



**GCSE**  
**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**(8702)**

Past and present: poetry anthology

For examinations from 2017

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## Love and relationships

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## **When We Two Parted**

When we two parted  
In silence and tears,  
Half broken-hearted  
To sever for years,  
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,  
Colder thy kiss;  
Truly that hour foretold  
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning  
Sank chill on my brow –  
It felt like the warning  
Of what I feel now.  
Thy vows are all broken,  
And light is thy fame;  
I hear thy name spoken,  
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,  
A knell in mine ear;  
A shudder comes o'er me –  
Why wert thou so dear?  
They know not I knew thee,  
Who knew thee too well –  
Long, long shall I rue thee,  
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met –  
In silence I grieve,  
That thy heart could forget,  
Thy spirit deceive.  
If I should meet thee  
After long years,  
How should I greet thee? –  
With silence and tears.

LORD BYRON

## Love's Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river  
And the rivers with the Ocean,  
The winds of Heaven mix for ever  
With a sweet emotion;  
Nothing in the world is single;  
All things by a law divine  
In one another's being mingle —  
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high Heaven,  
And the waves clasp one another;  
No sister-flower would be forgiven  
If it disdain'd its brother:  
And the sunlight clasps the earth,  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea —  
What are all these kisses worth,  
If thou kiss not me?

PERCEY BYSSHE SHELLEY

## Porphyria's Lover

The rain set early in to-night,  
The sullen wind was soon awake,  
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
and did its worst to vex the lake:  
I listened with heart fit to break.  
When glided in Porphyria; straight  
She shut the cold out and the storm,  
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;  
Which done, she rose, and from her form  
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
And, last, she sat down by my side  
And called me. When no voice replied,  
She put my arm about her waist,  
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,  
And all her yellow hair displaced,  
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
And spread o'er all her yellow hair,  
Murmuring how she loved me – she  
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,  
To set its struggling passion free  
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
And give herself to me for ever.  
But passion sometimes would prevail,  
Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain  
A sudden thought of one so pale  
For love of her, and all in vain:  
So, she was come through wind and rain.  
Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
Happy and proud; at last I knew  
Porphyria worshipped me: surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
While I debated what to do.  
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
Perfectly pure and good: I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string I wound  
Three times her little throat around,  
And strangled her. No pain felt she;  
I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
As a shut bud that holds a bee,  
I warily oped her lids: again  
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
And I untightened next the tress  
About her neck; her cheek once more

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:  
    I propped her head up as before,  
    Only, this time my shoulder bore  
Her head, which droops upon it still:  
    The smiling rosy little head,  
So glad it has its utmost will,  
    That all it scorned at once is fled,  
    And I, its love, am gained instead!  
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how  
    Her darling one wish would be heard.  
And thus we sit together now,  
    And all night long we have not stirred,  
    And yet God has not said a word!

ROBERT BROWNING

## Sonnet 29 – 'I think of thee!'

I think of thee! – my thoughts do twine and bud  
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,  
Put out broad leaves, and soon there 's nought to see  
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.  
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood  
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee  
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly  
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,  
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,  
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee  
Drop heavily down, – burst, shattered, everywhere!  
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee  
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,  
I do not think of thee – I am too near thee.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

## Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;  
    – They had fallen from an ash, and were grey.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles of years ago;  
And some words played between us to and fro  
    On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing  
Alive enough to have strength to die;  
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
    Like an ominous bird a-wing...

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me  
Your face, and the God curst sun, and a tree,  
    And a pond edged with greyish leaves.

THOMAS HARDY



## Letters from Yorkshire

In February, digging his garden, planting potatoes,  
he saw the first lapwings return and came  
indoors to write to me, his knuckles singing

as they reddened in the warmth.  
It's not romance, simply how things are.  
You out there, in the cold, seeing the seasons

turning, me with my heartful of headlines  
feeding words onto a blank screen.  
Is your life more real because you dig and sow?

You wouldn't say so, breaking ice on a waterbutt,  
clearing a path through snow. Still, it's you  
who sends me word of that other world

pouring air and light into an envelope. So that  
at night, watching the same news in different houses,  
our souls tap out messages across the icy miles.

MAURA DOOLEY

## The Farmer's Bride

Three Summers since I chose a maid,  
Too young maybe – but more's to do  
At harvest-time than bide and woo.

When us was wed she turned afraid  
Of love and me and all things human;  
Like the shut of a winter's day  
Her smile went out, and 'twasn't a woman –  
More like a little frightened fay.

One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

'Out 'mong the sheep, her be,' they said,  
Should properly have been abed;  
But sure enough she wasn't there  
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.

So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down  
We chased her, flying like a hare  
Before our lanterns. To Church-Town

All in a shiver and a scare  
We caught her, fetched her home at last  
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house  
As well as most, but like a mouse:

Happy enough to chat and play  
With birds and rabbits and such as they,  
So long as men-folk keep away.

'Not near, not near!' her eyes beseech  
When one of us comes within reach.

The women say that beasts in stall  
Look round like children at her call.  
I've hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he,  
Straight and slight as a young larch tree,  
Sweet as the first wild violets, she,  
To her wild self. But what to me?

The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,

The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,  
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,  
A magpie's spotted feathers lie

On the black earth spread white with rime,  
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.

What's Christmas-time without there be  
Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there  
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair  
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,  
The soft young down of her, the brown,  
The brown of her – her eyes, her hair, her hair!

CHARLOTTE MEW

SAMPLE

## Walking Away

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –  
A sunny day with leaves just turning,  
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play  
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite  
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see  
You walking away from me towards the school  
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free  
Into a wilderness, the gait of one  
Who finds no path where the path should be.

That hesitant figure, eddying away  
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,  
Has something I never quite grasp to convey  
About nature's give-and-take – the small, the scorching  
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.

I have had worse partings, but none that so  
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly  
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –  
How selfhood begins with a walking away,  
And love is proved in the letting go.

CECIL DAY LEWIS

## Eden Rock

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:  
My father, twenty-five, in the same suit  
Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack  
Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress  
Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,  
Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.  
Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.

She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight  
From an old H.P. Sauce bottle, a screw  
Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out  
The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.

The sky whitens as if lit by three suns.  
My mother shades her eyes and looks my way  
Over the drifted stream. My father spins  
A stone along the water. Leisurely,

They beckon to me from the other bank.  
I hear them call, 'See where the stream-path is!  
Crossing is not as hard as you might think.'

I had not thought that it would be like this.

CHARLES CAUSLEY

## **Follower**

My father worked with a horse-plough,  
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung  
Between the shafts and the furrow.  
The horse strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing  
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.  
The sod rolled over without breaking.  
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round  
And back into the land. His eye  
Narrowed and angled at the ground,  
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake,  
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;  
Sometimes he rode me on his back  
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,  
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.  
All I ever did was follow  
In his broad shadow round the farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,  
Yapping always. But today  
It is my father who keeps stumbling  
Behind me, and will not go away.

SEAMUS HEANEY

**From *Book of Matches*, 'Mother, any distance'**

Mother, any distance greater than a single span  
requires a second pair of hands.

You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors,  
the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors.

You at the zero-end, me with the spool of tape, recording  
length, reporting metres, centimetres back to base, then leaving  
up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling  
years between us. Anchor. Kite.

I space-walk through the empty bedrooms, climb  
the ladder to the loft, to breaking point, where something  
has to give;  
two floors below your fingertips still pinch  
the last one-hundredth of an inch ... I reach  
towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky  
to fall or fly.

SIMON ARMITAGE

## Before You Were Mine

I'm ten years away from the corner you laugh on  
with your pals, Maggie McGeeney and Jean Duff.  
The three of you bend from the waist, holding  
each other, or your knees, and shriek at the pavement.  
Your polka-dot dress blows round your legs. Marilyn.

I'm not here yet. The thought of me doesn't occur  
in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows  
the right walk home could bring. I knew you would dance  
like that. Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close  
with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it's worth it.

The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh?  
I remember my hands in those high-heeled red shoes, relics,  
and now your ghost clatters toward me over George Square  
till I see you, clear as scent, under the tree,  
with its lights, and whose small bites on your neck, sweetheart?

*Cha cha cha!* You'd teach me the steps on the way home from Mass,  
stamping stars from the wrong pavement. Even then  
I wanted the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere  
in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts  
where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine.

CAROL ANN DUFFY



## Winter Swans

The clouds had given their all -  
two days of rain and then a break  
in which we walked,

the waterlogged earth  
gulping for breath at our feet  
as we skirted the lake, silent and apart,

until the swans came and stopped us  
with a show of tipping in unison.  
As if rolling weights down their bodies to their heads

they halved themselves in the dark water,  
icebergs of white feather, paused before returning again  
like boats righting in rough weather.

'They mate for life' you said as they left,  
porcelain over the stilling water. I didn't reply  
but as we moved on through the afternoon light,

slow-stepping in the lake's shingle and sand,  
I noticed our hands, that had, somehow,  
swum the distance between us

and folded, one over the other,  
like a pair of wings settling after flight.

OWEN SHEERS

## Singh Song!

I run just one ov my daddy's shops  
from 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock  
and he vunt me not to hav a break  
but ven nobody in, I do di lock –

cos up di stairs is my newly bride  
vee share in chapatti  
vee share in di chutney  
after vee hav made luv  
like vee rowing through Putney –

Ven I return vid my pinnie untied  
di shoppers always point and cry:  
*Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?*  
*Yor lemons are limes*  
*yor bananas are plantain,*  
*dis dirty little floor need a little bit of mop*  
*in di worst Indian shop*  
*on di whole Indian road –*

Above my head high heel tap di ground  
as my wife on di web is playing wid di mouse  
ven she netting two cat on her Sikh lover site  
she book dem for di meat at di cheese ov her price –

my bride  
she effing at my mum  
in all di colours of Punjabi  
den stumble like a drunk  
making fun at my daddy

my bride  
tiny eyes ov a gun  
and di tummy ov a teddy

my bride  
she hav a red crew cut  
and she wear a Tartan sari  
a donkey jacket and some pumps  
on di squeak ov di girls dat are pinching my sweeties –

Ven I return from di tickle ov my bride  
di shoppers always point and cry:  
*Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?*  
*Di milk is out ov date*  
*and di bread is always stale,*  
*di tings yoo hav on offer yoo hav never got in stock*

*in di worst Indian shop  
on di whole Indian road –*

Late in di midnight hour  
ven yoo shoppers are wrap up quiet  
ven di precinct is concrete-cool  
vee cum down whispering stairs  
and sit on my silver stool,  
from behind di chocolate bars  
vee stare past di half-price window signs  
at di beaches ov di UK in di brightey moon –

from di stool each night she say,  
*How much do yoo charge for dat moon baby?*

from di stool each night I say,  
*Is half di cost ov yoo baby,*

from di stool each night she say,  
*How much does dat come to baby?*

from di stool each night I say,  
*Is priceless baby –*

DALJIT NAGRA

## **Climbing My Grandfather**

I decide to do it free, without a rope or net.  
First, the old brogues, dusty and cracked;  
an easy scramble onto his trousers,  
pushing into the weave, trying to get a grip.  
By the overhanging shirt I change  
direction, traverse along his belt  
to an earth-stained hand. The nails  
are splintered and give good purchase,  
the skin of his finger is smooth and thick  
like warm ice. On his arm I discover  
the glassy ridge of a scar, place my feet  
gently in the old stitches and move on.  
At his still firm shoulder, I rest for a while  
in the shade, not looking down,  
for climbing has its dangers, then pull  
myself up the loose skin of his neck  
to a smiling mouth to drink among teeth.  
Refreshed, I cross the scree cheek,  
to stare into his brown eyes, watch a pupil  
slowly open and close. Then up over  
the forehead, the wrinkles well-spaced  
and easy, to his thick hair (soft and white  
at this altitude), reaching for the summit,  
where gasping for breath I can only lie  
watching clouds and birds circle,  
feeling his heat, knowing  
the slow pulse of his good heart.

ANDREW WATERHOUSE

## Power and conflict

Percy Bysshe Shelley

William Blake

William Wordsworth

Robert Browning

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Wilfred Owen

Seamus Heaney

Ted Hughes

Simon Armitage

Jane Weir

Carol Ann Duffy

Imtiaz Dharker

Carol Rumens

John Agard

Beatrice Garland

Ozymandias

London

Extract from, *The Prelude*

My Last Duchess

The Charge of the Light Brigade

Exposure

Storm on the Island

Bayonet Charge

Remains

Poppies

War Photographer

Tissue

The Émigrée

Checking Out Me History

Kamikaze

## Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

## London

I wander through each chartered street,  
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,  
In every infant's cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every black'ning church appalls,  
And the hapless soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most through midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,  
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

WILLIAM BLAKE

Extract from, *The Prelude*

One summer evening (led by her) I found  
A little boat tied to a willow tree  
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.  
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in  
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;  
Leaving behind her still, on either side,  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,  
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point  
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view  
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,  
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnacle; lustily  
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat  
Went heaving through the water like a swan;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,  
And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the covert of the willow tree;  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –  
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
And serious mood; but after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



## My Last Duchess

### *Ferrara*

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace – all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, – good! but thanked  
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark' – and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
– E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

ROBERT BROWNING

SAMPLE

## The Charge of the Light Brigade

1.

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  
'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

2.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
Some one had blunder'd:  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

3.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell  
Rode the six hundred.

4.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turn'd in air  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wonder'd:  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

5.

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
    Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
    Left of six hundred.

6.

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
    All the world wonder'd.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
    Noble six hundred!

ALFRED TENNYSON

## Exposure

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive  
us ...

Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent ...  
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient ...  
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,  
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,  
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.  
Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,  
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.  
What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow ...  
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.  
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army  
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,  
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.  
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,  
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,  
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's  
nonchalance,  
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces -  
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare,  
snow-dazed,  
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,  
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.  
- Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed  
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;  
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;  
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed, -  
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;  
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.  
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;  
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,  
For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,

Shrivelling many hands. puckering foreheads crisp.  
The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,  
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,  
But nothing happens.

WILFRED OWEN

SAMPLE

## Storm on the Island

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,  
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.  
This wizened earth has never troubled us  
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks  
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees  
Which might prove company when it blows full  
Blast: you know what I mean – leaves and branches  
Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale  
So that you can listen to the thing you fear  
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.  
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.  
You might think that the sea is company,  
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs  
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits  
The very windows, spits like a tame cat  
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives  
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo,  
We are bombarded by the empty air.  
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

SEAMUS HEANEY

## Bayonet Charge

Suddenly he awoke and was running – raw  
In raw-seamed hot khaki, his sweat heavy,  
Stumbling across a field of clods towards a green hedge  
That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing  
Bullets smacking the belly out of the air –  
He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm;  
The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye  
Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest, –

In bewilderment then he almost stopped –  
In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations  
Was he the hand pointing that second? He was running  
Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs  
Listening between his footfalls for the reason  
Of his still running, and his foot hung like  
Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame  
And crawled in a threshing circle, its mouth wide  
Open silent, its eyes standing out.  
He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge,  
King, honour, human dignity, etcetera  
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm  
To get out of that blue crackling air  
His terror's touchy dynamite.

TED HUGHES



## Remains

On another occasion, we get sent out  
to tackle looters raiding a bank.  
And one of them legs it up the road,  
probably armed, possibly not.

Well myself and somebody else and somebody else  
are all of the same mind,  
so all three of us open fire.  
Three of a kind all letting fly, and I swear

I see every round as it rips through his life –  
I see broad daylight on the other side.  
So we've hit this looter a dozen times  
and he's there on the ground, sort of inside out,

pain itself, the image of agony.  
One of my mates goes by  
and tosses his guts back into his body.  
Then he's carted off in the back of a lorry.

End of story, except not really.  
His blood-shadow stays on the street, and out on patrol  
I walk right over it week after week.  
Then I'm home on leave. But I blink

and he bursts again through the doors of the bank.  
Sleep, and he's probably armed, possibly not.  
Dream, and he's torn apart by a dozen rounds.  
And the drink and the drugs won't flush him out –

he's here in my head when I close my eyes,  
dug in behind enemy lines,  
not left for dead in some distant, sun-stunned, sand-smothered land  
or six-feet-under in desert sand,

but near to the knuckle, here and now,  
his bloody life in my bloody hands.

SIMON ARMITAGE

## Poppies

Three days before Armistice Sunday  
and poppies had already been placed  
on individual war graves. Before you left,  
I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals,  
spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade  
of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

Sellotape bandaged around my hand,  
I rounded up as many white cat hairs  
as I could, smoothed down your shirt's  
upturned collar, steeled the softening  
of my face. I wanted to graze my nose  
across the tip of your nose, play at  
being Eskimos like we did when  
you were little. I resisted the impulse  
to run my fingers through the gelled  
blackthorns of your hair. All my words  
flattened, rolled, turned into felt,

slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked  
with you, to the front door, threw  
it open, the world overflowing  
like a treasure chest. A split second  
and you were away, intoxicated.  
After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,  
released a song bird from its cage.  
Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,  
and this is where it has led me,  
skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy  
making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without  
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

On reaching the top of the hill I traced  
the inscriptions on the war memorial,  
leaned against it like a wishbone.  
The dove pulled freely against the sky,  
an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear  
your playground voice catching on the wind.

JANE WEIR

## War Photographer

In his darkroom he is finally alone  
with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.  
The only light is red and softly glows,  
as though this were a church and he  
a priest preparing to intone a Mass.  
Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

He has a job to do. Solutions slop in trays  
beneath his hands, which did not tremble then  
though seem to now. Rural England. Home again  
to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel,  
to fields which don't explode beneath the feet  
of running children in a nightmare heat.

Something is happening. A stranger's features  
faintly start to twist before his eyes,  
a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries  
of this man's wife, how he sought approval  
without words to do what someone must  
and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

A hundred agonies in black-and-white  
from which his editor will pick out five or six  
for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyeballs prick  
with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers.  
From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where  
he earns his living and they do not care.

CAROL ANN DUFFY

## Tissue

Paper that lets the light  
shine through, this  
is what could alter things.  
Paper thinned by age or touching,

the kind you find in well-used books,  
the back of the Koran, where a hand  
has written in the names and histories,  
who was born to whom,

the height and weight, who  
died where and how, on which sepia date,  
pages smoothed and stroked and turned  
transparent with attention.

If buildings were paper, I might  
feel their drift, see how easily  
they fall away on a sigh, a shift  
in the direction of the wind.

Maps too. The sun shines through  
their borderlines, the marks  
that rivers make, roads,  
railtracks, mountainfolds,

Fine slips from grocery shops  
that say how much was sold  
and what was paid by credit card  
might fly our lives like paper kites.

An architect could use all this,  
place layer over layer, luminous  
script over numbers over line,  
and never wish to build again with brick

or block, but let the daylight break  
through capitals and monoliths,  
through the shapes that pride can make,  
find a way to trace a grand design

with living tissue, raise a structure  
never meant to last,  
of paper smoothed and stroked  
and thinned to be transparent,

turned into your skin.

IMTIAZ DHARKER

SAMPLE

## The Émigree

There once was a country... I left it as a child  
but my memory of it is sunlight-clear  
for it seems I never saw it in that November  
which, I am told, comes to the mildest city.  
The worst news I receive of it cannot break  
my original view, the bright, filled paperweight.  
It may be at war, it may be sick with tyrants,  
but I am branded by an impression of sunlight.

The white streets of that city, the graceful slopes  
glow even clearer as time rolls its tanks  
and the frontiers rise between us, close like waves.  
That child's vocabulary I carried here  
like a hollow doll, opens and spills a grammar.  
Soon I shall have every coloured molecule of it.  
It may by now be a lie, banned by the state  
but I can't get it off my tongue. It tastes of sunlight.

I have no passport, there's no way back at all  
but my city comes to me in its own white plane.  
It lies down in front of me, docile as paper;  
I comb its hair and love its shining eyes.  
My city takes me dancing through the city  
of walls. They accuse me of absence, they circle me.  
They accuse me of being dark in their free city.  
My city hides behind me. They mutter death,  
and my shadow falls as evidence of sunlight.

CAROLE RUMENS

## Checking Out Me History

Dem tell me  
Dem tell me  
Wha dem want to tell me

Bandage up me eye with me own history  
Blind me to me own identity

Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat  
dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat  
But Toussaint L'Ouverture  
no dem never tell me bout dat

*Toussaint  
a slave  
with vision  
lick back  
Napoleon  
battalion  
and first Black  
Republic born  
Toussaint de thorn  
to de French  
Toussaint de beacon  
of de Haitian Revolution*

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de balloon  
and de cow who jump over de moon  
Dem tell me bout de dish ran away with de spoon  
but dem never tell me bout Nanny de maroon

*Nanny  
see-far woman  
of mountain dream  
fire-woman struggle  
hopeful stream  
to freedom river*

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo  
but dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu  
Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492  
but what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she lamp  
and how Robin Hood used to camp  
Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole soul  
but dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

*From Jamaica  
she travel far  
to the Crimean War  
she volunteer to go  
and even when de British said no  
she still brave the Russian snow  
a healing star  
among the wounded  
a yellow sunrise  
to the dying*

Dem tell me  
Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me  
But now I checking out me own history  
I carving out me identity

JOHN AGARD



## Kamikaze

Her father embarked at sunrise  
with a flask of water, a samurai sword  
in the cockpit, a shaven head  
full of powerful incantations  
and enough fuel for a one-way  
journey into history

but half way there, she thought,  
recounting it later to her children,  
he must have looked far down  
at the little fishing boats  
strung out like bunting  
on a green-blue translucent sea

and beneath them, arcing in swathes  
like a huge flag waved first one way  
then the other in a figure of eight,  
the dark shoals of fishes  
flashing silver as their bellies  
swivelled towards the sun

and remembered how he  
and his brothers waiting on the shore  
built cairns of pearl-grey pebbles  
to see whose withstood longest  
the turbulent inrush of breakers  
bringing their father's boat safe

- *yes, grandfather's boat* – safe  
to the shore, salt-sodden, awash  
with cloud-marked mackerel,  
black crabs, feathery prawns,  
the loose silver of whitebait and once  
a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous.

*And though he came back  
my mother never spoke again  
in his presence, nor did she meet his eyes  
and the neighbours too, they treated him  
as though he no longer existed,  
only we children still chattered and laughed*

*till gradually we too learned  
to be silent, to live as though  
he had never returned, that this*

*was no longer the father we loved.*  
And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered  
which had been the better way to die.

BEATRICE GARLAND

SAMPLE

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