Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

POWER AND CONFLICT

Poetry Anthology

AQA GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

POEMS, THEMES & INTERPRETATIONS

GRADES 7–9



Name: _____

Class: _____

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POWER & CONFLICT

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AQA GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

GRADES 7–9

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POEMS • THEMES • INTERPRETATIONS

Use the page numbers to find each revision sheet.



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OZYMANDIAS

Percy Bysshe Shelley

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

HUBRIS:
POWER CLAIMS PERMANENCE.

The king imagines that his authority can outlast time.



DECAY:
POWER IS EPHEMERAL.

Human dominance is temporary; even stone cannot guarantee survival.



ART:
THE IMAGE OUTLIVES THE RULER.

The sculptor preserves the arrogance the king hoped to glorify.



1 THE BIG IDEA: POWER CANNOT CONTROL ITS LEGACY

- **Thesis:** Shelley exposes political power as ephemeral: the ruler's claim to permanence is undone by time and the desert.
- **Develop:** the ruined statue transforms a monument to greatness into evidence of pride and failure.
- **Qualify:** art survives, but imperfectly; it preserves the tyrant's cruelty rather than his authority.
- **Context:** Shelley's opposition to tyranny informs a warning that extends beyond this ancient king.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Opening:** a traveller's story distances the king from the reader.
- **Statue:** broken fragments expose the failure of monumental power.
- **Inscription:** the ruler's boast briefly interrupts the description.
- **Ending:** the empty landscape supplies the final judgement.

ESSAY ROUTE: CLAIM → EXPOSURE → ERASURE

1. **Claim:** explore the king's imagined supremacy.
2. **Exposure:** analyse the sculptor's portrait of tyranny.
3. **Erasure:** connect the ruined monument, ironic ending and limits of power.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 A MONUMENT ALREADY BROKEN

★ *'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone'*



- **Method:** 'vast' suggests grandeur; immediately undermined by *'trunkless'*.
- **Explore:** the missing body makes supposed strength incomplete and absurd.
- **Structure:** we encounter ruin before hearing the king's boast.

GRADE 9 NUANCE
Shelley frames the claim to greatness with evidence of failure: readers know more than the boastful king.

3 TYRANNY WRITTEN ON THE FACE

★ *'sneer of cold command'*



- **Method:** *'sneer'* conveys contempt; *'cold'* suggests emotional detachment.
- **Explore:** authority depends on domination rather than compassion.
- **Contrast:** the expression survives even though the power behind it has vanished.

GRADE 9 NUANCE
His legacy is an attitude of cruelty, not proof that his achievements deserved admiration.

4 ART CAN EXPOSE ITS PATRON

★ *'The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed'*



- **Method:** *'mocked'* can mean imitated, while also suggesting ridicule.
- **Explore:** the sculptor's hand captures the passions nourished by the king's heart.
- **Develop:** the artist reads the ruler more perceptively than the ruler understands himself.

GRADE 9 NUANCE
The statue can glorify its subject and expose him at once; the king cannot fix its meaning.

5 THE LANGUAGE OF ABSOLUTE POWER

★ *'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings'*



- **Method:** *'My'* asserts possession; 'King of Kings' claims supremacy over other rulers.
- **Explore:** the inscription tries to dictate how posterity remembers him.
- **Contrast:** his commanding voice reaches us only through other speakers.

GRADE 9 NUANCE
The framed narrative reduces a supposedly absolute ruler to a quotation within a traveller's tale.

6 THE BOAST BECOMES A WARNING

★ *'Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!'*

★ *'Nothing beside remains.'*



- **Method:** imperatives command admiration, but the abrupt sentence overturns the boast.
- **Structure:** the caesura after 'remains' arrests the king's imagined triumph.
- **Irony:** future rulers should despair at power's extinction, not his greatness.

GRADE 9 NUANCE
The words survive while their intended meaning collapses: time rewrites the king's message.

7 THE DESERT HAS THE LAST WORD

★ *'The lone and level sands stretch far away'*



- **Method:** alliteration and the expansive final image emphasise emptiness and scale.
- **Contrast:** 'boundless' space dwarfs the fragments of human ambition.
- **Structure:** the poem closes with landscape rather than the ruler's voice.

GRADE 9 NUANCE
Nature does not need to fight the king: its indifference makes his desire for dominance seem insignificant.

8 FORM: A MONUMENT IN FOURTEEN LINES

- The sonnet traditionally immortalises its subject; Shelley preserves a warning about failed immortality.
- **Interwoven**, irregular rhymes resist a neat Petrarchan or Shakespearean pattern.
- **Enjambment** carries sentences across line endings: formal boundaries do not ensure containment.
- **Judgement:** political authority fades, while poetry gives the ruin a new and critical afterlife.

? If art preserves the king's arrogance, who ultimately controls his legacy?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect language, form and structure to one argument.
- In comparison, link how poets present the limits of power.

Grades 7–9: distinguish the survival of an image from the survival of authority.

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LONDON

William Blake

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

CONTROL:
EVEN NATURE IS CLAIMED.

The city's legal and economic structures reach into the natural world.

SUFFERING:
SEE IT. HEAR IT.

Visible misery becomes an inescapable chorus of cries, sighs and curses.

CORRUPTION:
INSTITUTIONS FAIL.

Church, monarchy and marriage are implicated in suffering.

1 THE BIG IDEA: OPPRESSION SHAPES EVERY LIFE

- **Thesis:** Blake presents London as a system of oppression, where authority damages bodies, minds and relationships.
- **Develop:** suffering is widespread, but its causes are traced to powerful institutions.
- **Qualify:** no escape is shown, but exposing the 'mind-forg'd' chains may challenge people to question and resist oppression.
- **Context:** Blake's radical outlook challenges established authority and the exploitation of vulnerable people.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Quatrain 1:** wandering reveals controlled spaces and visible distress.
- **Quatrain 2:** repeated cries expose psychological captivity.
- **Quatrain 3:** suffering indicts Church and monarchy.
- **Quatrain 4:** corruption enters marriage and threatens new life.

ESSAY ROUTE: SPACE → MIND → INSTITUTIONS

1. **Control:** analyse ownership and restricted freedom.
2. **Internalise:** explore how oppression shapes thought.
3. **Indict:** connect public authority to private suffering.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 WANDERING WITHOUT ESCAPE

★ *'I wander thro' each charter'd street'*

- **Method:** 'wander' suggests movement without a fixed destination.
- **Contrast:** apparent freedom meets the regulated space of 'charter'd'.
- **Develop:** 'each' makes control pervasive; no liberating alternative appears.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The speaker can move and observe, but mobility is not the same as freedom. Wandering exposes the system's reach.

3 EVEN THE THAMES IS CONTROLLED

★ *'the charter'd Thames does flow'*

- **Method:** repeated 'charter'd' extends legal and commercial control from streets to river.
- **Tension:** 'flow' suggests natural movement, yet nature is framed by ownership.
- **Explore:** suppression appears so extensive that even the natural world is claimed.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The river still flows: Blake exposes attempts to possess nature, rather than claiming its movement literally stops.

4 CHAINS THAT ENTER THE MIND

★ *'The mind-forg'd manacles I hear'*

- **Method:** the metaphor turns mental restriction into physical imprisonment.
- **Explore:** 'forg'd' suggests constraints manufactured by oppressive beliefs and institutions.
- **Pattern:** repeated 'every' makes suffering sound relentless and collective.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Perhaps Blake also challenges Londoners to resist: if oppressive beliefs are made in the mind, recognising and questioning them may begin to loosen their hold.

5 QUATRAIN THREE: A COMMAND TO LISTEN

★ *'Chimney-sweepers cry'*
'Soldiers sigh'

- **Method:** auditory imagery makes exploited children and soldiers impossible to ignore.
- **Acrostic:** the four line openings — How / Every / And / Runs — spell HEAR.
- **Interpertation:** this can be read as an imperative to hear suffering as well as see it.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The possible command 'HEAR' makes attentive listening an ethical demand: observation should become recognition.

6 CHURCH AND MONARCHY INDICTED

★ *'Every blackning Church appalls'*
'Runs in blood down Palace walls'

- **Method:** 'blackning' suggests soot and moral corruption, staining spiritual authority.
- **Explore:** the child's cry exposes a Church failing to protect the vulnerable.
- **Metaphor:** the soldier's sigh becomes blood, implicating monarchy in suffering.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Church and Palace are not neutral scenery: institutional grandeur is set against the human cost that sustains it.

7 MARRIAGE BECOMES A HEARSE

★ *'And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse'*

- **Method:** 'Marriage hearse' fuses union and new beginnings with death.
- **Explore:** 'plagues' can evoke venereal disease, corrupting marriage's supposed sanctity.
- **Develop:** the 'youthful Harlots curse' connects exploitation to damaged families and infants.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Disease can expose sexual hypocrisy and a corrupt social system; the vulnerable young woman is more than a source of blame.

8 FORM: A PATTERN OF CONFINEMENT

- Four regular quatrains and an ABAB rhyme scheme can suggest enclosure and repeated suffering.
- **Repetition** of 'every' links separate lives into a shared pattern of oppression.
- The movement from streets to marriage shows public power entering intimate life.
- The infant returns in the final quatrain: suffering threatens another generation.

Who is truly imprisoned: the people in London, or their capacity to imagine freedom?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect language, form and structure to the systems Blake criticises.
- In comparison, examine how poets expose the human cost of power.

Grades 7–9: distinguish seeing suffering from understanding who produces it.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

EXTRACT FROM

THE PRELUDE

William Wordsworth

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

CONFIDENCE: THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL.

The boy enjoys his skill and treats the landscape as something he can master.



THE SUBLIME: AWE MIXED WITH FEAR.

Nature's overwhelming scale unsettles human confidence.



INTROSPECTION: LOOKING INWARD.

The encounter turns him inward: he reconsiders nature's power and his own place within it.



1 THE BIG IDEA: NATURE RESHAPES THE SELF

- **Thesis:** Wordsworth presents nature's sublime power as a challenge to youthful confidence, prompting introspection and a re-evaluation of the self.
- **Develop:** the boy moves from apparent control of the landscape to awareness of powers beyond his understanding.
- **Qualify:** introspection brings uncertainty, not a complete explanation; his familiar
- view of nature breaks down.

Context: Romantic interest in nature, imagination and childhood shapes this autobiographical account of a developing mind.

HOW THE EXTRACT DEVELOPS

Opening: secrecy and pleasure accompany the stolen boat.

Confidence: purposeful rowing suggests skill and control.

Turning point: the huge peak seems to rise and pursue him.

Introspection: the journey turns inward as he struggles to understand nature and his own response.

ESSAY ROUTE: CONTROL → SUBLIME → INTROSPECTION

1. **Control:** analyse his confident belief that skill gives him mastery.
2. **Sublime:** explore how the peak overwhelms his senses and unsettles that belief.
3. **Introspection:** show how inward reflection changes his understanding of nature and himself.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 PLEASURE ALREADY TROUBLED

★ *'an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure'*



- **Method:** 'troubled pleasure' combines enjoyment with unease.
- **Explore:** 'stealth' reveals that the adventure begins in secrecy and transgression.
- **Structure:** anxiety exists before the mountain appears.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Fear does not suddenly enter a perfectly innocent scene; earlier unease complicates the later sense of punishment.

3 CONFIDENCE HAS A NARROW HORIZON

★ *'Proud of his skill' 'With an unswerving line, I fixed my view'*



- **Method:** 'unswerving' and 'fixed' suggest certainty and purposeful control.
- **Explore:** he chooses his destination and trusts his own judgement.
- **Structure:** the limited horizon prepares for something beyond his understanding.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

His visual boundary becomes a limit of knowledge: confidence depends on what he has not yet seen.

4 THE SUBLIME BREAKS INTO VIEW

★ *'a huge peak, black and huge'*



- **Method:** repeated 'huge' conveys overwhelming scale, as though language cannot contain it.
- **Contrast:** 'black' replaces the earlier sparkling, moonlit beauty.
- **Structure:** the sudden appearance overturns his sense of mastery.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

The sublime exceeds comfortable beauty: nature provokes wonder and terror by exposing human smallness.

5 NATURE SEEMS TO HAVE A WILL

★ *'with purpose of its own' 'Strode after me'*



- **Method:** personification gives the peak agency; 'Strode' suggests powerful, deliberate movement.
- **Contrast:** the boy who chose his course now imagines himself pursued.
- **Qualify:** 'For so it seemed' marks the experience as subjective.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

The mountain need not move to overpower him: perception and imagination turn the landscape into a htreatening presence.

6 THE BODY BETRAYS LOST CONTROL

★ *'With trembling oars I turned'*



- **Method:** 'trembling' transfers the boy's fear to the oars he holds.
- **Contrast:** confident forward movement becomes a frightened retreat.
- **Echo:** 'stole my way' recalls the earlier 'stealth', now replacing boldness with shame or fear.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Returning the boat restores its physical place, but cannot restore the boy's earlier confidence.

7 INTROSPECTION: NATURE WITHIN

★ *'my brain / Worked with a dim and undetermined sense' 'were a trouble to my dreams'*



- **Method:** 'Worked' suggests sustained mental effort to process the encounter.
- **Explore:** 'dim and undetermined' conveys uncertainty as familiar beliefs lose their authority.
- **Structure:** outward movement becomes inward reflection; nature continues to occupy his mind.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Introspection is not instant wisdom: the adult poet revisits a childhood disturbance that may deepen self-knowledge without resolving its mystery.

8 FORM: THE GROWTH OF A MIND

- **First-person retrospective narration** joins the child's experience to the adult's reflection.
- **Blank verse** uses unrhymed, mainly iambic pentameter: no fixed rhyme closes the experience neatly.
- **Enjambment** carries thought across line endings; the continuous verse paragraph sustains the unfolding memory.
- The boat returns, but his earlier certainty does not: physical return gives way to introspection.

Does the encounter teach him more about nature, or about the limits of his own understanding?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Trace the movement from the illusion of control, through the sublime, to introspection.
- Compare how poets show external power reshaping the inner life.

Grades 7–9: explore re-evaluation without forcing a neat moment of understanding.



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MY LAST DUCHESS

Robert Browning

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

THE MALE GAZE: A WOMAN BECOMES AN OBJECT.

The Duke presents the Duchess as an image to possess, display and interpret.



PRIDE: STATUS DEMANDS SUBMISSION.

His ancient name becomes a reason to expect exclusive admiration.



CONTROL: OPPRESSION OUTLIVES HER.

The curtain gives him control over who sees her portrait, even after death.



1 THE BIG IDEA: POSSESSION DISGUISED AS LOVE

- **Thesis:** Browning exposes a possessive aristocrat whose pride turns marriage into domination and his wife into a collectible image.
- **Develop:** the Duke controls the portrait, the conversation and the story of the Duchess's life.
- **Qualify:** control of her representation does not guarantee control of our judgement; his own words expose him.
- **Context:** the Renaissance court setting lets Browning explore patriarchal power, inherited privilege and marriage as a transaction.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Portrait:** the Duke directs the visitor's gaze.
- **Complaint:** her pleasure in ordinary life becomes an offence to his pride.
- **Commands:** an abrupt admission suggests lethal authority.
- **Negotiation:** a new marriage and the final sculpture extend the pattern.

ESSAY ROUTE: GAZE → PRIDE → CONTROL

1. **Gaze:** examine who looks, who speaks and who is displayed.
2. **Pride:** show why her independent responses threaten his status.
3. **Control:** connect the curtain, commands and next marriage.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 THE MALE GAZE: POSSESSION

★ *'That's my last Duchess painted on the wall'*



- **Method:** possessive 'my' presents her through her relationship to him.
- **Explore:** 'painted' fixes a living individual as an object in his collection.
- **Structure:** we meet his representation of her before hearing his complaints.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The male gaze is about power as well as looking: he directs how another man sees and understands her.

3 THE CURTAIN: CONTROL AFTER DEATH

★ *'none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I'*



- **Method:** 'none' and 'but I' insist on exclusive authority.
- **Explore:** the curtain regulates access to the Duchess's image; even in death she is subject to his permission.
- **Contrast:** he can restrict the painted gaze in a way he could not control her living responses.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Display becomes another form of confinement: the portrait preserves her appearance while denying her agency and voice.

4 PRIDE IN AN INHERITED NAME

★ *'My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name'*

★ *'I choose / Never to stoop'*



- **Method:** 'gift' assumes his status should command gratitude.
- **Explore:** the age of the name exposes pride in inherited privilege rather than personal merit.
- **Metaphor:** 'stoop' imagines discussion with his wife as a humiliating descent.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

His pride reveals insecurity: ordinary kindness threatens him because he needs his rank to make him uniquely valuable.

5 HER JOY BECOMES HIS ACCUSATION

★ *'too soon made glad, Too easily impressed'*



- **Method:** repeated 'too' turns happiness and responsiveness into alleged faults.
- **Explore:** he resents her delight in nature and kindness because it is not reserved for him.
- **Qualify:** these are his judgements; the poem offers no proof of her infideiity.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Readers can reverse his accusation: what he calls excessive may reveal her generosity and his emotional poverty.

6 COMMANDS REPLACE CONVERSATION

★ *'I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together.'*



- **Method:** 'commands' expresses authority without naming the precise instruction.
- **Explore:** the abrupt euphemism strongly implies that he arranged her death.
- **Structure:** the rapid move back to the portrait makes the admission chillingly casual.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The omission conceals the act but exposes the mentality: he treats her independent pleasure as something he can terminate.

7 THE FINAL IMAGE: DOMINATION

★ *'Notice Neptune, though, Taming a sea-horse'*



- **Method:** the imperative 'Notice' directs the visitor's attention once again.
- **Symbolism:** the powerful god subduing a smaller creature echoes the Duke's desire for mastery.
- **Structure:** the closing artwork links collecting, status and control to the new marriage.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The statue may function as a warning to the envoy: the next Duchess could be expected to submit to the same unequal relationship.

8 FORM: HE CONTROLS THE SPEECH, NOT ITS MEANING

- **Dramatic menologue** gives the Duke the speaking voice: the Duchess and envoy cannot answer directly.
- **Rhyming couplets** and mainly iambic pentameter suggest formal order.
- **Enjambment and caesurae** disrupt that neatness, creating conversational flow and revealing agitation.
- **Dramatic irony:** he seeks to impress, but reveals possessiveness, jealousy and possible murder.

Does owning her portrait give the Duke power over her legacy — or reveal the limits of his control?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

Connect gaze, pride and control to one argument.
Compare how poets expose the abuse of power and its human cost.

Grades 7–9: distinguish the Duke's accusations from Browning's invitation to judge him.



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THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

COURAGE:
BRAVERY UNDER FIRE.

The soldiers' discipline and courage endure despite an impossible situation.



COMMAND:
OBEDIENCE HAS A COST.

A military error sends men into danger they are not permitted to question.

REMEMBRANCE:
HONOUR OUTLASTS DEFEAT.

The poem turns a disastrous charge into a lasting public memorial.

1 THE BIG IDEA: NONOUR THE MEN, QUESTION THE COMMAND

- **Thesis:** Tennyson celebrates collective courage while acknowledging that failed leadership makes that courage tragically necessary.
- **Develop:** relentless movement and overwhelming firepower expose the human cost of obedience.
- **Qualify:** the poem commemorates the soldiers rather than rejecting military duty; admiration and unease coexist.
- **Context:** the 1854 charge at Balaclava in the Crimean War followed confused orders. As Poet Laureate, Tennyson shaped public remembrance.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Stanzas 1–2:** the command drives the men forward despite the acknowledged blunder.
- **Stanzas 3–4:** encircling cannon fire meets a courageous assault.
- **Stanza 5:** survivors return; repetition now registers loss.
- **Stanza 6:** the reader is commanded to honour the brigade.

ESSAY ROUTE: COMMAND → COURAGE → COST

1. **Command:** examine obedience and the failure of authority.
2. **Courage:** analyse the rhythm and imagery that celebrate the charge.
3. **Cost:** connect casualties to the final demand for remembrance.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 MOMENTUM BEFORE REFLECTION

★ *'Half a league, half a league, / Half a league onward'*



- **Method:** repetition and the driving dactylic rhythm evoke galloping horses.
- **Explore:** 'onward' prioritises movement towards danger.
- **Effect:** readers are swept into the charge before the error is disclosed.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The rhythm can exhilarate and disturb: its momentum celebrates collective resolve while making the advance seem difficult to halt.

3 AN ERROR WITHOUT A NAME

★ *'Someone had blundered.'*



- **Method:** blunt 'blundered' punctures the heroic register with an admission of failure.
- **Explore:** indefinite 'Someone' leaves individual responsibility unnamed.
- **Contrast:** leaders make the mistake; ordinary soldiers face its consequences.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Blame is acknowledged but not fully pursued. The poem's emphasis moves towards honouring the men rather than investigating command.

4 OBEDIENCE EXCLUDES A VOICE

★ *'Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die.'*



- **Method:** repeated 'Theirs' defines the soldiers through their assigned duty.
- **Contrast:** 'not' denies questioning; 'but' narrows their role to action and sacrifice.
- **Sound:** the rhyme links 'why' to 'die', joining denied explanation to mortal risk.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Their courage is conscious: the soldier 'knew' of the blunder. Duty is admirable, yet the hierarchy denies them meaningful choice.

5 DEATH BECOMES A PREDATOR

★ *'Into the jaws of Death, Into the mouth of hell'*



- **Method:** personification and bodily imagery make the battlefield seem ready to devour them.
- **Pattern:** repeated 'Into' drives the movement towards destruction.
- **Echo:** 'valley of Death' evokes Psalm 23, giving the ordeal a solemn, biblical scale.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The biblical echo elevates the soldiers' courage, but offers no explicit promise that they will all survive.

6 THE RETURN REVEALS THE LOSS

★ *'Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them'*

★ *'Then they rode back, but not Not the six hundred.'*



- **Method:** anaphora maps an encircling field of fire.
- **Structure:** 'in front' becomes 'behind' on the return; danger persists in retreat.
- **Repetition:** 'not / Not' interrupts the collective refrain and forces recognition of casualties.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

'Six hundred' first suggests unity, then becomes a measure of absence. Collective glory cannot erase individual loss.

7 THE READER RECEIVES AN ORDER

★ *'When can their glory fade?'*

★ *'Honour the Light Brigade'*



- **Method:** the rhetorical question assumes their courage deserves lasting recognition.
- **Imperative:** 'Honour' transfers responsibility from the battlefield to the audience.
- **Structure:** the final stanza turns narration into a public act of commemoration.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The soldiers obeyed a destructive command; readers receive a commemorative one. Authority now directs remembrance rather than the charge.

8 FORM: A PUBLIC MEMORIAL IN SOUND

- **Six stanzas** trace advance, battle, return and remembrance; their unequal lengths resist a neat, uniform account.
- A predominantly dactylic rhythm and insistent repetition create propulsion; the metre varies rather than remaining mechanically regular.
- The changing 'six hundred' refrain moves from collective strength to loss, then honour.
- **Judgement:** the charge faiis militarily, but the poem preserves the soldiers' moral courage.

Does celebrating heroic obedience challenge failed leadership—or help society accept its cost?

BUILD AN INTERPREATION

- Connect courage, command and commemoration.
- Compare how poets distinguish the bravery of individuals from the power directing them.

Grades 7–9: sustain the tension between admiration and criticism.



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EXPOSURE

Wilfred Owen

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

NATURE: THE ENEMY IS EVERYWHERE.

Weather becomes a relentless assailant, more immediate than distant gunfire.

STASIS: WAITING BECOMES TORMENT.

The absence of military action does not mean the absence of suffering.

ABANDONMENT: HOPE LOSES ITS SHELTER.

Home and faith offer uncertain comfort as the soldiers face death.

1 THE BIG IDEA: WAR DESTROYS WITHOUT A CHARGE

- **Thesis:** Owen exposes the slow destruction of soldiers through cold, waiting and uncertainty, challenging heroic visions of war.
- **Develop:** nature attacks while the men endure; suffering erodes bodies, minds and belief.
- **Qualify:** the collective voice retains a sense of sacrifice, even as its purpose becomes increasingly doubtful.
- **Context:** Owen's experience of the First World War informs his attention to the pity of war and the suffering of ordinary soldiers.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Stanzas 1–2:** exhausted vigilance gives way to questions about purpose.
- **Stanzas 3–4:** dawn and snow become an attacking force.
- **Stanzas 5–6:** dreamlike warmth leads to a home whose doors are closed.
- **Stanzas 7–8:** faith falters; frost and burial return us to the refrain.

ESSAY ROUTE: ASSAULT → STASIS → ABANDONMENT

1. **Assault:** analyse how weather acquires military violence.
2. **Stasis:** show how repetition makes waiting destructive.
3. **Abandonment:** explore the failure of home, faith and resolution.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 THE WEATHER TAKES UP A WEAPON

★ *'merciless iced east winds that knive us'*

- **Method:** personification makes the wind a pitiless attacker; 'knive' turns cold into stabbing violence.
- **Sound:** repeated sharp consonants reinforce the cutting sensation.
- **Explore:** 'Our brains ache' places mental suffering at the opening.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The enemy is not confined to another army: exposure makes the whole environment hostile, leaving no clear opponent to defeat.

3 DAWN REVERSES THE PROMISE OF HOPE

★ *'Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army'*

- **Method:** personification and military imagery turn daybreak into a gathering enemy.
- **Contrast:** dawn normally promises renewal; here it renews the assault.
- **Pattern:** 'ranks on shivering ranks' sets organised weather against vulnerable bodies.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The daily cycle brings repetition rather than rescue: natural renewal becomes another mechanism of suffering.

4 THE VIOLENCE OF NOTHING

★ *'But nothing happens.'*

- **Method:** the short recurring refrain arrests the longer lines and frustrates expectation.
- **Irony:** pain and death occur even though decisive military action does not.
- **Structure:** its return at the end denies progress or comforting resolution.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

'Nothing' exposes the inadequacy of measuring war only through battles: the soldiers' slow destruction can become invisible.

5 HOME CANNOT RECEIVE THEM

★ *'Slowly our ghosts drag home' 'on us the doors are closed'*

- **Method:** 'ghosts' presents the men as already separated from ordinary life.
- **Explore:** 'drag' makes even imagined return exhausting.
- **Symbolism:** closed doors turn home from refuge into exclusion.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

This is a dreamlike return, not proof of literal rejection: the men imagine themselves unable to re-enter the world they protect.

6 SACRIFICE WITHOUT CERTAIN SALVATION

★ *'For love of God seems dying.'*

- **Method:** 'seems' registers uncertainty rather than a simple declaration that God is absent.
- **Ambiguity:** human love for God may fade; divine love may feel withdrawn.
- **Contrast:** 'God's invincible spring' promises renewal, while the men endure a deathly winter.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The men may see their suffering as protecting the warmth and safety of home, yet struggle to feel God's love themselves. Sacrifice continues as faith weakens.

7 THE COLD ERASES HUMANITY

★ *'All their eyes are ice' 'half-known faces'*

- **Method:** the ice image suggests literal freezing and emotional numbness.
- **Explore:** 'half-known' shows familiar identities becoming difficult to recognise.
- **Qualify:** 'their' leaves the relation between the dead and the burying-party unsettlingly open.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The image can connect frozen bodies with numbed witnesses: war threatens both life and the capacity to respond to its loss.

8 FORM: CONFINED TO AN UNRESOLVED CYCLE

- **Eight** five-line stanzas repeatedly narrow from four long lines to a short final line.
- **Pararhyme** pairs such as 'knive us' / 'nervous' produce uneasy echoes rather than full resolution.
- Ellipses and pauses prolong anticipation; questions expose uncertainty and a loss of purpose.
- The final refrain, 'But nothing happens', suggests that even death brings no change or resolution.

If men are suffering and dying, whose version of war allows this to count as "nothing"?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

Connect natural violence, waiting and abandonment. Compare how poets expose forms of suffering that heroic accounts overlook.

Grades 7–9: distinguish lack of military action from lack of consequence.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

STORM ON THE ISLAND

Seamus Heaney

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

PREPARATION:
RESILIENCE HAS LIMITS.

Practical knowledge protects the community, but cannot make nature controllable.



ASSAULT:
THE FAMILIAR TURNS HOSTILE.

Sea and wind become threatening forces that overturn expectations of comfort.



FEAR:
INVISIBLE DOES NOT MEAN UNREAL.

The wind has no solid shape, yet its force and psychological effects are tangible.



1 THE BIG IDEA: SHELTER IS NOT MASTERY

- **Thesis:** Heaney presents an experienced community whose practical resilience coexists with fear of nature's overwhelming power.
- **Develop:** confidence in solid buildings gives way to uncertainty about an invisible threat.
- **Qualify:** fear does not prove preparation has failed; the houses are not shown collapsing, and the community remains together.
- **Context:** the exposed island setting foregrounds lives shaped by weather, limited shelter and adaptation to a demanding landscape.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

Opening: the collective voice explains practical preparations.

Landscape: apparent advantages also reveal isolation and exposure.

Turning point: the expected comfort of the sea is abruptly rejected.

Ending: violent weather becomes a paradox about fear and invisibility.

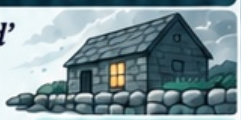
ESSAY ROUTE: PREPARE → ENDURE → QUESTION

1. **Prepare:** examine confidence, shared knowledge and solid materials.
2. **Endure:** explore nature's apparent aggression and the limits of human action.
3. **Question:** interpret the final paradox without dismissing the danger.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 CONFIDENCE BUILT ON EXPERIENCE

★ *'We are prepared'*



- **Method:** the assured declaration establishes confidence; the collective pronoun creates unity.
- **Structure:** the following colon introduces practical evidence for that confidence.
- **Explore:** low houses and strong materials show adaptation to nature rather than conquest of it.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The opening need not be mere arrogance: preparation is sensible, but physical security cannot guarantee emotional calm.

3 ABSENCE OFFERS NO SIMPLE SAFETY

★ *'no natural shelter'*



- **Method:** negative phrasing emphasises what the island lacks.
- **Contrast:** the absence of crops reduces potential losses, yet the lack of trees also removes protection and imagined companionship.
- **Explore:** the same bare landscape can appear reassuring and exposing.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The speaker's reasoning repeatedly reverses itself: knowledge of the island does not produce a simple feeling of security.

4 COMFORT CONTAINS VIOLENCE

★ *'Exploding comfortably'*



- **Method:** the oxymoronic pairing brings destructive force into contact with reassurance.
- **Explore:** familiar waves may seem harmless when breaking at a distance.
- **Structure:** the abrupt rejection that follows undermines the expectation that the sea offers companionship.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Comfort belongs to a human interpretation of the sea; familiarity does not make the natural world dependable or benevolent.

5 DOMESTICATION IS AN ILLUSION

★ *'spits like a tame cat / Turned savage'*



- **Method:** the simile transforms a familiar animal into a threat.
- **Structure:** enjambment delays the reversal until the next line, unsettling the initial impression.
- **Sound:** sibilance can evoke spitting spray and an animal's hiss.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The comparison questions the assumption that what feels familiar is under human control: wildness can exist beneath apparent tameness.

6 AN ASSAULT WITHOUT A VISIBLE ENEMY

★ *'strafes invisibly'*



- **Method:** military language presents the wind as an attacking force.
- **Explore:** the aerial attack metaphor makes invisible movement feel purposeful and dangerous.
- **Contrast:** nature acts while the islanders 'sit tight', reducing resistance to endurance.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The storm is not literally a conscious enemy: the metaphor reveals how vulnerable people make sense of an impersonal force.

7 THE PARADOX OF FEARING AIR

★ *'huge nothing'*



- **Method:** the paradox combines overwhelming scale with apparent absence.
- **Explore:** the wind cannot be grasped as a solid object, yet its pressure, noise and effects are real.
- **Structure:** the final word, 'fear', shifts attention from buildings to the human mind.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The storm is real, even though the wind is invisible. Its unseen power shapes both the islanders' surroundings and their thoughts.

8 FORM: A COMMUNITY HOLDING TOGETHER

- One continuous nineteen-line stanza can suggest a compact community enduring sustained pressure.
- Blank verse uses unrhymed, mainly iambic pentameter; variations keep the speech flexible.
- Conversational address draws readers into the speaker's reasoning; pauses and corrections complicate certainty.
- The movement from initial assurance to final fear shows that resilience and vulnerability can coexist.

Can people be well prepared for a storm and still recognise that they cannot control it?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

Connect preparation, natural power and psychological fear. Compare how poets distinguish human resilience from mastery over nature.

Grades 7–9: qualify claims; fear does not automatically mean defeat.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

BAYONET CHARGE

Ted Hughes

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

INSTINCT:
THE BODY OUTRUNS BELIEF.

The soldier keeps moving before he can understand why.



AGENCY:
A MAN INSIDE A MACHINE.

National purposes reduce the individual to an instrument.



PATRIOTISM:
IDEALS MEET PHYSICAL TERROR.

Public promises lose their authority when survival is at stake.



1 THE BIG IDEA: WHEN BELIEF CANNOT EXPLAIN ACTION

- **Thesis:** Hughes exposes the gap between patriotic ideals and combat, where the soldier's body continues a violence his mind can no longer justify.
- **Develop:** the charge moves from disorientation through questioning to instinctive flight.
- **Qualify:** abandoning patriotic belief does not free him; terror becomes another force driving his body.
- **Context:** the bayonet attack evokes industrial warfare and the bodily cost hidden by heroic accounts.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Opening:** movement before understanding.
- **Pause:** the soldier questions his role.
- **Hare:** suffering interrupts reflection.
- **Ending:** terror replaces patriotic purpose.

ESSAY ROUTE: SHOCK → DOUBT → INSTINCT

1. **Shock:** examine the abrupt awakening.
2. **Doubt:** explore lost agency.
3. **Instinct:** test whether survival brings freedom.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 AWAKENING WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING

★ *'Suddenly he awoke and was running'*

- **Method:** in medias res places us inside an action already underway; the abrupt adverb denies preparation.
- **Explore:** bodily movement precedes conscious choice.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Awakening usually promises clarity, yet he wakes into bewilderment. It may suggest an awakening from patriotic illusion rather than literal sleep.

3 PATRIOTISM BECOMES A BURDEN

★ *'Sweating like molten iron'*

- **Method:** the industrial simile transforms patriotic feeling into heat and weight.
- **Explore:** idealised emotion becomes bodily strain rather than inspiration.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The earlier patriotic tear is remade as burning metal. War does not simply erase belief: it converts an uplifting ideal into something physically oppressive.

4 WHO CONTROLS THE HAND?

★ *'cold clockwork of the stars and the nations'*

- **Method:** the mechanical metaphor joins political power with an apparently cosmic order.
- **Explore:** the soldier questions whether he is merely a component in an indifferent system.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

As a clock's hand, he indicates a purpose he cannot control. His question exposes the gulf between carrying out history and having authority over it.

5 THE HARE MIRRORS THE SOLDIER

★ *'a yellow hare that rolled like a flame'*

- **Method:** the simile gives the animal's movement a violent, burning intensity.
- **Explore:** its suffering reflects the soldier's bodily vulnerability.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The hare has no patriotic cause. Its presence strips suffering of heroic meaning and places the soldier within the same exposed animal world.

6 IDEALS BECOME DISPENSABLE

★ *'King, honour, human dignity, etcetera'*

- **Method:** the list ends in a dismissive catch-all, flattening grand ideals into a formula.
- **Explore:** immediate danger makes public values seem remote.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Including human dignity makes this more troubling than rejecting propaganda: survival may demand abandoning the very values that make life meaningful.

7 TERROR TAKES COMMAND

★ *'His terror's touchy dynamite'*

- **Method:** the explosive metaphor makes fear volatile and physically dangerous.
- **Explore:** instinct drives the final rush rather than a recovered sense of duty.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Losing patriotic conviction does not restore agency. Terror turns him into a potential weapon, so his urge to escape can still propel the charge.

8 FORM: MOVEMENT AGAINST REFLECTION

- Three unequal stanzas trace action, questioning and renewed movement.
- Free verse and enjambment disrupt a predictable marching rhythm.
- Caesurae and the central pause stretch a moment of bewilderment.
- Third-person narration enters his perceptions while preserving his anonymity.

? If terror drives the charge, how freely does the soldier act?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect bodily vulnerability, failed ideals and the limits of choice.
- Follow the changing motive for movement; sustain a nuanced argument.

Grades 7–9: sustain a nuanced argument while distinguishing the soldier's experience from his wider context.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

REMAINS

Simon Armitage

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

UNCERTAINTY: DOUBT OUTLIVES THE DECISION.

The soldier acts on probability, then relives the possibility that the killing was unjustified.



RESPONSIBILITY: SHARED ACTION, PRIVATE GUILT.

The collective shooting becomes an individual burden that comradeship cannot absorb.



HAUNTING: THE WAR COMES HOME.

Physical distance offers no escape: memory turns the mind into another battlefield.



1 THE BIG IDEA: A KILLING WITHOUT CLOSURE

- **Thesis:** Armitage explores how an irreversible act can trap the soldier in unresolved moral doubt.
- **Develop:** casual storytelling gives way to intrusive memory and isolated responsibility.
- **Qualify:** suffering invites empathy without proving the killing justified or the victim innocent.
- **Context:** the poem draws on a veteran's testimony, shaping it into a dramatic monologue.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Incident:** violence sounds routine.
- **Aftermath:** a physical trace persists.
- **Home:** the event returns in sleep.
- **Ending:** collective action becomes private guilt.

ESSAY ROUTE: DOUBT → RETURN → RESPONSIBILITY

1. **Doubt:** test the soldier's justification.
2. **Return:** trace memory's refusal to end.
3. **Responsibility:** follow the shift from 'we' to 'my'.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 THE DOUBT THAT CANNOT BE SETTLED

★ *'probably armed, possibly not'*

- **Method:** competing adverbs expose uncertainty beneath the decision to fire.
- **Structure:** the phrase returns in sleep; doubt becomes a recurring mental event.
- **Explore:** the soldier cannot undo the act or establish what might have been.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The poem withholds a verdict. His torment grows from uncertainty. not a confirmed confession that the man was unarmed.

3 COMRADESHIP CANNOT DISTRIBUTE GUILT

★ *'all of the same mind'*
★ *'all three of us open fire'*

- **Method:** repeated 'all' spreads the action across the group.
- **Explore:** agreement may offer reassurance, but it cannot establish moral certainty.
- **Structure:** collective language gives way to the final possessive 'my'.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Shared responsibility does not produce shared relief. The group's apparent unity contrasts with the speaker's later isolation.

4 THE VICTIM REMAINS AFTER REMOVAL

★ *'His blood-shadow stays on the street'*

- **Method:** the compound metaphor joins bodily evidence to a haunting absence.
- **Explore:** the body is removed, but its trace resists the attempt to clear the scene.
- **Title:** 'Remains' suggests both bodily remains and what continues to exist.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The victim becomes more than a disposable 'looter': his persistent trace challenges the speaker's power to treat the killing as finished.

5 THE STORY REFUSES ITS ENDING

★ *'End of story, except not really.'*

- **Method:** the abrupt correction overturns a familiar phrase of closure.
- **Structure:** this central turn leads from the external event to its inner aftermath.
- **Explore:** the soldier can finish an account, but cannot make the experience end.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The broken closure exposes the limits of storytelling: giving the event a sequence does not give it a resolution.

6 THE MIND BECOMES OCCUPIED TERRITORY

★ *'he's here in my head'*
★ *'dug in behind enemy lines'*

- **Method:** military imagery relocates the conflict inside the speaker.
- **Explore:** 'dug in' makes memory entrenched and resistant to removal.
- **Paradox:** returning home brings the victim closer rather than leaving him behind.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The victim has no literal power to invade. The language reveals the soldier's struggle with his own memory, not a new act of aggression by the dead man.

7 THE HANDS CLAIM WHAT 'WE' DID

★ *'his bloody life in my bloody hands.'*

- **Method:** repeated 'bloody' binds the victim's lost life to the soldier's agency.
- **Explore:** the colloquial intensifier also becomes a literal image of culpability.
- **Structure:** the isolated final couplet concentrates the burden on 'my'.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The image recalls Macbeth's blood-stained guilt. Yet the speaker's self-accusation remains his judgement, not a settled verdict supplied.

8 FORM: FROM SPOKEN ANECDOTE TO PRIVATE ORDEAL

- Dramatic monologue gives access to one perspective; the victim's account remains unheard.
- Seven quatrains contract into a final couplet, sharpening the ending's isolation.
- Free verse, colloquial language and enjambment create speech that strains towards control.
- The present-tense return of the killing collapses the distance between then and now.

Does the speaker seek forgiveness, understanding, or a certainty the poem cannot give him?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect unresolved doubt, failed closure and the movement from collective action to private guilt.
- Compare how poets make conflict persist beyond the battlefield.

Grades 7–9: explore contradictions; distinguish the speaker's perspective from the poem's judgement.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

POPPIES

Jane Weir

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

LOVE:
CARE BECOMES VULNERABILITY.

A mother's intimate gestures reveal the emotional cost of letting a child go.



TEXTILES:
FEELING TAKES MATERIAL FORM.

Fabric imagery gives suppressed emotion a texture and a bodily presence.



REMEMBRANCE:
PRIVATE LOSS, PUBLIC RITUAL.

The war memorial connects personal separation with collective mourning.



1 THE BIG IDEA: THE COURAGE OF LETTING GO

- **Thesis:** Weir relocates courage from the battlefield to the home, revealing the emotional cost borne by those who let loved ones leave.
- **Develop:** acts of care become images of injury; the mother's controlled behaviour contrasts with her unsettled inner life.
- **Qualify:** the memorial suggests bereavement, but the poem never confirms that her son has died.
- **Context:** Armistice remembrance frames an imagined mother's voice; war reaches beyond those who fight.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Departure:** care and restraint.
- **Memory:** childhood interrupts the present.
- **Release:** the open door and caged bird.
- **Memorial:** listening without an answer.

ESSAY ROUTE: CARE → RELEASE → ABSENCE

1. **Care:** explore love through touch.
2. **Release:** examine the cost of independence.
3. **Absence:** preserve the ending's uncertainty.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 REMEMBRANCE BECOMES A WOUND

★ *'spasms of paper red'*



- **Method:** the violent noun makes the paper poppy suggest bodily pain.
- **Explore:** a public symbol of remembrance becomes an image of private anguish.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The poppy joins pride and suffering. Even before departure, the mother's loving gesture carries the possibility of injury and loss.

3 WORDS BECOME FELT

★ *'flattened, rolled, turned into felt'*



- **Method:** the textile metaphor gives unspoken words a compressed, material form.
- **Explore:** her feelings remain present, but cannot emerge as speech.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Felt is made by binding fibres together. The image can suggest feelings pressed inward: maternal restraint contains emotion without resolving it.

4 COURAGE AT THE FRONT DOOR

★ *'I was brave'*

★ *'like a treasure chest'*



- **Method:** the simple declaration gives the mother the language of courage; the simile presents the son's exciting prospects.
- **Explore:** his opportunity is her emotional risk.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The mother enables the freedom that causes her pain. Courage becomes the willingness to release someone rather than the power to protect them.

5 FREEDOM CREATES AN EMPTY SPACE

★ *'released a song bird from its cage'*



- **Method:** the bird symbol echoes the son's departure and suggests liberation.
- **Explore:** release brings freedom, but also leaves the mother alone.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The cage complicates parental protection: safety may also restrict independence. Her act of release acknowledges that love cannot justify permanent possession.

6 THE BODY SPEAKS IN STITCHES

★ *'making tucks, darts, pleats'*



- **Method:** the list turns the mother's stomach into fabric shaped by invisible sewing.
- **Explore:** anxiety becomes bodily tension; domestic language carries emotional pain.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Earlier, she arranges her son's clothes; now her own body seems involuntarily folded. The movement from deilberate care to physical distress exposes the limits of control.

7 LISTENING CANNOT RESTORE THE CHILD

★ *'your playground voice catching on the wind'*



- **Method:** auditory imagery returns the adult son to childhood through memory.
- **Explore:** she hopes to recover a familiar voice, but receives no clear reply.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The ending preserves uncertainty. Whether she mourns death, distance or lost childhood, remembrance cannot restore the relationship as it once was.

8 FORM: MEMORY RESISTS A STRAIGHT LINE

- Dramatic monologue centres the mother's imagined perspective.
- Four unequal stanzas and free verse resist a uniform pattern.
- Enjambment and shifting memories connect departure, childhood and the memorial.
- Direct address sustains intimacy despite the son's absence.

?

Can letting someone go be an act of courage?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect maternal care, emotional restraint and the cost of independence.
- Sustain a nuanced argument; do not assume the son is confirmed dead.

Grades 7–9: sustain a nuanced argument; do not assume the son is confirmed dead.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

Carol Ann Duffy

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

ORDER:
FORM CANNOT CONTAIN SUFFERING.

The photographer arranges images precisely, but their human cost exceeds his control.



WITNESS:
RECORDING IS MORALLY UNEASY.

Photography preserves evidence while raising questions about permission, duty and profit.



DISTANCE:
SEEING IS NOT THE SAME AS CARING.

Images cross borders, but their readers can return quickly to comfortable lives.



1 THE BIG IDEA: WHAT DOES WITNESSING REQUIRE?

- **Thesis:** Duffy explores the gap between preserving suffering and producing a lasting moral response.
- **Develop:** the photographer's careful work contrasts with the reader's passing sympathy.
- **Qualify:** his distress does not remove the ethical tensions of earning a living through others' pain.
- **Context:** conflict photojournalism brings distant violence into the routines of British newspaper readers.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Darkroom:** ritual promises order.
- **Home:** safety exposes unequal suffering.
- **Image:** development becomes remembrance.
- **Publication:** selection meets indifference.

ESSAY ROUTE: ORDER → WITNESS → RESPONSE

1. **Order:** test the limits of control.
2. **Witness:** explore duty and its tensions.
3. **Response:** question sympathy without action.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 ORDER CANNOT REPAIR THE WORLD

★ *'spools of suffering set out in ordered rows'*



- **Method:** sibilance and the metaphor compress human pain into physical film.
- **Explore:** arrangement offers a defence against the chaos he has witnessed.
- **Link:** the regular stanza pattern echoes this impulse to contain.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Order makes suffering representable, but cannot undo it. The poem's controlled form holds what its subject refuses to resolve.

3 A SECULAR RITUAL OF REMEMBRANCE

★ *'a priest preparing to intone a Mass'*

★ *'All flesh is grass.'*



- **Method:** religious imagery gives the work solemnity; the biblical allusion stresses mortality.
- **Explore:** the darkroom becomes a place of witness and remembrance.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Shared mortality should connect distant strangers. Yet the final indifference tests whether this ritual can create a caring community.

4 SAFETY MAKES PAIN UNEQUAL

★ *'hands, which did not tremble then though seem to now'*



- **Method:** the temporal contrast presents a delayed physical response.
- **Explore:** professional control gives way to distress once immediate danger has passed.
- **Link:** the return to Rural England sharpens the contrast between forms of suffering.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Home offers physical security without emotional release. Distance from danger can make its memory harder to suppress.

5 DEVELOPMENT BECOMES A HAUNTING

★ *'a half-formed ghost'*

★ *'to do what someone must'*



- **Method:** the ghost metaphor joins the emerging image to the returning memory of a dead man.
- **Explore:** the appeal to duty frames photography as necessary witness.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Seeking unspoken approval reveals ethical uncertainty. His belief in duty cannot make the grieving wife's consent fully knowable.

6 SUFFERING BECOMES A SELECTION

★ *'A hundred agonies in black and white'*

★ *'five or six'*



- **Method:** the numerical contrast reduces many experiences of pain to a few publishable images.
- **Explore:** the editor mediates what distant readers are allowed to see.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

Black and white is the photographic medium; it need not imply moral simplicity. Clear images can still leave responsibility unresolved.

7 TEARS DO NOT GUARANTEE CARE

★ *'between the bath and pre-lunch beers'*

★ *'they do not care'*



- **Method:** mundane comforts frame the reader's brief emotional response.
- **Explore:** the blunt final clause challenges sympathy that produces no lasting commitment.
- **Link:** his impassive stare may suggest exhaustion or protective detachment.

GRADE 9 NUCLEUS

The photographer's outward blankness need not equal the audience's indifference. The poem asks us to distinguish feeling, appearance and action.

8 FORM: CONTROL WITHOUT RESOLUTION

- Four regular six-line stanzas and an ABBCDD rhyme scheme impose formal order.
- Enjambment carries disturbing material across the boundaries of that pattern.
- Third-person narration brings us close to his distress while retaining distance.
- The return journey suggests a cycle of witnessing, publication and renewed exposure.

When suffering becomes an image, who gains—and who becomes responsible?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect formal control, the ethics of witnessing and the limits of spectatorship.
- Grades 7–9: test tensions rather than reducing the poem to a single moral.

Grades 7–9: sustain an argument while testing alternative readings.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

TISSUE

Imtiaz Dharker

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

FRAGILITY:
WEAK MATERIALS CAN HOLD POWER.

Paper carries beliefs, records, borders and transactions that organise human lives.



LIGHT:
AUTHORITY CAN BE QUESTIONED.

Transparency offers an alternative to rigid structures and claims to permanence.



HUMANITY:
LIFE MATTERS MORE THAN MONUMENTS.

The poem moves from paper to skin, connecting temporary structures to vulnerable bodies.



1 THE BIG IDEA: RETHINK WHAT DESERVES TO LAST

- **Thesis:** Dharker questions apparently permanent power and imagines a more open world built around fragile human life.
- **Develop:** paper preserves relationships but also carries systems that divide and govern us.
- **Qualify:** fragility does not make life worthless; impermanence may encourage care rather than domination.
- **Context:** religious records, maps and receipts connect intimate experience to larger structures of authority.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

Opening: light passes through paper worn by use.

Records: family histories place individual lives within continuity.

Systems: buildings, maps and money reveal human constructions.

Ending: imagined architecture becomes living tissue and the reader's skin.

ESSAY ROUTE: RECORD → QUESTION → REBUILD

1. **Record:** examine how paper preserves human connections.
2. **Question:** explore the vulnerability of supposedly solid authority.
3. **Rebuild:** connect openness, mortality and a different model of value.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 LIGHT MAKES CHANGE POSSIBLE

★ *'lets the light'*



- **Method:** light becomes a recurring motif of openness and possibility.
- **Explore:** transparency allows something beyond the surface to become visible.
- **Structure:** the tentative opening proposes change rather than issuing a rigid doctrine.

GRADE 9 NUCANCE

Transparency can suggest questioning authority without replacing one absolute system with another.

3 FRAGILITY CAN PRESERVE CONNECTION

★ *'names and histories'*



- **Method:** personal records connect religious paper with family memory.
- **Explore:** births and deaths place lives within a larger human continuity.
- **Qualify:** sparse records expose mortality, yet recording people also resists their disappearance.

GRADE 9 NUCANCE

A life's brevity need not imply insignificance: remembrance offers a quieter value than monumental achievement.

4 SOLIDITY IS NOT PERMANENCE

★ *'If buildings were paper'*



- **Method:** the conditional invites an imaginative experiment.
- **Explore:** apparently stable structures become movable and vulnerable.
- **Develop:** physical grandeur cannot guarantee lasting importance.

GRADE 9 NUCANCE

The imagined fragility challenges the authority invested in buildings, rather than simply predicting their literal destruction.

5 BORDERS CANNOT CONTAIN LIGHT

★ *'borderlines'*



- **Method:** maps reduce a complex world to lines and marks.
- **Contrast:** sunlight passes through boundaries that appear authoritative on paper.
- **Explore:** natural continuity unsettles human divisions.

GRADE 9 NUCANCE

The poem invites us to see borders as constructed and revisable, not timeless truths.

6 FREEDOM AND CONTROL OVERLAP

★ *'paper kites'*



- **Method:** the simile transforms financial records into an image of flight.
- **Explore:** a kite rises freely but remains tethered; apparent freedom may depend on controlling systems.
- **Qualify:** flight can also suggest lightness and release, keeping the image open.

GRADE 9 NUCANCE

The image is ambivalent: paper can enable movement while also directing the shape of a life.

7 THE MONUMENT BECOMES HUMAN

★ *'your skin'*



- **Method:** direct address makes the final transformation intimate.
- **Explore:** the title connects thin paper with living flesh.
- **Structure:** the isolated final line brings the abstract discussion back to a vulnerable person.

GRADE 9 NUCANCE

Human vulnerability becomes a reason to build more gently. The alternative to permanent domination is care for temporary lives.

8 FORM: OPENNESS IN THE POEM ITSELF

- Nine quatrains lead to a single final line, moving from repeated structures towards an exposed individual.
- Free verse avoids a fixed rhyme scheme and regular metre.
- Enjambment carries meaning beyond line and stanza boundaries, echoing permeability.
- Conditional language and imagined possibilities make the poem exploratory rather than authoritarian.

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect paper, light and living tissue. Compare how poets question permanence and redefine human value.
- **Grades 7–9:** distinguish vulnerability from worthlessness, and preservation from domination.

If nothing human lasts forever, should we build monuments to power—or relationships that sustain life?



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

THE EMIGRÉE

Carol Rumens

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

MEMORY: A HOMELAND HELD IN LIGHT.

Childhood memory preserves belonging, but its brightness may conceal complexity.

LANGUAGE: A HOME SHE CAN CARRY.

Her first language sustains identity beyond borders and state control.

RESISTANCE: BELONGING SURVIVES EXCLUSION.

The speaker defends her remembered city against political violence and hostility.

1 THE BIG IDEA: WHO CAN DEFINE HER HOME?

- **Thesis:** Rumens presents memory as a source of identity that political power cannot fully govern.
- **Develop:** sunlight unites remembered place, language and enduring belonging.
- **Qualify:** her emotional certainty does not establish the accuracy of her childhood view.
- **Context:** the unnamed country broadens the poem's exploration of exile; avoid assigning a specific conflict.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Memory:** childhood fixes a radiant image.
- **Language:** belonging travels with her.
- **Encounter:** the city becomes a companion.
- **Threat:** shadow becomes proof of light.

ESSAY ROUTE: MEMORY → LANGUAGE → DEFIANCE

1. **Memory:** explore its strength and limits.
2. **Language:** trace identity beyond borders.
3. **Defiance:** test the final claim of sunlight.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 CLARITY IS NOT THE SAME AS TRUTH

★ *'There once was a country…'*
'my memory of it is sunlight-clear'

- **Method:** the story-like opening gives the country a partly imagined quality.
- **Explore:** the compound adjective claims clarity while bathing memory in ideal light.
- **Qualify:** she recalls childhood experience, not a complete political reality.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The memory can be emotionally truthful yet historically incomplete. Its value need not depend on perfect accuracy.

3 LIGHT LEAVES A WOUND

★ *'I am branded by an impression of sunlight.'*

- **Method:** 'branded' introduces pain, permanence and imposed identity into radiant imagery.
- **Explore:** sunlight consoles her, yet its mark suggests she cannot freely leave the past.
- **Paradox:** the remembered homeland both sustains and posseses her.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Nostalgia is not simply comforting: the very attachment that preserves identity may make separation permanently painful.

4 LANGUAGE EXCEEDS THE STATE

★ *'banned by the state'*
'It tastes of sunlight.'

- **Method:** synaesthesia makes language a bodily experience of remembered light.
- **Explore:** political prohibition cannot erase what remains on her tongue.
- **Develop:** identity survives through speech when physical return is impossible.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The state can police public expression without fully governing inner belonging. Her remembered language becomes a portable homeland.

5 THE CITY BECOMES SOMEONE TO LOVE

★ *'I comb its hair and love its shining eyes.'*

- **Method:** personification transforms a distant city into an intimate companion.
- **Explore:** the caring gesture reverses dependence: she now nurtures the home that formed her.
- **Structure:** 'My city hides behind me' later makes her its protector.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The beloved city may be a creation she can shelter in memory, distinct from the changing place beyond her reach.

6 THE 'FREE CITY' EXPOSES ITS LIMITS

★ *'They accuse me of being dark in their free city.'*

- **Method:** the accusation sets collective: 'They' against the isolated speaker.
- **Explore:** 'free' becomes ironic when belonging depends on excluding an outsider.
- **Reading:** 'dark' may suggest racialised hostility as well as moral suspicion.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The unnamed accusers keep the threat unsettled. The poem exposes exclusion without making every location or political allegiance certain.

7 SHADOW BECOMES HER COUNTER-EVIDENCE

★ *'my shadow falls as evidence of sunlight.'*

- **Method:** the physical link between shadow and light becomes an argument for hope.
- **Explore:** she reclaims darkness from accusation and makes it testify to belonging.
- **Qualify:** the final sunlight does not remove the surrounding threat of death.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

This is defiance under pressure, not an uncomplicated victory. Shadow confirms light while keeping darkness within the final image.

8 FORM: SUNLIGHT RETURNS, CERTAINTY IS TESTED

- Three stanzas end with 'sunlight', making remembered brightness a recurring point of return.
- Free verse and enjambment suggest movement across boundaries despite enforced separation.
- Repeated 'but' turns political threat into renewed assertion, without erasing the threat.
- The first-person voice establishes her right to tell her story; its conviction remains subjective.

Does sunlight reveal her homeland, or protect the version of it she needs to keep?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect light's comfort, memory's limits and the speaker's resistance to imposed identities.
- Compare how poets explore belonging when place, language or freedom is threatened.

Grades 7–9: hold resilience and idealisation together in one qualified argument.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY

John Agard

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

CONTROL:
HISTORY CAN BLIND.

Selective teaching restricts what the speaker knows about his past and himself.



ILLUMINATION:
BLACK FIGURES LIGHT THE WAY.

Toussaint, Nanny and Seacole become beacons guiding him towards reclaiming identity.



SELF-DEFINITION:
IDENTITY MUST BE RECLAIMED.

The speaker challenges imposed narratives and actively shapes his own identity.



1 THE BIG IDEA: RECLAIMING THE RIGHT TO KNOW

- **Thesis:** Agard exposes how colonial education suppresses Black history and presents rediscovery as an act of resistance.
- **Develop:** Black historical figures offer courage, hope and direction.
- **Qualify:** Reclaiming identity requires active investigation, not simply replacing one list of heroes with another.
- **Context:** Agard challenges the Eurocentric education he experienced in British Guiana.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Imposition:** repeated voices tell him what to know.
- **Exposure:** omissions reveal a selective curriculum.
- **Celebration:** lyrical portraits restore Black achievement.
- **Reclamation:** the speaker takes control of his history.

ESSAY ROUITE: CONTROL → LIGHT → RECLAMATION

1. **Control:** explore imposed knowledge and blindness.
2. **Light:** connect the Black figures as sources of guidance.
3. **Reclamation:** trace the shift from passive pupil to active investigator.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 EDUCATION BECOMES A BLINDFOLD

★ *'Bandage up me eye with me own history'*



- **Method:** the bandage metaphor makes education an obstruction to sight.
- **Explore:** something meant to heal instead conceals his heritage.
- **Develop:** imposed history damages his understanding of himself.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The possessive "me own" sharpens the injustice: his history is used to deny him self-knowledge.

3 TOUSSAINT: A BEACON OF RESISTANCE

★ *'Toussaint de beacon of de Haitian Revolution'*



- **Method:** "beacon" presents Toussaint as a guiding light.
- **Explore:** his "vision" counters the speaker's imposed blindness.
- **Context:** the Haitian Revolution challenges colonial domination.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Toussaint illuminates both a suppressed past and the possibility of resisting imposed power.

4 NANNY: HOPE MOVES TOWARDS FREEDOM

★ *'fire-woman struggle'*
'to freedom river'



- **Method:** fire imagery suggests energy, courage and resistance.
- **Explore:** the "hopeful stream" develops into a river of liberation.
- **Connect:** Nanny joins Toussaint and Seacole as a source of light and direction.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The natural imagery presents freedom as a living force that colonial accounts cannot contain.

5 SEACOLE: LIGHT THAT SUSTAINS LIFE

★ *'a healing star'*
'a yellow sunrise'



- **Method:** luminous metaphors celebrate Seacole's care.
- **Explore:** "star" suggests guidance; "sunrise" promises renewal.
- **Contrast:** her achievements challenge the curriculum's selective praise of Nightingale.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

Together, the three lyrical portraits form a constellation of Black achievement guiding the speaker towards reclaimed identity.

6 THE CURRICULUM REVEALS ITS BIAS

★ *'Dem tell me'*
'But Toussaint L'Ouverture no dem never tell me bout dat'



- **Method:** repetition makes instruction sound relentless and controlling.
- **Contrast:** nursery tales receive space while Black achievement is excluded.
- **Explore:** "dem" separates institutional authority from the speaker.

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The problem is selective authority over knowledge; Agard does not simply dismiss every British historical figure.

7 THE SPEAKER BECOMES THE MAKER

★ *'But now I checking out me own history'*
'I carving out me identity'



- **Method:** "But now" marks a decisive turn towards agency.
- **Metaphor:** "carving" makes self-definition active and creative.
- **Structure:** "Dem" gives way to the assertive first-person "I".

GRADE 9 NUANCE

The ongoing action suggests identity is continually shaped through enquiry rather than finally completed.

8 FORM: THE POEM PERFORMS RECLAMATION

- **Creole voice** asserts cultural identity and challenges the authority of standard English.
- **Alternating** sections contrast imposed accounts with lyrical celebrations of Black history.
- **Short lines, free verse** and musical rhythms give the recovered figures distinctive prominence.
- The repeated opening returns in the ending, but the speaker now claims agency.

Who controls identity: those who teach history, or those who question it?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect blindness, guiding light and the creative act of carving.
- Compare how poets challenge power over personal or collective identity.

Grades 7–9: connect language, form and structure to a developing argument.



Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

KAMIKAZE

Beatrice Garland

GRADES 7–9

★ = core quotation

DUTY:
WHO DEFINES HONOUR?

National duty demands self-sacrifice; personal memories reveal other loyalties.



NATURE:
LIFE INTERRUPTS IDEOLOGY.

The living sea challenges a mission organised around death.



EXILE:
SURVIVAL BECOMES ERASURE.

He returns physically, but his family withdraws recognition.



1 THE BIG IDEA: THE COST OF CHOOSING LIFE

- **Thesis:** Garland exposes how patriotic ideals can make survival appear shameful. The pilot's return sets love of life against a community's demand for sacrifice.
- **Develop:** nature and childhood memories offer an alternative sense of belonging.
- **Qualify:** his motives are reconstructed by his daughter; we never hear his own explanation.
- **Context:** Japanese kamikaze missions in the Second World War expected pilots to die attacking enemy targets.

HOW THE POEM DEVELOPS

- **Departure:** a mission framed by honour.
- **Sea:** beauty and memory interrupt duty.
- **Return:** family silence replaces welcome.
- **Ending:** two kinds of death are weighed.

ESSAY ROUTE: DUTY → LIFE → EXILE

1. **Duty:** examine the script of heroic sacrifice.
2. **Life:** explore nature and remembered belonging.
3. **Exile:** question the community's judgement.

KEY QUOTATION STUDIES

2 A MIND PREPARED FOR DEATH

★ *'a one-way journey into history'*

- **Method:** the euphemistic phrase frames death as entry into national memory.
- **Explore:** individual life becomes valuable through its sacrifice.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The promise of historical honour contrasts with his later erasure from family life.

3 TRAINED TO DESTROY, DRAWN TO LIFE

★ *'strung out like bunting'*

- **Method:** the celebratory simile makes the fishing boats appear festive and full of life.
- **Explore:** ironically, a pilot sent to seek ships as targets notices boats associated with work, food and community. He sees what war would destroy.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Bunting evokes national pride, yet here it celebrates a scene that may weaken his commitment to patriotic sacrifice. Honour shifts towards preserving life.

4 NATURE OFFERS ANOTHER FLAG

★ *'a huge flag waved first one way'*

- **Method:** the metaphor transforms shoaling fish into a flag.
- **Explore:** natural movement challenges fixed patriotic direction.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The changing direction suggests that allegiance can shift; the pilot may belong to life as well as nation.

5 SURVIVAL DOES NOT MEAN FREEDOM

★ *'the dark prince, muscular, dangerous'*

- **Method:** the regal metaphor and forceful adjectives emphasise the tuna's strength, yet even this magnificent creature has been caught.
- **Explore:** the captured tuna may foreshadow the pilot's fate: he escapes death on his mission, only to become trapped by shame and rejection at home.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

Turning back is an act of personal choice, but its consequences expose the limits of that choice. He can refuse the death demanded by his nation, yet cannot make his family accept his survival.

6 THE FAMILY ENFORCES THE SENTENCE

★ *'as though he no longer existed'*

- **Method:** the comparison presents social erasure.
- **Explore:** silence turns the home into a place of punishment.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The children learn rejection from adults, showing how shame is transmitted rather than naturally felt.

7 WHICH DEATH COUNTS?

★ *'which had been the better way to die'*

- **Method:** the final question contrasts physical and social death.
- **Explore:** survival brings exclusion instead of restoration.



GRADE 9 NUANCE

The daughter imagines his thoughts. This invites empathy while keeping his own perspective inaccessible.

8 FORM: A LIFE TOLD THROUGH OTHER VOICES

- Seven six-line stanzas give the account a regular frame.
- Free verse and enjambment carry fluid movement and memory through that frame.
- The shift into the daughter's direct voice brings inherited shame closer.
- Reconstructed thoughts keep the pilot's motives uncertain.

If survival is treated as betrayal, who decides what courage means?

BUILD AN INTERPRETATION

- Connect imposed duty, natural vitality and learned rejection.
- Sustain an argument while distinguishing the pilot's experience from his daughter's reconstruction.

Grades 7–9: sustain an argument while distinguishing the pilot's experience from his daughter's reconstruction.

Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

POWER & CONFLICT

THEME COMPARISONS • GRADES 7–9

Choose a pairing that answers the question. Compare a shared idea, then explore a meaningful difference.

1 POWER & PRIDE

Ozymandias + My Last Duchess



Link: Both expose powerful men who treat others as possessions and use art to advertise their status.

Difference: Shelley reveals power already destroyed; Browning lets the Duke expose his own arrogance while still exercising control.

Methods: ruined statue and irony / dramatic monologue and possessive language.

2 OPPRESSION & RESISTANCE

London + Checking Out Me History



Link: Both question systems that restrict how people live and understand themselves.

Difference: Blake's speaker witnesses widespread suffering; Agard's speaker actively reclaims an identity distorted by colonial education.

Methods: repetition and regular quatrains / contrasting typography, rhythms and voices.

3 THE POWER OF NATURE

The Prelude + Storm on the Island



Link: Both unsettle human confidence by presenting nature as a force people cannot fully control.

Difference: Wordsworth's encounter transforms an individual's mind; Heaney's community discovers that preparation cannot remove fear.

Methods: sublime imagery and narrative shift / conversational blank verse and violent personification.

Also try Exposure: nature becomes a relentless enemy.

4 PATRIOTISM & WAR

Bayonet Charge + The Charge of the Light Brigade



Link: Both reveal soldiers' vulnerability when military duty places them in danger.

Difference: Hughes shows patriotic ideals collapsing into instinct; Tennyson honours collective courage while acknowledging failed leadership.

Methods: *in medias res* and disrupted movement / driving rhythm and repetition.

5 GUILT & LASTING TRAUMA

Remains + War Photographer



Link: Both show that returning from conflict does not end its psychological effects.

Difference: Armitage explores guilt after participation in killing; Duffy explores the witness's distress and the public's limited response.

Methods: colloquial monologue and haunting repetition / ordered stanzas containing disturbing memories.

6 FAMILY, LOSS & SEPARATION

Poppies + Kamikaze



Link: Both reveal how military expectations can damage family relationships.

Difference: Weir explores a mother's uncertain separation from her son; Garland presents a returning father rejected by his family. Neither ending offers simple closure.

Methods: textile imagery and shifts in time / reported voices and the final question.

7 IDENTITY & BELONGING

The Émigrée + Checking Out Me History



Link: Both present identity as something that can resist political control.

Difference: Rumens's speaker preserves a personal vision of home through memory; Agard's speaker seeks excluded histories to shape his future.

Methods: recurring sunlight and personification / historical portraits and the metaphor of carving.

8 HUMAN FRAGILITY & IMPERMANENCE

Tissue + Ozymandias



Link: Both challenge the belief that human structures can guarantee permanent power.

Difference: Shelley exposes a ruler's failed monument; Dharker imagines a more open world that accepts fragility instead of enforcing rigid boundaries.

Methods: ruined stone and the desert / paper, light and flowing enjambment.

BUILD A COMPARATIVE ARGUMENT

- **Both poets explore… However, while… This difference suggests…**

Compare ideas throughout. Use language, form and structure to explain how each poet develops them.

Mr Pryke's Revision Notes

POWER & CONFLICT

BUILD A STRONGER ARGUMENT • GRADES 7–9

Make a clear claim. Prove it precisely. Explain why the comparison matters.

1 START WITH AN ARGUMENT

Give your answer a direction



Try: Explain what both poets suggest about the question's central idea, then identify a significant difference.

Example: Both Shelley and Browning expose the arrogance of power, but Shelley reveals its eventual collapse while Browning exposes its cruelty within personal relationships.

Develop: Let each paragraph test or extend this argument.

2 MAKE SMALL DETAILS MATTER

Move from a word to an interpretation



Example: In *"sneer of cold command"*, *"cold"* suggests power stripped of human warmth: the ruler's authority depends on emotional distance.

Develop: The expression survives in stone, preserving his cruelty rather than the greatness he wanted remembered.

Ask: How does this detail strengthen my argument about power?

3 EXPLAIN FORM & STRUCTURE

Connect the pattern to the meaning



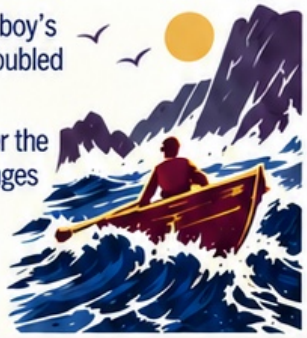
Example: *War Photographer* contains disturbing memories within six-line stanzas. This formal order can suggest an attempt to contain experiences that resist emotional control.

Develop: *Remains* moves from a shared military incident towards an isolated speaker, suggesting that collective action leaves an intensely private burden.

Ask: What does the poem's organisation reveal?

4 FOLLOW THE POEM'S JOURNEY

Track a change, return or unresolved ending



Example: The *Prelude* moves from the boy's confident control of the boat to a mind troubled by unfamiliar shapes.

Develop: Nature's power continues after the encounter: the lasting disturbance challenges his earlier belief in human mastery.

Ask: How does the ending change our understanding of the opening?

5 MAKE COMPARISON REVEAL MORE

Explain the significance of a difference



Example: Both *Poppies* and *Kamikaze* explore separation within families. However, Weir presents a mother longing for connection, while Garland shows a family withholding it.

Develop: Together, they reveal that war can divide families through both physical absence and social rejection.

Ask: What becomes clearer when I read these poems together?

6 USE CONTEXT TO EXPLAIN

Connect the wider world to a precise reading



Example: In *Checking Out Me History*, colonial education shapes which lives are celebrated and which are excluded.

Develop: "Dem tell me" presents official history as imposed authority; "I carving" makes self-definition an active response.

Ask: How does this context illuminate the poet's choices and ideas?

7 EXPLORE AMBIGUITY

Keep interpretations grounded in evidence



Example: *Poppies* does not confirm the son's death. The mother's movement towards the war memorial evokes bereavement, but her longing also allows a reading of separation and fear.

Develop: This uncertainty broadens the poem's exploration of loss.

Ask: What does the poem leave unresolved, and why might that matter?

8 REACH A PRECISE JUDGEMENT

Return to the question with a sharper insight



Example: Tennyson honours soldiers' courage while acknowledging failed command; Hughes exposes how survival can displace patriotic ideals.

Develop: The poems therefore offer different views of duty: collective heroism can be celebrated even as individual experience reveals its terrible cost.

Ask: What has my comparison shown about the question's central idea?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

- Does every paragraph answer the question, use precise evidence and develop the comparison?
- Depth comes from explaining your evidence, testing your ideas and making connections.