainty/division
• Structure: seven stanzas each with separate view of the young man; stanzas 1 – 3 ironic searching; stanzas 4 – 6 suggest it is too complicated; stanzas 7 – 9 describe real truth of the situation. Repetition of phrases – re-wording same situation.
• Language: door and shadows – motifs; suspicion and barriers; range of verbs and nouns describe activists behaviour – each with an emotional connotation; conversational style using second person pronouns – links speaker to reader. Questions reflect struggle to find definitive meaning.
• Importance of language – power; attitudes/fear/suspicion/threats; anxiety; desire for reconciliation/prejudices.
The Right Word: Questions

1. Why do you think the poet repeats the word ‘outside’ and what is its significance?
2. What do you think the poet really means when she uses the expression the right word? What examples does she give for this semantic expression (an expression with different meanings to different people.)
3. How do the ideas of ‘being left out’ and ‘alien’ fit into the poem?
4. What is the poet’s attitude to conflict?
5. What concluding ideas do you get from the final stanza?
6. Select some examples (4) of how language has been used effectively.
7. What can you say about the structure of the poem?
At the Border
By Choman Hardi

This poem tells of the moment when the poet – then five years old – returned to Iraq with her family following four years of exile in Iran. It is a mix between conveying the adult emotion of returning from separation and the child-like, everyday feelings of a young girl who, when looking from one side of the border to another, can’t really see any physical differences.

The poem was written in 1979 and although she didn’t remember going to Iran as she was an infant, clearly, from what her mother and others say, she is aware that Iraq is home for her.

This was to be the first of many points in her life where she would become aware of a border and of a magnetic pull home.

The poem is direct and simple language is used to reflect the life of a young child.

Link poem to The Right Word and The Yellow Palm. Metaphor of ‘borders’/separation; sides; home; loyalties.
Form, structure and language

- Form: first person; unequal stanzas – fragments of memory; use of caesure (stops in middle of lines) and enjambement reinforce memories/fragments.
- Structure: direct speech; reflective tone develops through poem.
- Language: child-like language; simple, conversational; short sentences – sense of memory – understanding of borders unclear to a child; direct speech – natural conversation; passive, impersonal sentences/descriptions – families in power of the officials. Metaphor of the ‘chain of mountains.’
- Nationalism; borders/boundaries/separation/control.
Questions

1. ‘It is your last check-in point in this country?’ What do the words and punctuation suggest about the guard who says this line?
2. In lines 3 – 5, what is going to stay the same, and what will be different?
3. The two sides are divided by a ‘thick iron chain’. Why do you think the writer uses the word thick and iron?
4. ‘The border guards told her off.’ Look for all mentions of guards in this poem: how is the writer invited to think of them? What does this make you think about the authorities behind the guards?
5. In the fourth stanza the mother is speaking to the children. How does the writer make this sound like a speech to the child? Do you think she believes what she says?
6. What does the child conclude from comparing the two sides of the border?
7. It is autumn and it is raining; how might these two details reflect on the situation?
8. The man ‘kissed his muddy homeland’. What can muddy reflect on symbolically?
9. Who are ‘all of us’ do you think?
10. What do you think is meant by the symbol: ‘...chain of mountain ...’
At the Border: Questions

1. In what ways is the idea of ‘conflict’ presented in the poem?
2. What child-like themes are brought out in the poem?
3. What are the attitudes towards going home of, 1. Choman’s mother, 2. her sister, 3. The man at the end?
4. What ideas about nationality do you think the poet is putting across?
5. What impact do the border guards have on the young Choman?
6. How would you comment on the poem’s ending?
The message

The message of the poem is simple enough, that both sides of the border are the same, meaning that the boundary is artificial like ‘the chain’ that divides the two sides. ‘The same chain of mountains encompassed all of us’ suggests that divisions are false. Perhaps though ‘chain’ implies that both sides are subjugated, not free, as the tone of the poem seems to suggest.
The poet grew up at the height of the Northern Ireland troubles (1960s – 1970s). His life was surrounded by the atrocities of all that life in Belfast at that time entailed and, like a lot of people, there was no escape from it. The poem mixes the metaphors of him being a writer with the debris of war and by the use of very clever imagery and wordplay, he is able to convey the sense of utter despondency.

The poem tells of the poet/narrator caught up in a bomb incident. He describes his attempt to get to safety away from the bomb. Every time he attempts to escape he is thwarted by the security forces and confusion.
Form, structure and language

Form: irregular lines, incomplete sentences, ellipsis, enjambement: fragmented thoughts; chaos. Full stops (caesuras) show he is trapped.

Structure: starts in middle of an incident; no clear conclusion; tenses change showing panic.

Language: violence, damage, lack of communication, questions, lists, chaos.
The list of military items in line 8 makes the riot squad seem faceless and inhuman: they are not given human qualities, and the equipment hides them. They are in Saracens or hidden behind masks and mesh. This makes the army itself seem impersonal and aggressive, almost from another world, so that the speaker ends up questioning his own nature and identity. The ‘Dead end’ literally refers to the streets from which he is trying to escape, but perhaps also refers to the battles after which the streets are named, famous British battles, historical dead ends which ended nowhere but death.
Questions

1. What is ironic about the metaphor used in the title?
2. The punctuation marks used in the poem are all metaphors. What would each refer to: exclamation marks, asterisk, hyphenated line, question mark, stops, broken type?
3. Lines 5 – 7 what do you think the speaker is trying to do and what is his feeling about the situation?
4. Why do you think the poet presents all the military items in line 15 in this way?
5. In the last line the writer is challenged on the street; why may it be described in this way?
6. What else is being questioned by the speaker?
7. How does the poet reveal a sense of conflict in the poem; which images particularly suggest this to you?
This poem is in narrative style, telling the story of how Weir, as a mother, would feel on the experience of her son going off to fight in a war. It describes her son leaving home to fight in the army. It is about her emotional reaction to the leaving – her feeling sad, lonely and scared for his safety. She describes helping him smarten his uniform ready to leave. After he goes, she visits places that remind her of him, desperately trying to find any trace of him. The writer describes herself leaning against the war memorial ‘like a wishbone’. The shape is forked and the image might suggest that mother and memorial form this shape, implying her affinity with this sentiment and her hope that her son doesn’t meet the same fate as those whose names are on the memorial.
Message

Death is never far from the mother’s thoughts. The information about the poppies being placed on graves that opens the poem has nothing to do with the son’s departure, except for her fear, and when at the end of the poem the dove, ‘has led me’ to the church yard and the war memorial, it has only led her here because they represent the death that she thinks about constantly, and fears.

Poppies symbolise the battle fields of World War One and the deaths; the red the blood
Form, structure and language

• Form: no regular rhyme or rhythm, long sentences, enjambement, caesuras – inner thoughts and memories, sudden realisations.
• Structure: the son leaving, what she does afterwards, time frame ambiguous.
• Language: first person statements, strong emotions shown, metaphors, images of war, bereavement, loss, domesticity, symbolism of birds/freedom.
Questions

1. Describe the imagery drawn from clothing.
2. What is the significance of the poem’s title?
3. Find any examples of words or images that relate to war or injury.
4. In the second stanza the speaker, ‘steeled the softening of her face.’ Why do you think her face softens and why does she ‘steel it’?
5. Find any reference to her son’s childhood and comment on it.
6. Conflict is not dealt with in the traditional sense in this poem. How are the issues of war and conflict dealt with?
7. The poem uses a series of cliches (tired/overused expressions to represent war, death and hope. What are these and how successful is their use?
8. What does the dove symbolise at the end of the poem?
9. What is the effect of the last line on the reader?
10. What impression does the poet give you of the mother through the things that she does?
Futility by Wilfred Owen

(See YouTube: Kenneth Branagh reading and analysis by Francis Gilbert: Futility Wilfred Owen Analysis 6.25 mins).

This poem has the same structure as a sonnet but is different. The first stanza is gentle and optimistic in mood whilst the second is questioning with dwindling hope for mankind.

It is about a dead soldier in France during World War One. The poet questions what the point is of life being created if it can be destroyed so easily. The poem is looking at this farmer/soldier being woken by the sun in peacetime; it then progresses to his death, to the image of the sun waking our planet and our species. The final line links the soldier’s sleep with the state in which Owen suggests the sun should have left our planet: unwoken.
Message

The idea that the sun may rouse the corpse is examined in the second stanza. It can wake seeds and woke the planet but here it is helpless. All the sun’s endeavour and with it human life itself, is pointless if this is the outcome as the final couplet makes clear – fatuous seems to be spat out just as the war has spat out this pointless death. Owen is clearly angered at this waste of human life, it causes him to question the very purpose and value of our lives.
Form, structure and language

• Form: half-rhymes,

• Structure: opens with commands; two stanzas, the poem moves from ‘practical instruction’ to philosophical consideration of life in the context of war; tenses change

• Language: personification: nature – powerful but helpless; philosophical; metaphors; direct address- emotionally engaging. Commands, questions, challenge. Anger and frustration.
Questions

1. What is the meaning and impact of the poem’s title (in fact it became the central theme that emerged from World War One as it progressed.)?
2. At the end of the first stanza the sun is described as ‘kind’. What other words in the stanza suggest the sun is ‘kind’?
3. What is the relevance of the sun being described as ‘old’? Think how it links to the beginning of the second stanza.
4. How does Owen make the death of the soldier seem more important than just a single death, in the second stanza?
5. Why does Owen chose to use questions in the second stanza?
6. What is the effect of the dash in the line ‘full-nerved’?
7. How do ideas about warmth and cold create meaning as the poem progresses?
8. What does the line: ‘Was it for this the clay grew tall’ mean?
9. How is the poet’s anger revealed at the end?
10. Owen uses half-rhymes all the way through the poem, rather than full rhymes: seeds/sides; tall/toil etc. Why might he do this? Think about his attitude to war and what it has done to mankind and nature.
The Charge of the Light Brigade
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Reading of poem – various examples.

This poem was written in response to a military charge led by Lord Cardigan in the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War 1854. (against Russia). The charge was a complete disaster, with huge fatalities and although the soldiers who fought were considered heroes, their leaders faced great criticism for making the wrong decisions and effectively leading the men to their death. A wrong order given in battle.
The poem itself describes the disastrous battle between the British cavalry on horseback and the Russian forces with artillery. A misunderstanding meant that the Light Brigade was ordered to advance in to a valley surrounded by enemy soldiers. The cavalry were only armed with swords; they were virtually defenceless.

The poem is about conflict, but also about bravery and sacrifice; unrealistic orders; stupidity and horror at the needless violence. The tragedy is underlined by the word ‘wild’ in part 6, line 2: it suggests not only the fierce bravery of the soldiers but the chaotic recklessness of the order. Tennyson recognises the ‘blunder’ but focuses instead on the honour and glory of their unquestioning bravery: ‘Theirs not to reason why.’

Notice the rhythm of the poem (dactylic metre; each line with 6 syllables) to represent the charging motion of the horses.
Form, structure and language

• Form: third person, narrative, strong rhyme and rhythm
• Structure: battle in chronological order, repeated lines, repetition of words reinforces numbers involved.
• Language: violence, powerful verbs and adjectives; heroic/respectful/brave words.
Questions

1. How does the poet establish the feeling of the charge in lines 1 and 2?
2. ‘Was there a man dismay’d‘ suggests the courage of the men. Where else can you find a reference to courage?
3. In stanza 3 how is it clear that the men are surrounded?
4. How is personification used in stanza 3?
5. What is the effect of having the word ‘not’ repeated in part 4 at the end of the line and then the beginning of the next?
6. How does the 5th stanza show the soldiers returning from the battle?
7. In the last stanza, which words show the attitude of the poet?
8. Comment on the use of repetition in the poem.
9. Pick out 2/3 examples of how language is used effectively (metaphors/adjectives etc.)
Come On, Come Back
Stevie Smith

• U Tube presentation for a school project.

This is not about war in the conventional sense, as in this poem the war hasn’t happened and is set in the future with a mix of labels and settings from other theatres of war. Smith cleverly creates a powerful, evocative landscape where she delves into the future and imagines a scenario where a female soldier is injured in a way that would not have been conventional in her time.

The poem raise many questions, not only about the terrors of war, especially given the fact that Hiroshima and the gassing of the Jews by Nazis had just happened, but also about the role of women in war.

Two main protagonists inhabit the poem. The young woman who is injured and a rather anaemic sounding male enemy look-out guard. The title of the poem resonates throughout the narrative.
The poem starts with a young female soldier, Vaudevue, sitting on the ground. She has just returned from a battle at Austerlitz ( confusing link to nineteenth century Napoleonic battle in Austria, perhaps suggesting wars simply go on through history ).

Although she has survived, she has been badly wounded and has lost her memory, so she is feeling very confused and disturbed.

She is so distressed that she takes her clothes off and jumps in to the lake.

An enemy soldier finds Vaudevue’s clothes next to the lake and waits for her to come back. However, she never returns as she is dead.

Apart from conflict, this poem is about women in warfare/combat; chemical warfare, waiting ( women have always waited for man’s return from war ) and, about time where it seems mixed up.
Continued

The last line of the poem echoes the title. It perhaps becomes a song title, perhaps reminiscent of well known world war one songs such as ‘It’s a long way to Tipperary’ which, as her and the troops of all the armies’ favourite, reminds us of her isolation, described in the first stanza. Perhaps the song title is not addressed to Vaudevue herself, but to her memory.

Alternatively, the death of Vaudevue’s memory ‘for evermore’ caused by ML5, has reduced her to a creature of instinct, drawn towards the lake in which she swims until an undercurrent seizes her and ‘the waters...close above her head.’ Perhaps this is a welcome release from her mental state.
Form, structure and language

• Form: mixed line lengths, rambling and conversational, random rhymes, sense of confused form representing Vaudevue’s mental state.

• Structure: events in chronological order, last three lines link back to start suggesting a cyclical effect.

• Language: repetitions – title song, surreal language, descriptive images, personification, references to war historic and futuristic – universal/timeless.

• Impersonal attitude, dramatic, death, mystery – moonlight and pipe music (Pan – Greek god of woods, fields and flocks – nature).
Questions

1. Vaudevue’s mind has been affected. How is this made clear in the first stanza?
2. How might we tell that this is set in a future battle?
3. What sense of change occurs in stanza 4; what words might indicate this?
4. How is personification used in stanza 5?
5. Comment on the word ‘adorable’ in stanza 4.
6. Why might Vaudevue be attracted to the lake? Try to find other examples of the lake being seen romantically.
7. What is the source of Vaudevue’s grief in lines 22 – 27?
8. How does the poet create a sense of mystery in the poem?
9. How is the enemy sentinel depicted in the poem?
10. What is the effect of the poem ending as it began? Think of ‘cycles in life’.
Short U tube presentation of the poem.
The Trench – final scene showing ‘Going Over the Top’ with bayonets.
This poem is nightmarish in the illusion it creates of horror in
describing a bayonet charge. It is about a soldier’s experience of a
violent battle. It describes his thoughts and actions as he
desperately tries to avoid being shot. The soldier’s overriding
emotion and motivation is fear, which has replaced the more
patriotic ideals that he held before the violence began. The poem
ends with ‘His terror’s touchy dynamite.’ Dynamite is clearly linked
to the violence of war; being touchy implies the volatility of his
emotions under these circumstances, as though he has emotionally
become the violence of war. In the face of the ‘yelling alarm’ of
battle, all sense of ‘honour’ and ‘dignity’ are blown away by ‘His
terror’s touchy dynamite’ and the poem ends leaving the reader
with a chaotic collage of images of nightmarish violence and horror.
Form, structure and language

• Form: enjambement used rather than line endings – creates sense of urgency, desperation, chaos

• Structure: starts in middle of an action and cover’s soldier’s movements, there is a pause (time stands still) then moves to confusion and terror with the reality of the violence.

• Language: pronoun ‘he’ – anonymous or universal; figurative language of horror, pain and injury, violence in sights and sounds relates to confusion and fear.
Questions

1. ‘Suddenly’ sets the tone for the poem. Find examples of words of action and note how they are often ‘present participles’ – ings. What could this suggest?

2. Hughes uses a lot of words connected to the senses. List 3 or 4 and suggest what effect this creates.

3. Find 3 or 4 examples of violent imagery and comment upon their effectiveness.

4. What happened to the patriotic emotion that he was feeling before the charge? (lines 20+)

5. Why does the soldier almost stop in the second stanza? Why is he bewildered?

6. What images are used that make the poem seem like a bit of a nightmare?

7. Comment upon the things the soldier dropped towards the end of the poem; what do they represent?

8. What do you think the poem reveals about the poet’s attitude to war?
The Falling Leaves
Margaret Postgate Cole

This short, one stanza poem compares the fallen soldiers in Flanders (Belgium, World War One) with the falling leaves of autumn. The woman is riding down a lane and notices how the leaves seem to fall even when there is no wind, just like the way in which winter snow falls thickly without sound. She then draws comparisons with the soldiers dying in Flanders and introduces a range of metaphors and arguments. As the poem is read, the pauses in the rhythm act as a metaphor for the soldiers cut down in their prime of life. Notice the alliteration in line 4 which again acts as a metaphor for the absence of their lives, as does the reference to the dead (snowflakes wiping out the moon). Notice also the key word ‘withering’ – the soldiers lie there decaying. The poem simply conveys a sad message and reality about the war in 1915. It links to nature as a metaphor for the cycle of life and, like the leaves, we are left with the image of a mass of life, wasted and withering.

U – Tube: ref VanityDollxox
Form, structure and language

• Form: one stanza – one complex sentence – an intense thought. Lines different lengths – random way leaves fall/men die in battle; regular rhyme gives peaceful tone. Pauses in lines relate to dead.

• Structure: lines 1 – 6 – the falling leaves, lines 7 – 12 soldiers dying. The semi-colon in line 6 creates the balance point between the two ideas.

• Language: formal, archaic (old fashioned), serious/adds to dignity; nature imagery links to deaths, notice range of metaphors.
Questions

1. What are the soldiers compared to in the poem?
2. Why are they compared to these things?
3. Why is the word brown used in line 2?
4. Why does she include the line ‘In a still afternoon.’?
5. Comment in detail upon the line on the flakes falling: ‘thickly, silently.’
6. What is meant by the line: ‘...like snowflakes wiping out the noon.’?
7. Who are the gallant multitude?
8. Think carefully and comment upon her use of the word ‘beauty’ in the last line – what is her underlying meaning?
9. How does the poet create an atmosphere of sadness?
10. What attitude to war do you feel the poet is trying to express?
next to of course god america i
EE Cummings

This poem is in a loose sonnet form, but in free verse and rather like a monologue. Almost the whole poem is spoken in quotations, as though said by some army veteran. The word order in the title: ‘god america i’ is very important as it reflects the military attitude of xenophobic American patriots. By the second line the poem has gone into a parody of symbols of America by the mention of ‘land of the pilgrims’ and the quotation from the national anthem. The poem is a speech of cliches and stereotypes of military patriotism – which he challenges, raising anti-war sentiments about death and the sincerity of politicians and a gullible public.

Various U-Tube clips
Form, structure and language

• Form: first person monologue; 13 lines and a concluding gnome (a saying carrying meaning) in third person; some kind of speech; sonnet form parodied (copied for effect): serious form underlined by the content as the political speech is parodied by the poem’s words. He is using these ideas of form to be critical of ideas of patriotism/heroism/nationalism.
• Structure: first 13 lines in speech marks; words are fragments of full sentences; very little punctuation – makes phrases sound confusing and meaningless; final line close to Standard English – makes rest of the poem/sentiments empty.
• Language: patriotic, noble but ironic, anti-war ideas using pro-war beliefs of patriots; full of cliches, songs, American slang; rhetorical language of cliches and exaggerations building to an emotive ending.
Questions

1. What is the effect of the enjamement in the poem (run on lines with no punctuation)?
2. What is the effect of the speaker using incomplete lines, e.g. ‘...by the dawn’s early... (light)? (Is he being critical, suggesting these lines are simply cliches said without real thought?)
3. The speaker seems to be making a serious speech, but uses the phrase ‘and so forth’, what effect does this have?
4. What is the effect of the words... ‘we should worry’ in line 5?
5. What is the effect of the slang line: ‘by jingo by gee by gosh by gum’?
6. What is the effect of the poet bringing in the words, ‘roaring slaughter’? How does this fit in with the rest of the poem?
7. Lines 12 and 13 are part of the rhetorical question (one that answers itself). How might this be a major message of the poet? You might need to split the lines up and consider separately.
8. What do you think the public wants to hear?
9. Why has the poet used extracts from well-known patriotic songs.
Hawk Roosting
Ted Hughes

This is a poem of six, four line stanzas that can be read on different levels. Basically, it describes the predatory actions of a hawk and what the purpose of his life is. On a deeper level, it can be viewed as a metaphor for the behaviour of political leaders, those with power/arrogance/egotism/those who destroy. It is also about a creature in a natural environment – Hughes expressing his love of nature, Creation and the ‘natural order.’
The poem is about a hawk boasting about its power. It thinks it is the most important and powerful creature in the world and that it controls the universe. The hawk describes how it likes to kill its prey in a particularly violent way. In lines 8 and 9 the language is deliberately blunt; the alliteration of the k sounds in ‘hooked’ and ‘locked’ and ‘bark’ and in mostly monosyllabic words seem as hard and cold as the hawk itself. The initial implication could be that all the power of creation which went into creating his foot is contained within that foot; it further suggests an image of another creature caught and killed in the hawk’s claws; and perhaps resembles a stereotypical villain’s claim that, ‘your life is in their hands.’
Form, structure and language

• Form: dramatic monologue; first person; a personal metaphysical/metaphorical view of creation/existence.

• Structure: confident list of statements; repetition gives weight to ideas.

• Language: personification – the earth is a humble subject of the hawk; first person pronouns, self-centred language, language/images of violence/death/power/control
Questions

1. What effect does the use of personal pronouns have on the poem?
2. Find 2 or 3 examples of the hawks feeling of power.
3. What type of person/people could be likened to the hawk? Give examples of the type of behaviour these ‘people’ would show by interpreting detail from the poem, eg: ‘The allotment of death.’
4. What does the hawk dream of?
5. Why might the hawk think that nature was made for him? See stanza 2.
6. The word ‘sophistry’ means that there is no feeling of the need to explain or justify. What is the implication here for the hawk and, in turn, mankind?
7. Why is there a list of 4 sentences in the final stanza?
8. What is the final impression left of the hawk?
9. Pick out 3 powerful images and then explain them in detail.
The Unseen Poem Question

- Remember that you also have to write on an unseen poem. The previous work on Conflict has been designed to prepare you for this. You need a series of headings to revise in order to approach the work:
  1. What is the content of the poem about?
  2. What is the main theme(s) in the poem?
  3. What kind of tone/feeling/atmosphere of the poem?
  4. What is the form of the poem?
  5. How is the poem structured?
  6. What language/images have been used and what are the effects of these?
  7. What is the poet’s main message in the poem?
  8. How effective has the poet been in putting across his/her ideas?
  9. What quotations should you use to reflect your understanding?
 10. What features of the poem stand out for you?
N.B look at the notes at the beginning of this powerpoint!!!.