

Unseen Poetry

Fifteen Named Poets

Unit 2 GCSE English Literature



15

Contents

William Blake	2
John Keats	3
Thomas Hardy	4
Christina Rossetti	0
WH Auden	1
Robert Frost	2
Wilfred Owen	3
Dorothy Parker	4
Maya Angelou	4
Wendy Cope	5
Tony Harrison	2
Jo Shapcott	3
Sophie Hannah	1
Owen Sheers	1
Brian Patten	3

William Blake

London

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.

And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

What do you think is the poet's attitude to London and how does he present this attitude to the reader? (18 marks)

John Keats

Bright Star

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—

Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night

And watching, with eternal lids apart,

Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,

The moving waters at their priestlike task

Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,

Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask

Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—

No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,

Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,

To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,

Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,

And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

How does the poet feel about the moon and how does he present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Thomas Hardy

The Convergence of the Twain

(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")

I In a solitude of the sea

 Deep from human vanity,

And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly
couches she.

II Steel chambers, late the pyres

 Of her salamandrine fires,

Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal
lyres.

III Over the mirrors meant

 To glass the opulent

The sea-worm crawls — grotesque, slimed,
dumb, indifferent.

IV Jewels in joy designed

 To ravish the sensuous mind

Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and
black and blind.

V Dim moon-eyed fishes near

 Gaze at the gilded gear

And query: "What does this vaingloriousness
down here?" ...

VI Well: while was fashioning

 This creature of cleaving wing,

The Immanent Will that stirs and urges
everything

VII Prepared a sinister mate

 For her — so gaily great —

A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII And as the smart ship grew

 In stature, grace, and hue,

In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg
too.

IX Alien they seemed to be;

 No mortal eye could see

The intimate welding of their later history,

X Or sign that they were bent

 By paths coincident

On being anon twin halves of one august
event,

XI Till the Spinner of the Years

 Said "Now!" And each one hears,

And consummation comes, and jars two
hemisphere

How does the poet feel about the sinking of the Titanic and how does he present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Christina Rossetti

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,

Gone far away into the silent land;

When you can no more hold me by the hand,

Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.

Remember me when no more day by day

You tell me of our future that you plann'd:

Only remember me; you understand

It will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while

And afterwards remember, do not grieve:

For if the darkness and corruption leave

A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,

Better by far you should forget and smile

Than that you should remember and be sad.

How does the speaker in the poem feel about her own death and how does Rossetti present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

WH Auden

Musée des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a
window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently,
passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must
be
Children who did not specially want it to
happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run
its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life
and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how
everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the
ploughman may

Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure;
the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing
into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that
must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the
sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly
on.

How does the poet feel about 'suffering' and how does he present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Robert Frost

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

How does the poet feel about making a decision and how does he present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Wilfred Owen

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as
cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor
bells,

Nor any voice of mourning save the
choirs,—

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad
shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.

The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;

Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

How does the poet feel about war and how does he present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Dorothy Parker

Song in a Minor Key

There's a place I know where the birds swing
low,

And wayward vines go roaming,

Where the lilacs nod, and a marble god

Is pale, in scented gloaming.

And at sunset there comes a lady fair

Whose eyes are deep with yearning.

By an old, old gate does the lady wait

Her own true love's returning.

But the days go by, and the lilacs die,

And trembling birds seek cover;

Yet the lady stands, with her long white hands

Held out to greet her lover.

And it's there she'll stay till the shadowy day

A monument they grave her.

She will always wait by the same old gate, —

The gate her true love gave her.

How does the poet feel about the lady who is waiting for 'Her own true love's returning' and how does she present these feelings to the reader?

Maya Angelou

Caged Bird

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard

on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing
trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright
lawn
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of
dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

How does the poet feel about freedom and how does she present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Wendy Cope

Differences of Opinion

He tells her that the earth is flat—

He knows the facts, and that is that.

In altercations fierce and long

She tries her best to prove him wrong.

But he has learned to argue well.

He calls her arguments unsound

And often asks her not to yell.

She cannot win. He stands his ground.

The planet goes on being round.

How does the poet feel about this relationship between a man and a woman, and how does she present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Tony Harrison

Marked with a D

When the chilled dough of his flesh went in an oven
not unlike those he fuelled all his life,
I thought of his cataracts ablaze with Heaven
and radiant with the sight of his dead wife,
light streaming from his mouth to shape her name,
'not Florence and not Flo but always Florrie.'
I thought how his cold tongue burst into flame
but only literally, which makes me sorry,
sorry for his sake there's no Heaven to reach.
I get it all from Earth my daily bread
but he hungered for release from mortal speech
that kept him down, the tongue that weighed like lead.
The baker's man that no one will see rise
and England made to feel like some dull oaf
is smoke, enough to sting one person's eyes
and ash (not unlike flour) for one small loaf.

How does the speaker in the poem feel about death and how does he present these feelings to the reader? (18 marks)

Jo Shapcott

Love in the lab

One day

the technicians

touched souls

as they exchanged

everyday noises

above the pipette.

Then they knew

that the state of molecules

was not humdrum.

The inscriptions

on the specimen jars

which lined the room in racks

took fire in their minds:

what were yesterday

mere hieroglyphs

from the periodic table

became today urgent proof

that even here -

laboratory life -

writing is mystical.

The jars glinted under their labels:

it had taken fifteen years

to collect and collate them.

Now the pair were of one mind.

Quietly, methodically

they removed the labels

from each of the thousands

of jars. It took all night.

At dawn, rows of bare glass

winked at their exhausted coupling

against the fume cupboard.

Using their white coats

as a disguise

they took their places at the bench

and waited for the morning shift.

‘Jo Shapcott has a way of turning physics into the physical’. How far do you agree with this statement?

Sophie Hannah

Your Dad Did What?

Where they have been, if they have been away,
or what they've done at home, if they have not -
you make them write about the holiday.

One writes My Dad did. What? Your Dad did what?

That's not a sentence. Never mind the bell.

We stay behind until the work is done.

You count their words (you who can count and spell);
all the assignments are complete bar one

and though this boy seems bright, that one is his.

He says he's finished, doesn't want to add
anything, hands it in just as it is.

No change. My Dad did. What? What did his Dad?

You find the 'E' you gave him as you sort
through reams of what this girl did, what that lad did,
and read the line again, just one 'e' short:
This holiday was horrible. My Dad did.

How does the speaker in the poem feel about the way the teacher treats the boy, and how does Sophie Hannah present these feelings?

Owen Sheers

Not Yet My Mother

Yesterday I found a photo of you at seventeen,
holding a horse and smiling,
not yet my mother.

The tight riding hat hid your hair,
and your legs were still the long shins of a boy's.
You held the horse by the halter,
your hand a fist under its huge jaw.

The blown trees were still in the background
and the sky was grained by the old film stock,
but what caught me was your face,
which was mine.

And I thought, just for a second, that you were me.
But then I saw the woman's jacket,
nipped at the waist, the ballooned jodhpurs,
and of course the date, scratched in the corner.

All of which told me again,
that this was you at seventeen,
holding a horse and smiling, not yet my mother,
although I was clearly already your child.

How does the speaker in the poem feel about the photograph of his mother, and how does Owen Sheers present these feelings to the reader?

Brian Patten

Geography Lesson

Our teacher told us one day he would leave
And sail across a warm blue sea
To places he had only known from maps,
And all his life had longed to be.

The house he lived in was narrow and grey
But in his mind's eye he could see
Sweet-scented jasmine clinging to the walls,
And green leaves burning on an orange tree.

He spoke of the lands he longed to visit,
Where it was never drab or cold.
I couldn't understand why he never left,
And shook off the school's stranglehold.

Then halfway through his final term
He took ill and never returned.
He never got to that place on the map
Where the green leaves of the orange trees burned.

The maps were redrawn on the classroom wall;
His name forgotten, he faded away.
But a lesson he never knew he taught
Is with me to this day.

I travel to where the green leaves burn,
To where the ocean's glass-clear and blue,
To places our teacher taught me to love –
And which he never knew.

How does the speaker in the poem feel about his 'geography lesson' and how does Brian Patten present these feelings to the reader?