WJEC EDUQAS

GCSE English Literature
Paper 1 Revision

1b: Poetry Anthology
How do I love thee? Let me count the ways! -
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday’s
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight -
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right, -
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;
I love thee with the passion, put to use
In my old griefs, ... and with my childhood's faith:
I love thee with the love I seemed to lose
With my lost Saints, - I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Sonnet 43 is a reflective poem, written by Browning, about her intense love and feelings for her fiancé Robert Browning. In the love poem (sonnet), Elizabeth Barrett Browning tries her best to measure or define the love she has for her fiancé. The poem captures how much she loves Robert Browning and explores the different levels of her love throughout.

Themes:
- Love
- Relationships
- Death

Remember, you need to include context! Elizabeth Barret Browning was a key Victorian poet. She suffered from lifelong illness, despite which she married the poet and playwright Robert Browning, who was a major influence on her work, and to whom Sonnet 43 is addressed. Sonnet 43 is part of a longer sonnet sequence of 44 sonnets called Sonnets from the Portuguese. Sonnet 43 was the next to last sonnet in this series.
Sonnet 43
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Analyse the quotations below thinking about how language & structure are used to present love/relationships in Sonnet 43.

‘Let me count the ways!’
- **Imperative sentence** (command): shows she is assertive and strong-minded about her relationship. Also exclamatory (!) which highlights her excitement/enthusiasm.
- **Verb ‘count’** and plural ‘ways’: there are many reasons why she loves her fiancé.

‘depth and breadth and height/My soul can reach’
- **Semantic field of measurement** (words that link to one theme) – ‘depth’, ‘breadth’: highlights that she is trying to measure her love. Asks the question whether love can be measured?
- **Enjambment** (runs onto next line): shows the continuation of her love; it is ongoing and non-stop.

‘I love thee’
- **Repetition**: foregrounds/emphasises how much she loves her fiancé.
- **Pronouns** ‘I’ and ‘thee’ (you): positioning of the pronouns places her and her fiancé together, structurally showing their closeness.
- **Direct address**: she speaks directly TO her lover which reinforces her assertiveness and the strength of their relationship.

‘better after death.’
- **Comparative adjective ‘better’**: creates the idea that she will love him even more after they both die.
- **Juxtaposition ‘death’ with theme of love**: She does not seem afraid of death because of their eternal relationship which will forever continue. She turns negative concept (death) into a positive.
Valentine by Carol Ann Duffy

Not a red rose or a satin heart.
I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears like a lover.
It will make your reflection a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.
I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring,
if you like.
Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

Theme:

What is it about?
The poem is about a (seemingly genderless) speaker giving the gift of an onion to her lover or valentine. The poem explores the realities of love being complex and, at times, damaging, and juxtaposes the typical ‘ideals’ commonly associated with love and romance. The poem illustrates how an onion, as a gift, is a much more accurate representation of love, symbolising both the beauties and negatives associated with love as a concept.

Remember, you need to include context!
Her poetry has been the subject of controversy. Duffy often tackles difficult subjects, encouraging the reader to explore alternative points of view.

Duffy’s poetry is often feminist in its themes and approach. She is also openly homosexual.

Themes:
- Love/marriage
- Relationships
- Hurt
### Valentine
Carol Ann Duffy

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<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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| ‘Not a red rose or a satin heart’ | **Adverb ‘not’ to start poem:** Immediately establishes that the poem will NOT be a traditional love poem; it will challenge the typical conventions of love.  
**Semantic field of love – ‘rose’, ‘heart’**: overall theme of love in the poem but there is also an overall theme of hurt. The poem is combining the truths of love. |
| ‘it is a moon wrapped in brown paper’ (onion) | **Metaphor:** by using the metaphor of an onion to talk about love, Duffy explores how aspects of love can be unpleasant/unattractive (like the outer brown), but the inside can be a ‘moon’ – positive and beautiful. |
| ‘possessive and faithful’ | **Adjectives:** these adjectives juxtapose the positive and negative sides of love. ‘Possessive’ contribute to the more negative semantic field in the poem (along with words like ‘grief’, ‘tears’ etc – the inevitable bad sides to a love. ‘Faithful’ links to marriage and commitment – the more positive aspects of love. |
| ‘cling to your fingers, Cling to your knife’ | **Repetition/syntactic parallelism:** this phrase is repeated to highlight how negative parts of love can be ongoing and annoying. ‘Cling’ suggests that love is always with you, whether relationships are still ongoing. ‘Knife’, the final word in the poem, deploys the image that love, ultimately, can hurt you. |
She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that’s best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o’er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o’er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

What is it about?
She Walks in Beauty is a poem about Byron admiring a lady from afar. He explores the power of someone’s attractiveness – magnetism to another human being. The speaker is fascinated by the woman’s beauty. We are therefore painted a picture of this woman, as seen through someone else’s eyes. The speaker is keen to emphasise that it is not all about outward appearances. He falls in love with the woman for her outer beauty and her inner goodness of character. By the end of the poem he seems to fall in love with the woman – although it is never actually said - but she does not love him back. He feels like she is unobtainable – too good for him? The reader is likely to sympathise with him.

Remember, you need to include context!
Byron was one of the leading poets of a group known as the Romantics. Romanticism was a general artistic movement (literature, music, the visual arts, etc.) which dominated European culture from the late-18th century until the mid-19th century. Byron wrote this poem from personal experience in response to seeing a woman at a party in London. It has been claimed that the lady in question was in mourning and dressed in a black spangled gown; the first two lines shows how this interpretation would seem to mirror the image that Byron creates. Byron himself had many stormy personal relationships. He was famously described as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'. In other words, Lord Byron was what we may refer to as a ‘loveable rogue.’
New theme: Love & Relationships

She Walks in Beauty
Lord Byron

Analyse the quotations below thinking about how language & structure are used to present love/relationships in She Walks in Beauty.

‘like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies’

‘nameless grace Which waves in every raven tress’

‘Where thoughts serenely sweet express, How pure, how dear their dwelling-place’

‘So soft, so calm, yet eloquent’

Simile: The simile at the start of the poem brings together light and darkness, two things which cannot co-exist together (It is either one or the other). This simile is powerful and highlights how powerful the woman’s beauty is. The alliteration of the ‘c’ and the sibilance of the ‘s’ gives a pleasant, romantic, smooth sound to the poem, again highlighting her beauty.

Metaphor: The woman is a raven-haired (dark-haired) beauty. The adjective ‘raven’ perhaps gives her a darker aspect as it is traditionally associated with a bird of bad omen. This perhaps represents the two sides of her characters. The metaphor also emphasises that the poet cannot put into words how beautiful the woman is.

He uses sibilance to show that the inner beauty of the woman creates the outer beauty on the surface. He says her thoughts are beautiful, her character is beautiful, that it is almost coming to the surface in her beautiful face. The repetition of ‘how’ is a sign of endearment, he cannot stop thinking about her wonder and beauty.

Repetition/syntactic parallelism: The intensifier ‘so’ is used which highlights the extent to which the poet is marveling at this woman. The adjectives ‘soft’ and ‘calm’ are positive, feminine, and romantic. The subordinating conjunction ‘yet’ gives an alternative to his admiration – ‘eloquent’ means fluent or persuasive, which shows he also admires her mind, not just her beauty.
Cozy Apologia by Rita Dove

For Fred

I could pick anything and think of you—
This lamp, the wind-still rain, the glossy blue
My pen exudes, drying matte, upon the page.
I could choose any hero, any cause or age
And, sure as shooting arrows to the heart,
Astride a dappled mare, legs braced as far apart
As standing in silver stirrups will allow—
There you'll be, with furrowed brow
And chain mail glinting, to set me free:
One eye smiling, the other firm upon the enemy.

This post-postmodern age is all business: compact
disks
And faxes, a do-it-now-and-take-no-risks
Event. Today a hurricane is nudging up the coast,
Oddly male: Big Bad Floyd, who brings a host
Of daydreams: awkward reminiscences
Of teenage crushes on worthless boys
Whose only talent was to kiss you senseless.
They all had sissy names—Marcel, Percy, Dewey;
Were thin as licorice and as chewy,
Sweet with a dark and hollow center. Floyd's

Cussing up a storm. You're bunkered in your
Aerie, I'm perched in mine
(Twin desks, computers, hardwood floors):
We're content, but fall short of the Divine.
Still, it's embarrassing, this happiness—
Who's satisfied simply with what's good for us,
When has the ordinary ever been news?
And yet, because nothing else will do
To keep me from melancholy (call it blues),
I fill this stolen time with you.

Remember, you need to include context!
American poet, Rita Dove is married to fellow-writer Fred Viebahn and Cozy Apologia seems to be an affectionate tribute to him. The poem notes details of a couple's domestic life as writers, 'Twin desks, computers, hardwood floors'. It is set against the arrival of Hurricane Floyd, a powerful storm which hit the east coast of the USA in 1999. This factual, real-life context supports the idea this is an autobiographical poem.
‘I could pick up anything and think of you […] the glossy blue
My pen exudes…

‘There you'll be, […] to set me free’

‘Big Bad Floyd’

‘To keep me from melancholy (call it blues),
I fill this stolen time with you’

Analyse the quotations below thinking about how language & structure are used to present love/relationships in She Walks in Beauty.

- **Pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’**: The relationship’s strength is established straight away with the positionig of pronouns. Whilst the hurricane hits, everything reminds the speaker of her partner. The nouns that follow ‘pen’, ‘matte’, ‘page’ show that everything has a link to her husband. Perhaps because they were both writers?

- **Image of saviour**: Here, the pronouns are contrasted again to bring the couple together despite their distance during the hurricane. The image created here is positive and traditional; the speaker know her partner will save her from everything – this is true in this case, as her loneliness is being saved by her memories of him.

- **Alliteration**: Alliteration is used here of the ‘b’ sound, or a plosive sound (where the sound is powerful and plosive from the mouth). This obviously refers to the hurricane she is awaiting whilst safe in her study, but the use of alliteration highlights the dangers that are pending. It makes it sad that she is not with her partner.

- **Figurative language**: The ‘stolen time’ is personification, but she feels that the Hurricane Floyd has stolen or taken precious time away from her and her partner. It shows the power of the hurricane and its effects on their relationship. The metaphor ‘I fill this stolen time with you’ is her avoiding sadness by thinking of her partner.
Death of a Naturalist
by Seamus Heaney

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied Specks to range on window sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until
The fattening dots burst, into nimble Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

Themes:
- Nature
- Childhood/innocence
- Change

What is the poem about?
This poem reflects on a significant event in the poet’s childhood and describes the memories of a young boy who has been collecting frogspawn from a flax dam. This is a memory poem that shows how an older Heaney captures the perspective and descriptions of a young child who has gone out with his class to collect frogspawn.
When he later returns to the scene, the reader learns about how both the scene and the poet have changed.

Remember, you need to include context!

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) was an Irish poet who wrote poems about Ireland, rural life and nature. He won the nobel prize for literature in 1995.
Death of a Naturalist
Seamus Heaney

Analyse the quotations below thinking about how language & structure are used to present nature in Death of a Naturalist.

• **Metaphor**: The metaphorical ‘death’ in the title of the poem refers to the loss of childhood innocence and enthusiasm as we grow older. ‘Naturalist’ refers to one who is in touch with nature.

‘Death of a naturalist’

‘warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water’

Simile: The simile here is describing a really visual memory for the speaker where he saw frogspawn as a child. The simile is detailing the size and image of the spawn. The ‘slobber’ links to this childish self and the image almost sounds like it is admired by the child.

‘Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam;’

**Change of tone**: ‘Then one hot day’ marks a change in the poem, where the speaker returns to the place in the present, at an older age. The imagery is more negative (‘rank with cowdung’) and nature s personified to sound almost dangerous (angry frogs invaded).

‘The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance’

• **Figurative language**: The metaphor ‘slim kings’ is referring to the frogs but maximises and exaggerates their power and appearance; they are seen to be fearful things, very distinct to humans. The personification in the verb ‘gathered’ has connotations of them being intimidating and threatening to human nature. There is a clear divide between humans and nature.
1. SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
   Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
   With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
   And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
   To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
   And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
   For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

2. Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
   Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
   Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
   Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
   And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
   Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
   Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Themes:
- Nature
- Time
- Death

3. Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
   Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
   And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
   Among the river sallows, borne aloft
   Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
   And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricketts sing; and now with treble soft
   The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

What is the poem about?
In To Autumn, John Keats paints three perfect autumnal landscapes in three powerful stanzas. He also highlights the impact on the senses which occur to the patient observer. The poem is written in a highly formal pattern and combines rich imagery with clever use of personification. The speaker addresses autumn directly and personifies it as a woman. The poem moves from the early stages of autumn to the coming of winter. It includes detailed descriptions of different aspects of the season which is seen as beautiful and full of natural wonder.

Remember, you need to include context!
Keats is generally classified as one of the Romantic poets. Romanticism was a general artistic movement (literature, music, the visual arts, etc.) which dominated European culture from the last part of the 18th century until the mid-19th century. Among its key aspects were:
All of these may be seen at work in Keats’ To Autumn which reflects on mankind’s relationship with a particular time of year. He wrote the poem inspired by a walk he had taken through the countryside; it is, therefore, a highly personal response.
To Autumn  
John Keats

Analyse the quotations below thinking about how language & structure are used to present nature in To Autumn.

*SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness*

‘Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.’

*Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?*

Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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<th>Exclamatory/sibilance:</th>
<th>This opening, exclamatory line has tones of sibilance (repetition of ‘s’ sound) in its description of the weather in autumn. Alliteration is also used to create a slow rhythm to the line, which reflects the fact that everything is slowing down in preparation for autumn. The poet, however, is not displeased by this fact – he seems, instead, to be celebrating the richness of nature.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personification:</td>
<td>Keats continues to personify autumn directly ‘thou watches’) as something that has done its job and is now passive, watching the last of its effects. You could even say that autumn feels proud to see its work. The onomatopoeia ‘oozings’ creates the sound and image of slowness and everyting coming to an end. The repetition of ‘hours’ emphasises that autumn and the process of harvest is coming to an end – time is running out.</td>
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<td>Rhetorical questions:</td>
<td>The rhetorical question includes sibilance to refer to the opposite season of spring. Keats reassures autumn that spring is not so brilliant – as it doesn’t hang around any longer than autumn does – even though it appears to be more celebrated. Keats alludes to the pastoral tradition wherein shepherds typically sing during springtime – season of newness. He makes this comparison to show that autumn is just as important.</td>
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<td>Sensory language:</td>
<td>The closing section of the poem is alive with the noises that various birds and insects make. The poet uses sensory language such as ‘sing’ and ‘whistles’ to remind the reader that though the year may be drawing to a close, the cycle of life still goes on. It almost reads as a synectic list of what the poet can see and hear around him – we can follow his train of thought. Words such as ‘twitter’ are onomatopoeic in that they mimic the sound of the birds singing.</td>
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Dulce et Decorum Est. by Wilfred Owen
(Translated to: It is sweet and right)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime.

Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

What is the poem about?
The poem describes a gas attack on a trench in World War One. The poem reveals to the reader the terrible consequences of a gas attack. It also presents the unglamorous reality of trench life, with the soldiers described as being 'like old beggars'. The Latin used at the end of the poem means 'It is sweet and honourable to die for your country', a concept Owen is strongly denying, saying it is an 'old lie'.

New theme:
- Nature
- Time
- Death

Themes:
- War & Conflict

Remember, you need to include context!
- Owen fought in WW1 and many of his poems are about the horrors of war
- WW1 took place between 1914 and 1918 and is remembered for the use of gas and technological innovations.
New theme: War & Conflict

Dulce et Decorum Est. Wilfred Owen

‘Bent double, like old beggars under sacks’

- Image ‘bent-double’ – creates image of the soldiers being worn out and tired. The double-adjective ‘bent-double’ shows they are struggling to stand upright, and suggests they are feeling the strain.
- Simile ‘like old beggars’ – creates image of old, poor men – very ironic as soldiers were typically quite young. Very emotive to the reader.

‘Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling Fitting the clumsy helmets’

- The exclamatory sentences here are short and express a considerable amount of energy – reflecting the panic and adrenaline of the soldiers experiencing a gas attack.
- Noun ‘boys’ is very emotive again – juxtaposes the ‘old beggars’ previously – foregrounds how young the soldiers are.
- Metaphor ‘ecstasy of fumbling’ – suggests the mixed emotions of a drug, uncertainty/confusion/excitement
- Metaphor ‘clumsy helmets’ – refers to gas masks.

‘He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning’

- The third person pronoun ‘he’ is personal and anecdotal. Refers to Owen’s experience in the war, as he reflects on losing a close friend.
- Verb ‘plunges’ connotes desperation and the struggle the friend went through, it is as though he is reaching out for help. Very emotive and striking imagery.
- Triple verbs ‘guttering, choking, drowning’ are all negative and the repeated suffix suggests the continuation of struggle. Metaphor ‘drowning’ refers to the gas and his inability to breathe.

‘The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est

- Declarative sentence ‘The old lie’ reflects Owen’s certainty that it is in fact a lie. Adjective ‘old’ is idiomatic and suggests it is commonly thought. The noun ‘lie’ is direct and strong – Owen is exposing the brutalities of war.
- ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ – Latin for ‘It is sweet and right’ – repetition of the title is deliberate, as this time, Owen exposes the truth by following it with: ‘Pro patria mori’ (to die for one’s country).
IF I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home. And
think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

What is the poem about?
The poem was written in 1914 at the start of World War 1. Rupert Brooke talks about the soldier’s possible death and the peaceful afterlife he will enjoy after sacrificing himself for his country. Brooke himself fought in World War 1 and died in 1915 from blood poisoning after suffering a mosquito bite. After his death, Brooke came to represent the tragic loss of talented young men during the war.

Remember, you need to include context!
- The beginning of WW1, as the first war, mean that people were naïve and idealistic in their perception of it.
- The war was in fact brutal, killing over 20 million on both sides, changing the world forever.
- Written before WW1, Brooke’s poem is quite romanticised and optimistic – unknowing of the brutalities that would occur.
- Poems written post 1914 (such as Dulce) are much more realistic.
New theme: War & Conflict

The Soldier
Rupert Brooke

‘If I should die, think only this of me:’

- Subordinating conjunction ‘If’ starts the poem, posing the idea of Brooke’s possible death. The sentence is imperative and instructs the reader to see the speaker in a particular way if he finds his death. First person pronoun ‘me’ suggests the poem is about Brooke, as it was written before he fought in WW1.

‘A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,’ [...] ‘A body of England’s’

- Personification of England as a very powerful, strong, female, creating an overall, dominant theme of patriotism – the core of the poem and the reason why men went to war, according to Brooke.
- Verbs ‘bore, shaped, made aware’ – foregrounds the strength of England as a creator.
- ‘A body of England’s’ – Brooke wants to be remembered for fighting for his creator, for his country.

‘In hearts at peace, under an English heaven’

- The conclusion of the poem is very positive and links to the afterlife Brooke hopes to experience, as a reward, for fighting for his country if he dies.
- The metaphor ‘hearts at peace’ is extremely optimistic and positive; there is no fear of dying.
- Metaphor ‘under at English heaven’ reflects that Brooke feels he will be looked after for being so loyal to his country.

Structure

- The poem is one stanza, 14 lines and fulfills the sonnet form – typically associated with love.
- This could reflect the reasons why Brooke, and others, fought in war – purely for love for their country.
For years afterwards the farmers found them – the wasted young, turning up under their plough blades as they tended the land back into itself.

A chit of bone, the china plate of a shoulder blade, the relic of a finger, the blown and broken bird’s egg of a skull, all mimicked now in flint, breaking blue in white across this field where they were told to walk, not run, towards the wood and its nesting machine guns.

And even now the earth stands sentinel, reaching back into itself for reminders of what happened like a wound working a foreign body to the surface of the skin.

This morning, twenty men buried in one long grave, a broken mosaic of bone linked arm in arm, their skeletons paused mid dance-macabre in boots that outlasted them, their socketed heads tilted back at an angle and their jaws, those that have them, dropped open.

As if the notes they had sung have only now, with this unearthing, slipped from their absent tongues.

What is the poem about?
The poem describes how farmers in France find the bodies (or broken up bones) of soldiers who were killed in World War 1, whilst ploughing their fields. The memories of the young soldiers remain in the soil. The poem switches between describing events of the past, with the discovery of their bodies in the present. The choices of image, vocabulary and focus are all guided by the strange juxtaposition of the natural present state of Mametz Wood, against its all too unnatural past. It gives voice to those silent, unknown skeletons, most of whom would have been extremely young when they were killed.

Remember, you need to include context!
Mametz Wood (7th July 1916) was the scene of fierce fighting during the Battle of the Somme, one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. Soldiers of the Welsh division were ordered to take Mametz Wood, the largest area of trees on the battlefield. The generals thought this would take a few hours. It ended up lasting five days with soldiers fighting face-to-face with the enemy. There were 4,000 casualties, with 600 dead. The Welsh succeeded, but their bravery and sacrifice was never really acknowledged.
### New theme: War & Conflict

#### Mametz Wood

**Owen Sheers**

- **Image** created of farmers digging up the bodies of the soldiers who lost their lives in the Battle of the Somme.
- The **hyphen here** could portray the disruption to the soldiers’ lives, as them overtaking Mametz Wood should not have concluded as brutally as it did.
- The **adjective ‘wasted’ is emotive** – the soldiers would have been very young. Noun ‘young’ illustrates their innocence and naivety – very emotive as they should not have died.

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<thead>
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<th>'For years afterwards the farmers found them – the wasted young’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic field</strong> of the human body is evidence in the poem: ‘shoulder blade’, ‘finger’, ‘skull’, ‘skin’ etc – representing the number of lives lost that should not have been lost. Also shows how fragments of lost lives were discovered by the farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <strong>adjective ‘china’ depicts how valuable the lives were, as the noun ‘china’ connotes value and preciousness.</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- The **connective ‘And’** illustrates a change of time in the poem, as the focus switches throughout from memories of the battle, to the present day.
- The **personification** of the ‘earth stands sentinel’ portrays how the battle and deaths has not been forgotten or accepted.
- The **adjective ‘sentinel’ means guarding/on watch** – it is as though people are not over the tragedy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘And even now the earth stands sentinel’</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final stanza</strong> suggests that until the bodies have been discovered, the truth of the battle has not been recognised and the Welsh have not been rewarded for their bravery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The poem gives a <strong>voice</strong> to those who fought and died in the battle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their bravery is referred to through the <strong>metaphor</strong> of ‘song’, and their tongues have been ‘absent’.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A Wife in London
Thomas Hardy

I--The Tragedy

She sits in the tawny vapour
That the City lanes have uprolled,
Behind whose webby fold on fold
Like a waning taper
The street-lamp glimmers cold.

A messenger's knock cracks smartly,
Flashd news is in her hand
Of meaning it dazes to understand
Though shaped so shortly:
He--has fallen--in the far South Land . . .

II--The Irony

'Tis the morrow; the fog hangs thicker,
The postman nears and goes:
A letter is brought whose lines disclose
By the firelight flicker
His hand, whom the worm now knows:

Fresh--firm--penned in highest feather -
Page-full of his hoped return,
And of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn
In the summer weather,
And of new love that they would learn.

What is the poem about?
The poem is about a wife waiting for her husband to come back from the Boer War, which took place in South Africa from 1880-1881. It describes the hopes and fears of a wife who is anticipating her husband’s return from war. The story has two parts: I - The Tragedy creates a very gloomy and ominous atmosphere. The wife receives a letter from her husband’s regiment to notify her of his death. II – The Irony describes the wife receiving a letter from her husband the following morning, full of excitement about his planned return home. The irony of part II is sad it is that the soldier dies before his wife read his letter.

Remember, you need to include context!
- Hardy often focuses on tragedy in his poems.
- Written in 1899, he is referring to the Boer War, which was fought in South Africa, between 1880-1881.
- The Boers were farmers who rebelled against British rule in the Transvaal in northern South Africa, in a bid to re-establish their independence.
- The reference to fog is the idea that London was polluted by smoke from industry and war in the late 19th Century.

Themes:
- War
- Grief
- Death
- Relationships

Theme: War & Conflict
A Wife in London
Thomas Hardy

New theme:
War & Conflict

‘The street-lamp glimmers cold.’

- The opening stanza sets the scene of the wife in London.
- Pathetic fallacy is used to foreshadow the news she receives.
- The streetlamp is described as ‘cold’ which juxtaposes the conventional warming of light, foreshadowing the death that takes place of the wife’s husband in war. There is an absence of light.

‘He--has fallen--in the far South Land’

- The news of the husband’s death is revealed.
- Third person pronoun ‘He’ reflects the distance between the couple. Perhaps he is nameless to represent the many other men who lost lives in the Boer war.
- The hyphens depict the shock and difficulty of the wife in accepting the news. The speech is non-articulate and fragmented, and the use of euphemism ‘has fallen’ avoid the reality of what has happened.
- The ‘far South Land’ refers to the battle which was fought in South Africa.

‘Tis the morrow; the fog hangs thicker’

- The second stanza is ‘The irony’ and shows a different day with a different outcome.
- The noun ‘morrow’ portrays that it is the next day, and offers an alternative scenario – reflecting the uncertainty of being a partner of someone at war.
- The pathetic fallacy is continued, foregrounding an overall gloom. ‘fog hangs thicker’ – personification is used to resemble the control of nature; the wife has no control of her husband’s return. Also refers to the pollution of industry and war of the late 19th Century.

Fresh--firm--penned in highest feather -
Page-full of his hoped return,
And of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn
In the summer weather,
And of new love that they would learn.

- Final stanza – represented hope, optimism and the future – ironic as the soldier has died before the wife has received the letter.
- Semantic field of positivity – furthers the irony, and is particularly emotive.
- The juxtaposition of pathetic fallacy ‘summer weather’ provides a hopeful tone – again, ironic.
The Manhunt
Simon Armitage

After the first phase, 

\textit{after passionate nights and intimate days,}

only then would he let me trace 

the frozen river which ran through his face,

only then would he let me explore 

the blown hinge of his lower jaw

and handle and hold 

the damaged, porcelain collar bone,

and mind and attend 

the fractured rudder of shoulder-blade,

and finger and thumb 

\textit{the parachute silk of his punctured lung.}

Only then could I bind the struts 

and climb the rungs of his broken ribs,

and feel the hurt 

of his grazed heart.

Skirting along, 

only then could I picture the scan,

the foetus of metal beneath his chest 

where the bullet had come to rest.

Then I widened the search, 

traced the scarring back to its source 

to a sweating, unexploded mine 

buried deep in his mind, around which 

every nerve in his body had tightened and 

closed.

Then, and \textit{only then, did I come close.}

Remember, you need to include context!

\textit{This poem belongs to the collection called ‘The Not Dead’, which explores how soldiers and their families are affected by war and conflict. Sometimes referred to as ‘Laura’s Poem: The Manhunt’, it is about a soldier who served in Bosnia as a peace keeper in the 1990s. He did not expect that he would be fighting on the mission but he was badly injured and discharged from the army because of his physical and psychological injuries.}

\textit{Simon Armitage has worked on several television programmes including a documentary on permanently injured soldiers and their lives. This poem was first broadcast as part of that documentary.}

What is the poem about?

The Manhunt is written from the perspective of the wife of a soldier who has sustained serious injuries at war and has returned home. The poem explores the physical and mental effects of living with injuries sustained when on active service in the armed forces.
The Manhunt
Simon Armitage

‘after passionate nights and intimate days’

Semantic field is created here of love and romance in the adjectives ‘passionate’ and ‘intimate’, juxtaposing their relationship with the horrors of war. The word ‘after’ is dependant – their relationship is dependent on something and seems incomplete.

‘only then would he let me trace’

The anaphora is used again in ‘only then’ which suggests that his identity has changed from what she knew before he went to war. The imperative phrase ‘let me’ shows that he has control and is only willing to let her ‘in’ when he feels ready. His identity has been damaged through war.

‘blown hinge/the parachute silk of his punctured lung’

The adjective ‘blown’ has connotations of war, bombs and destruction. The noun ‘hinge’ relates to linking things together, highlighting that part of him is unable to function following his part in war. The metaphor ‘parachute silk’ creates an image of life-saving and could link to the soldier fighting to save lives. It could also suggest that he needs saving. The image created is of a deflated lung – something necessary is damaged quite significantly.

‘only then, did I come close’

The phrase ‘only then’ again is dependent on something – their relationship is not as it once was. ‘come close’ refers to her ongoing search to find his identity and to find who he once was before his experience with war.
And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons: - happy time
It was, indeed, for all of us; to me
It was a time of rapture: clear and loud
The village clock tolled six; I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse,
That cares not for his home. - All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din,
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees, and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron, while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

What is the poem about?
The prelude is a very long, autobiographical poem, showing the spiritual growth of the speaker. In the poem, Wordsworth recounts his childhood experience of skating on a frozen lake at twilight. His vocabulary and imagery is vivid and powerful. The sky is ‘orange’ and the evening ‘blaz’d.’ He feels not just happiness but ‘rapture.’ In the second section, he leaves the pack and is alone with nature. In the third section, he personifies nature as spirits, which ‘haunt’ him.

Themes:
- Loneliness
- Man and nature
- Gothic
- Danger

Remember, you need to include context!
- Wordsworth was born in the Lake District, which hugely influenced his writing.
- He was a massive contributor to the Romantic Movement where people changed the way they thought about the arts and writing.
Excerpt from The Prelude
William Wordsworth

Theme: Nature

‘the twilight Blazed’
- Describing the light from the cottage windows in a cosy, homely way.
- The noun ‘twilight’ gives the reader the time of day that the poem is set, the moment between day and night. It is ambiguous; it is the ending of one thing, but the beginning of another.
- The verb, ‘blazed’ presents the vivid colours that appear all through the poem.

‘We hiss’d along the polish’d ice.’
- This is Wordsworth reminiscing about skating as a child.
- The verb ‘hiss’d’ presents the excitement of the children as they skate around the ice. The poem continues to describe the noise the children as it continues.

‘It was a time of rapture: clear and loud’
- The use of the noun ‘rapture’, suggests a sense of intense ecstasy (relating to pleasure and fun). It also has some biblical connotations, which make the use of this word more powerful. It suggests happy times and freedom.
- The use of the adjective ‘clear’ adds a hint of the purity of the atmosphere, and the use of the adjective ‘loud’ begins to appeal to our aural senses.

‘The orange sky of evening died away.’
- The portrayal of the ‘orange sky’ or the sunset creates powerful, beautiful imagery. The dynamic verb ‘died’ is very powerful, but as Wordsworth has portrayed in some of his other poetry, death can be a beautiful thing.
- The tone in this part of the poem is sad and emphasises melancholy.
I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

Remember, you need to include context!
- Ted Hughes was born in Yorkshire and grew up in the countryside.
- The themes of countryside, human history and mythology hugely influenced his writing.
Hawk Roosting  
Ted Hughes

**Theme:** Nature

- **‘I sit at the top of the wood’**
  - Describing the location of the hawk – at the very top of a tree, looking down upon everything
  - Use of personal pronoun ‘I’ is repeated throughout the poem to mirror the arrogant nature of the creature.

- **‘Rehearse perfect kills and eat.’**
  - The use of the verb ‘rehearse’ and the adjective ‘perfect’ implies that there has been practice to ensure that the murders are done correctly
  - The adjective ‘perfect’ also implies an arrogance as the hawk is stating how good he is.

- **‘I kill where I please’**
  - Indiscriminate killer – kills where it wants
  - Repetition of personal pronoun, ‘I’ - the choice is the hawks (who/what to kill)

- **‘I am going to keep things like this.’**
  - Suggests it is the hawk’s choice as to how the world remains – is it God? Good? Evil?
  - Declarative statement signifying the arrogance of the hawk
London  William Blake

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.

The poem describes a journey around London, offering a glimpse of what the speaker sees as the terrible conditions faced by the inhabitants of the city. Child labour, the ‘corrupt’ Church and prostitution are all explored in the poem. It ends with a vision of the terrible consequences to be faced as a result of sexually transmitted disease. London is presented in a very regular way, much like a song.

Themes:
- Place
- People
- Religion
- Power
- Innocence
- Sin/corruption

Remember, you need to include context!
- Blake was religious but disagreed with the Church of England as he felt that they could do more to help overcome poverty.
- Blake supported rebellion because he wanted change in the living conditions in London.
London  William Blake

**Theme:**
Time, people and place

### ‘marks of weakness, marks of woe’
- Use of **repetition** of ‘marks’ demonstrating that in every face he sees, there is some sadness – almost like scars

### ‘Mind forg’d manacles.’
- These connote to the **metaphorical** handcuffs that oppress the people within London, as their minds are told to believe certain things.
- The verb ‘forg’d’ means to be made, therefore the ‘manacles’ (handcuffs) are made in the mind

### ‘Blackening church’
- The noun ‘church’ would ordinarily have connotations of purity, charity and religion however this idea is **juxtaposed** through the use of the adjective ‘blackening’ which conjures images of an impure and corrupt building. *Link to context and Blake’s beliefs about the church

### ‘Plagues the marriage hearse.’
- **Oxymoronic** phrase – Marriage connotes to love, happiness and joy whereas ‘Hearse’ connotes to death and misery
Summer is fading: The leaves fall in ones and twos From trees bordering The new recreation ground. In the hollows of afternoons Young mothers assemble At swing and sandpit Setting free their children. Behind them, at intervals, Stand husbands in skilled trades, An estateful of washing, And the albums, lettered Our Wedding, lying Near the television: Before them, the wind Is ruining their courting-places

That are still courting-places (But the lovers are all in school), And their children, so intent on Finding more unripe acorns, Expect to be taken home. Their beauty has thickened. Something is pushing them To the side of their own lives.

Themes:
- Passing of time
- Age
- Relationships
- Identity
- Change
- Nature

Afternoons is a very melancholy poem, about the inevitability of change and the passing of youth. The poem talks about the challenges of growing up and having children. The poem discusses parenthood – how priorities have changed and there are responsibilities to face. The couples in the poem have been replaced by younger couples who go to their old ‘courting places.’ The structure of the poem is simple; there are three stanzas with eight lines in each.

Remember, you need to include context!
• Larkin was an English poet (from Coventry!) famous for making observations about everyday life.
• People often categorise his poetry as negative and miserable.
**Afternoons  Philip Larkin**

**Theme:**

**Time and Place**

- **‘Summer is fading’**
  - The passing of time and a sense of loss is shown here through the adjective ‘fading’
  - The proper noun, ‘Summer’ has connotations of joy and life.

- **‘Young mothers assemble.’**
  - The women are stuck in a regimented lifestyle as they are trapped in their daily routine.
  - The adjective ‘young’ presents them as being innocent and naïve, yet they are also ‘mothers’ thus are perhaps transitioning into this new, responsible role.

- **‘Our Wedding lying near the television.’**
  - The wedding album/video has been left on the ground, abandoned perhaps indicating that it is no longer of value.

- **‘Something is pushing them to the side.’**
  - Larkin is being a realist here – once you have children, they become your focus and your own life is controlled by their needs.
  - The verb ‘pushing’ indicates the way in which the children will ‘push’ away any true independence.
There are just not enough
Straight lines. That
Is the problem.
Nothing is flat
Or parallel. Beams
Balance crookedly on supports
Thrust off the vertical.
Nails clutch at open seams.
**The whole structure leans dangerously**
**Towards the miraculous.**
Into this rough frame,
Someone has squeezed
A living space
And even dared to place
**These eggs in a wire basket,**
Fragile curves of white
Hung out over the dark edge
Of a slanted universe,
Gathering the light
Into themselves,
As if they were
**The bright, thin walls of faith.**

The poem describes a ramshackle living space, with its lack of 'straight lines' and beams 'balanced crookedly on supports'. Imtiaz Dharker has explained that the poem describes the slums of Mumbai, where people migrate from all over India in the hope of a better life. The slum areas are living spaces created out of all kinds of found materials: corrugated sheets, wooden beams and tarpaulin. The lines of the buildings are slanting and unstable, balancing precariously between dangerous and 'miraculous'. The eggs in a basket that hang out 'over the dark edge' are an act of faith, not only because someone has so delicately placed them in such a ramshackle environment, but also because they contain new life. The eggs, like the buildings are miracles. It may seem like an act of faith to live in one of these rough structures - a daring attempt to live in such a place.

**Remember, you need to include context!**
Imtiaz Dharker is a contemporary poet who was born in Pakistan and grew up in Scotland. She has written five collections of poetry and often deals with themes of identity, the role of women in contemporary society and the search for meaning. She draws on her multi-cultural experience in her work. She is also a film director and has scripted a number of documentaries in India, supporting work with women and children. Dharker's intimate knowledge of Mumbai is evident in this poem. She works to raise awareness of issues in other countries.

**Themes:**
- Fragility
- Hope/faith
- Chaos
Living Space  Intiaz Dharker

Theme:
Time and Place

'There are just not enough/straight lines.'

The **enjambment** here emphasises the fact that whilst there is not enough stability in the structures built, there is not enough of anything for the amount of people who live there. It emphasises the lack of basic things needed for life.

'The whole structure leans dangerously Towards the miraculous.'

The **juxtaposition** of the adverb ‘dangerously and ’miraculous’ is a contrasting description of the buildings – they look like they are going to collapse at any time, yet it is a miracle they are still standing. This represents feelings of fear and awe. **Personification** is used to describe the angle of the building leaning – as if in prayer or giving thanks to God.

'These eggs in a wire basket.'

The eggs are **metaphor** for life and hope. They could fall off the building at any time and smash. Just like the people who live in the densely populated, high-rise buildings. To place the eggs here, one must have faith and trust – they are a symbol of people’s daring and boldness.

'The bright, thin walls of faith.'

The use of **contrast** is demonstrated in 'walls of faith', that are 'bright'. This implies something positive, but they are also 'thin' which suggests fragility. Perhaps the poet feels that faith, like the shell of an egg, is easy to break.
As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away—
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy—
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon—
The Dusk drew earlier in—
The Morning foreign shone—
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone—
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

Imperceptibly means subtly and unnoticeably changing. The melancholic (sad) feels to the poem is created by comparing the departure of summer with the departure of emotions and the distress and longing this brings. Not only does this mean the end of a season and the beginning of a new one, but also represents the end of one set of experiences/emotions for the poet, and the beginning of something new. Grief is associated with change and transition and the feeling of nostalgia that sometimes comes with moving on and leaving the old behind. The poet does not want to let go of the past emotionally, or take on new emotions about the future.

Remember, you need to include context!
Dickinson was an American poet, born in Massachusetts in 1830. She barely left her house for 30 years, rarely had visitors and became an observer of the world. Much of her poetry is about how emotions are attached to or projected onto environment. Her poetry did not become famous until after her death and was heavily influenced by the metaphysical poets of the 18th century.
‘As imperceptibly as Grief.’

Repetition of the title in the first line shows a sense of loss and disbelief that the seasons are changing. The capitalisation of the word ‘grief’ brings emphasis to the emotions of the poet, and reflects how deeply she is experiencing the change in seasons.

‘The Summer lapsed away—/ The Dusk drew earlier in—

The personification of summer creates a sense that summer has tried to walk away from the poet and abandon her, after she has become attached. The hyphen at the end of the line shows the poet’s distress. The verb ‘lapsed’ is powerful because it shows that whilst enjoying the summer so much, she neglected to notice it gradually fading away. The capitalisation of the word ‘Dusk’ personifies a portion of the day and, along with the use of alliteration, creates a sense of sadness and betrayal – as if dusk had decided to come earlier to be spiteful.

‘A courteous, yet harrowing Grace’

The juxtaposition of ‘courteous’ and ‘harrowing’ suggest a conflict of emotions. As the sun shares itself around the world with other countries in a cycle of seasons – she knows that she is being selfish wanting it to stay with her and deprive another country of the beauty of summer. The noun ‘Grace’ shows the generosity of the sun, which she must respect.

‘Our Summer made her light escape Into the Beautiful.’

The use of the possessive pronoun shows the extent to which the poet had become attached to the season. She felt in some way connected to it, but in using the verb ‘made’ realises that she has no control over the seasons at all. They will change whether she likes it or not.
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 shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked 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.”

The poem describes the ruined statue, found in a desert, of a once great and powerful king. The narrator of Shelley's poem says he met a traveller from an ""antique"" (ancient) land and then tells us the story the traveller told him. He had seen the remains of a huge statue in the desert. There were two enormous legs without a trunk and next to them lay a damaged ""visage"" (face). At the foot of the statue were words which reflected the arrogance and pride of Ozymandias. Those words seem very hollow now as the magnificent statue is destroyed and none of the pharaoh's works have lasted.

Remember, you need to include context!
Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was one of the English Romantic poets, along with Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Byron. Shelley was thought to be a ‘radical’ (different and untraditional in his thinking) for his time. ‘Ozymandias’ is about the remains of a statue of the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses II who built extravagant temples to himself. Shelley’s criticism of people who act as if they are invincible is evident in the poem.
Theme:

Time and Place

'Ozymandias'

Percy Shelley

'Half sunk a shattered visage lies'

The adjectives 'half sunk' immediately establish the theme of something decreasing or deteriorating - in this case, it is the power and reputation of the ruler Rameses II. The adjective 'shattered' creates the image of it being in pieces, rather than one whole thing - it is much weaker and fragile like this. The noun 'visage' means face, or metaphorically, identity - the identity of the leader is less than it was, thus the power being temporary.

'wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command'

This images shows how the ruler was perceived by others. The noun phrase 'wrinkled lip' establishes the picture of the ruler being disapproving and unsatisfied at all times; it is not a pleasant image. The metaphor 'sneer of cold command' gives an insight to his leadership and suggests that he was not personable or warm.

'King of Kings'

'The repetition of the noun 'kings' foregrounds the ruler’s arrogance. It is metaphorical - he felt that he was in charge of all others, and that he was at the top. This is ironic as his identity is described as 'shattered' now; he was obviously delusional and overwhelmed by his power.'

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

The imperative sentence used in the inscription on the statue 'Look on my works' exposes the ruler’s arrogance and pride. Even after death, he is trying to rule and dictate what people do. The first person pronoun 'my' sums up his self-obsession and arrogance.