



texture

An Introduction to Prose and Poetry
Jc1 2012

“Style is
primarily a
matter of
instinct.”

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The Old Man at the Bridge

Ernest Hemingway

An old man with steel rimmed spectacles and very dusty clothes sat by the side of the road. There was a pontoon bridge across the river and carts, trucks, and men, women and children were crossing it. The mule-drawn carts staggered up the steep bank from the bridge with soldiers helping push against the spokes of the wheels. The trucks ground up and away heading out of it all and the peasants plodded along in the ankle deep dust. But the old man sat there without moving. He was too tired to go any farther.

It was my business to cross the bridge, explore the bridgehead beyond and find out to what point the enemy had advanced. I did this and returned over the bridge. There were not so many carts now and very few people on foot, but the old man was still there.

"Where do you come from?" I asked him.

"From San Carlos," he said, and smiled.

That was his native town and so it gave him pleasure to mention it and he smiled.

"I was taking care of animals," he explained.

"Oh," I said, not quite understanding.

"Yes," he said, "I stayed, you see, taking care of animals. I was the last one to leave the town of San Carlos."

He did not look like a shepherd nor a herdsman and I looked at his black dusty clothes and his gray dusty face and his steel rimmed spectacles and said, "What animals were they?"

"Various animals," he said, and shook his head. "I had to leave them."

I was watching the bridge and the African looking country of the Ebro Delta and wondering how long now it would be before we would see the enemy, and listening all the while for the first noises that would signal that ever mysterious event called contact, and the old man still sat there.

"What animals were they?" I asked.

"There were three animals altogether," he explained. "There were two goats and a cat and then there were four pairs of pigeons."

And you had to leave them?" I asked.

"Yes. Because of the artillery. The captain told me to go because of the artillery."

"And you have no family?" I asked, watching the far end of the bridge where a few last carts were hurrying down the slope of the bank.

"No," he said, "only the animals I stated. The cat, of course, will be all right. A cat can look out for itself, but I cannot think what will become of the others."

"What politics have you?" I asked.

"I am without politics," he said. "I am seventy-six years old. I have come twelve kilometers now and I think now I can go no further."

"This is not a good place to stop," I said. "If you can make it, there are trucks up the road where it forks for Tortosa."

"I will wait a while," he said, "and then I will go. Where do the trucks go?"

"Towards Barcelona," I told him.

"I know no one in that direction," he said, "but thank you very much. Thank you again very much."

He looked at me very blankly and tiredly, and then said, having to share his worry with someone, "The cat will be all right, I am sure. There is no need to be unquiet about the cat. But the others. Now what do you think about the others?"

"Why they'll probably come through it all right."

"You think so?"

"Why not," I said, watching the far bank where now there were no carts.

"But what will they do under the artillery when I was told to leave because of the artillery?"

"Did you leave the dove cage unlocked?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then they'll fly."

"Yes, certainly they'll fly. But the others. It's better not to think about the others," he said.

"If you are rested I would go," I urged. "Get up and try to walk now."

"Thank you," he said and got to his feet, swayed from side to side and then sat down backwards in the dust.

"I was taking care of animals," he said dully, but no longer to me. "I was only taking care of animals."

There was nothing to do about him. It was Easter Sunday and the Fascists were advancing toward the Ebro. It was a gray overcast day with a low ceiling so their planes were not up. That and the fact that cats know how to look after themselves was all the good luck that old man would ever have.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider the opening paragraph. How would you describe the language of the first two sentences?
 2. How does the nature of the paragraph change very slightly from the third sentence onwards? What can you say about the qualities of specific words?
 3. What significant change occurs in the way the story is told in the second paragraph? How does this influence our reading of the rest of the extract?
 4. What would you say is the main feature of the dialogue in the extract? Think in terms of what is said (and what is not) and the language used.
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Of Mice and Men

John Steinbeck

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan Mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders;

and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.

The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat-band with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

"Lennie!" he said sharply. "Lennie, for God' sakes don't drink so much." Lennie continued to snort into the pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. "Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last night."

Lennie dipped his whole head under, hat and all, and then he sat up on the bank and his hat dripped down on his blue coat and ran down his back. "That's good," he said. "You drink some, George. You take a good big drink." He smiled happily.

George unslung his bindle and dropped it gently on the bank. "I ain't sure it's good water," he said. "Looks kinda scummy."

Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers so the water arose in little splashes; rings widened across the pool to the other side and came back again. Lennie watched them go. "Look, George. Look what I done."

George knelt beside the pool and drank from his hand with quick scoops. "Tastes all right," he admitted. "Don't really seem to be running, though. You never oughta drink water when it ain't running, Lennie," he said hopelessly. "You'd drink out of a gutter if you was thirsty." He threw a scoop of water into his face and rubbed it about with his hand, under his chin and around the back of his neck. Then he replaced his hat, pushed himself back from the river, drew up his knees and embraced them. Lennie, who had been watching, imitated George exactly. He pushed himself back, drew up his knees, embraced them, looked over to George to see whether he had it just right. He pulled his hat down a little more over his eyes, the way George's hat was.

George stared morosely at the water. The rims of his eyes were red with sun glare. He said angrily, "We could just as well of rode clear to the ranch if that bastard bus driver knew what he was talkin' about. 'Jes' a little stretch down the highway,' he says. 'Jes' a little stretch.' God damn near four miles, that's what it was!

"Didn't wanta stop at the ranch gate, that's what. Too God damn lazy to pull up. Wonder he isn't too damn good to stop in Soledad at all. Kicks us out and says 'Jes' a little stretch down the road.' I bet it was more than four miles. Damn hot day."

Lennie looked timidly over to him. "George?"

"Yeah, what ya want?"

"Where we goin', George?"

The little man jerked down the brim of his hat and scowled over at Lennie. "So you forgot that awready, did you? I gotta tell you again, do I? Jesus Christ, you're a crazy bastard!"

"I forgot," Lennie said softly. "I tried not to forget. Honest to God I did, George."

"O.K.- O.K. I'll tell ya again. I ain't got nothing to do. Might jus' as well spen' all my time tellin' you things and then you forget 'em, and I tell you again."

QUESTIONS

1. What stages can you observe in the development of ideas and features of the first three paragraphs?
 2. How does the author create a sense of expectation in the extract? How do you know that this is the beginning of the novel?
 3. In paragraph 4 the two main characters of the novel are introduced. What is the significance of the author's repeated use of the word 'both'?
 4. How does the choice of verbs and adjectives in particular help to convey a sense of each man's character and personality even before the main dialogue begins?
 5. What can you say about the way the author 'builds' a sense of atmosphere? What features can you identify that help to explain what you have observed?
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The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

"Whenever you feel like criticizing any one," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought — frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction — Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the "creative temperament." — it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No — Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is

what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

QUESTIONS

1. Can you explain why so many personal pronouns have been used in the first four lines of the extract?
 2. Take a close look at the final sentence of the second paragraph. How would you describe this sentence? What qualities can you detect? Try saying the sentence aloud, what do you notice about it when it is spoken?
 3. In the fourth paragraph we are made conscious that the story we are reading is part of “this book”. What is the effect of giving this information to the reader in such a direct way?
 4. What do you notice about the language used to describe Gatsby? Does the style and sentence structure continue in the same way as the opening of the chapter?
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The Age of Innocence

Edith Wharton

Presentation of character

Few things seemed to Newland Archer more awful than an offence against "Taste," that far-off divinity of whom "Form" was the mere visible representative and vicegerent. Madame Olenska's pale and serious face appealed to his fancy as suited to the occasion and to her unhappy situation; but the way her dress (which had no tucker) sloped away from her thin shoulders shocked and troubled him. He hated to think of May Welland's being exposed to the influence of a young woman so careless of the dictates of Taste. (12)

Agreeable as their expression was, the young man was shocked that they should reflect so unseemly a picture of the august tribunal before which, at that very moment, her case was being tried. Nothing could be in worse taste than misplaced flippancy; and he answered somewhat stiffly: "Yes, you have been away a very long time." (15)

TASK

Read the above two excerpts and pen down two questions on the writer's use of language, style and form.

Suggestion and connotation

The second reason for his delay was a personal one. He had dawdled over his cigar because he was at heart a dilettante, and thinking over a pleasure to come often gave him a subtler satisfaction than its realisation. This was especially the case when the pleasure was a delicate one, as his pleasures mostly were; and on this occasion the moment he looked forward to was so rare and exquisite in quality that—well, if he had timed his arrival in accord with the prima donna's stage-manager he could not have entered the Academy at a more significant moment than just as she was singing: "He loves me—he loves me not—*he loves me!*—" and sprinkling the falling daisy petals with notes as clear as dew. (3-4)

Tone and atmosphere

When Newland Archer opened the door at the back of the club box the curtain had just gone up on the garden scene. There was no reason why the young man should not have come earlier, for he had dined at seven, alone with his mother and sister, and had lingered afterward over a cigar in the Gothic library with glazed black-walnut bookcases and finial-topped chairs which was the only room in the house where Mrs. Archer allowed smoking. But, in the first place, New York was a metropolis, and perfectly aware that in metropolises it was "not the thing" to arrive early at the opera; and what was or was not "the thing" played a part as important in Newland Archer's New York as the inscrutable totem terrors that had ruled the destinies of his forefathers thousands of years ago. (4)

TASK

Read the above three excerpts and pen down two questions on the writer's use of language, style and form. Be ready with an answer to one of your two questions.

Characterisation, its effects and purpose

"Well—upon my soul!" exclaimed Lawrence Lefferts, turning his opera-glass abruptly away from the stage. Lawrence Lefferts was, on the whole, the foremost authority on "form" in New York. He had probably devoted more time than any one else to the study of this intricate and fascinating question; but study alone could not account for his complete and easy competence. One had only to look at him, from the slant of his bald forehead and the curve of his beautiful fair moustache to the long patent-leather feet at the other end of his lean and elegant person, to feel that the knowledge of "form" must be congenital in any one who knew how to wear such good clothes so carelessly and carry such height with so much lounging grace. As a young admirer had once said of him: "If anybody can tell a fellow just when to wear a black tie with evening clothes and when not to, it's Larry Lefferts." And on the question of pumps versus patent-leather "Oxfords" his authority had never been disputed.

"My God!" he said; and silently handed his glass to old Sillerton Jackson.

(7)

TASK

Read the above excerpt and pen down two questions on the writer's use of language, style and form. Answer both these questions and be ready to present them in class.

Diction and Setting

He knew, of course, that whatever man dared (within Fifth Avenue's limits) that old Mrs. Manson Mingott, the Matriarch of the line, would dare. He had always admired the high and mighty old lady, who, in spite of having been only Catherine Spicer of Staten Island, with a father mysteriously discredited, and neither money nor position enough to make people forget it, had allied herself with the head of the wealthy Mingott line, married two of her daughters to "foreigners" (an Italian marquis and an English banker), and put the crowning touch to her audacities by building a large house of pale cream-coloured stone (when brown sandstone seemed as much the only wear as a frock-coat in the afternoon) in an inaccessible wilderness near the Central Park. (10)

Old Mrs. Mingott's foreign daughters had become a legend. They never came back to see their mother, and the latter being, like many persons of active mind and dominating will, sedentary and corpulent in her habit, had philosophically remained at home. But the cream-coloured house (supposed to be modelled on the private hotels of the Parisian aristocracy) was there as a visible proof of her moral courage; and she throned in it, among pre-Revolutionary furniture and souvenirs of the Tuileries of Louis Napoleon (where she had shone in her middle age), as placidly as if there were nothing peculiar in living above Thirty-fourth Street, or in having French windows that opened like doors instead of sashes that pushed up. (11)

TASK

Read the above excerpt and identify key stylistic features within. Be prepared to comment on their effects and what these effects suggest about the Mingotts.

Motifs

Mr. Beaufort's secret, people were agreed, was the way he carried things off. It was all very well to whisper that he had been "helped" to leave England by the international banking-house in which he had been employed; he carried off that rumour as easily as the rest—though New York's business conscience was no less sensitive than its moral standard—he carried everything before him, and all New York into his drawing-rooms, and for over twenty years now people had said they were "going to the Beauforts" with the same tone of security as if they had said they were going to Mrs. Manson Mingott's, and with the added satisfaction of knowing they would get hot canvas-back ducks and vintage wines, instead of tepid Veuve Clicquot without a year and warmed-up croquettes from Philadelphia. (18)

Madame Olenska put her hand on his arm, and he noticed that the hand was ungloved, and remembered how he had kept his eyes fixed on it the evening that he had sat with her in the little Twenty-third Street drawing-room. All the beauty that had forsaken her face seemed to have taken refuge in the long pale fingers and faintly dimpled knuckles on his sleeve, and he said to himself: "If it were only to see her hand again I should have to follow her—." (275)

How this miracle of fire and ice was to be created, and to sustain itself in a harsh world, he had never taken the time to think out; but he was content to hold his view without analysing it, since he knew it was that of all the carefully-brushed, white-waistcoated, button-hole-flowered gentlemen who succeeded each other in the club box, exchanged friendly greetings with him, and turned their opera-glasses critically on the circle of ladies who were the product of the system. (6-7)

TASK

Read the three excerpts above and discuss the significance of Wharton's use of motifs.

Theatricality, Mood and Sound

"It didn't last long, though: I heard of her a few months later living alone in Venice. I believe Lovell Mingott went out to get her. He said she was desperately unhappy. That's all right—but this parading her at the Opera's another thing."

"Perhaps," young Thorley hazarded, "she's too unhappy to be left at home."

This was greeted with an irreverent laugh, and the youth blushed deeply, and tried to look as if he had meant to insinuate what knowing people called a "double entendre."

"Well—it's queer to have brought Miss Welland, anyhow," some one said in a low tone, with a side-glance at Archer.

"Oh, that's part of the campaign: Granny's orders, no doubt," Lefferts laughed. "When the old lady does a thing she does it thoroughly."

The act was ending, and there was a general stir in the box. Suddenly Newland Archer felt himself impelled to decisive action. The desire to be the first man to enter Mrs. Mingott's box, to proclaim to the waiting world his engagement to May Welland, and to see her through whatever difficulties her cousin's anomalous situation might involve her in; this impulse had abruptly overruled all scruples and hesitations, and sent him hurrying through the red corridors to the farther side of the house. (13)

The club box, therefore, waited in visible suspense while Mr. Sillerton Jackson handed back Lawrence Lefferts's opera-glass. For a moment he silently scrutinised the attentive group out of his filmy blue eyes overhung by old veined lids; then he gave his moustache a thoughtful twist, and said simply: "I didn't think the Mingotts would have tried it on." (9)

TASK

Read the above excerpt and discuss how the theatre motif and its mood present Wharton's New York.

"The darling!" thought Newland Archer, his glance flitting back to the young girl with the lilies-of-the-valley. "She doesn't even guess what it's all about." And he contemplated her absorbed young face with a thrill of possessorship in which pride in his own masculine initiation was mingled with a tender reverence for her abysmal purity. "We'll read Faust together ... by the Italian lakes ..." he thought, somewhat hazily confusing the scene of his projected honey-moon with the masterpieces of literature which it would be his manly privilege to reveal to his bride. It was only that afternoon that May Welland had let him guess that she "cared" (New York's consecrated phrase of maiden avowal), and already his imagination, leaping ahead of the engagement ring, the betrothal kiss and the march from Lohengrin, pictured her at his side in some scene of old European witchery (6).

The Beauforts' house was one of the few in New York that possessed a ball-room (it antedated even Mrs. Manson Mingott's and the Headly Chiverses'); and at a time when it was beginning to be thought "provincial" to put a "crash" over the drawing-room floor and move the furniture upstairs, the possession of a ball-room that was used for no other purpose, and left for three-hundred-and-sixty-four days of the year to shuttered darkness, with its gilt chairs stacked in a corner and its chandelier in a bag; this undoubted superiority was felt to compensate for whatever was regrettable in the Beaufort past. (16)

May roused herself from one of the dreamy silences into which he had read so many meanings before six months of marriage had given him the key to them. (165)

TASK

Read the above excerpts and pen down three questions on the writer's use of language, style and form. Pose one to the class. Be ready to answer questions from your peers.

This is Just to Say

William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

QUESTIONS

1. If this appeared on your fridge (“Icebox”), how would you react to the note?
 2. What choices has the poet made about the way this information has been written? Why has the poem been constructed in three stanzas when there are only two sentences?
 3. When you read the poem aloud, how do you know when to take a breath, pause, change the tone of your voice etc? Are there particular qualities that you can detect when the words are read aloud?
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The Word *Plum*

Helen Chasin

The word *plum* is delicious

pout and push, luxury of
self-love, and savoring murmur
full in the mouth and falling
like fruit

taut skin
pierced, bitten, provoked into
juice, and tart flesh

question
and reply, lip and tongue
of pleasure.

QUESTIONS

1. What is Chasin doing here? Is she writing about fruit or words?
 2. How does the structure of the poem (especially the breaks between stanzas) help you to 'make sense' of what has been written?
 3. What is the effect of poem as a whole? How do you know?
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Preludes

T. S. Eliot

The winter's evening settles down
With smells of _____ in passageways.
Six o'clock.

(food, meals, steaks, onions)

The burnt-out ends of _____ days.
And now a gusty shower wraps

(grey, smoky, miserable lonely)

The grimy _____

(bits, shreds, skeletons, scraps)

Of withered leaves across your feet

And newspapers from vacant lots;

The showers _____

(beat, patter, knock tap)

On empty blinds and chimney-pots,

And at the corner of the street

A lonely cab-horse _____ and stamps.

(snorts, neighs, steams, sweats)

And then the lighting of the lamps.

QUESTIONS

1. After reading the poem aloud, fill in the blanks with the most suitable word from the four options presented to you. Put the right word in the right place!
 2. Can you find a pattern in the structure of the poem?
 3. Consider the effect of the poem's sound, metre and rhythm. Try inserting different words and reading it aloud to hear how 'dissonant' a poorly constructed poem sounds.
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Introduction to Poetry

Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the poet use the concept of holding the poem “up to the light”?
 2. What is, in your opinion, the purpose of the poem’s structure?
 3. How do the metaphors of the first five stanzas inter-relate?
 4. What is the effect upon the reader of the last two lines?
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Metaphors

Sylvia Plath

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

QUESTIONS

1. Why and how is the number 9 significant to your understanding of the poem?
 2. How does the poet convey the idea that the metaphors may be more important than the subject of the poem?
 3. What is the effect of using the first person pronoun "I" in this poem?
 4. Can you find a reason to explain why the poem has been written in one stanza?
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One Art

Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

--Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

QUESTIONS

1. Is there a pattern to the items and images that are 'lost' by the speaker?
 2. The poem is a villanelle, employing a 'refrain' that is repeated in a specific pattern. What is the effect of this refrain and how does it differ each time it is repeated?
 3. What do you think is the attitude of the speaker?
 4. Is there a shift in tone and attitude in the final stanza? If so, what suggests this?
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We Real Cool

Gwendolyn Brooks

We real cool. We
Left School. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the poem composed in four stanzas? How does the subject of each stanza differ?
 2. Why is 'We' placed at the end of lines 1-7? Why has it been excluded from line 8?
 3. What is the effect of the use of assonance, consonance and enjambment in the poem?
 4. What is the effect and purpose of the poem as a whole?
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Auto Wreck

Karl Shapiro

Its quick soft silver bell beating, beating
And down the dark one ruby flare
Pulsing out red light like an artery,
The ambulance at top speed floating down
Past beacons and illuminated clocks
Wings in a heavy curve, dips down,
And brakes speed, entering the crowd.
The doors leap open, emptying light;
Stretchers are laid out, the mangled lifted
And stowed into the little hospital.
Then the bell, breaking the hush, tolls once,
And the ambulance with its terrible cargo
Rocking, slightly rocking, moves away,
As the doors, an afterthought, are closed.

We are deranged, walking among the cops
Who sweep glass and are large and composed.
One is still making notes under the light.
One with a bucket douches ponds of blood
Into the street and gutter.
One hangs lanterns on the wrecks that cling,
Empty husks of locusts, to iron poles.

Our throats were tight as tourniquets,
Our feet were bound with splints, but now,
Like convalescents intimate and gauche,
We speak through sickly smiles and warn
With the stubborn saw of common sense,
The grim joke and the banal resolution.
The traffic moves around with care,
But we remain, touching a wound
That opens to our richest horror.
Already old, the question Who shall die?
Becomes unspoken Who is innocent?

For death in war is done by hands;
Suicide has cause and stillbirth, logic;
And cancer, simple as a flower, blooms.
But this invites the occult mind,
Cancels our physics with a sneer,
And spatters all we knew of denouement
Across the expedient and wicked stones.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the poet make full use of language to establish the initial atmosphere in the first stanza?
 2. If you do not know already, find out what a *passive voice* is when discussing verbs. How has the passive form been used in the opening stanza?
 3. What is the effect of using a *first person (plural) perspective* in the remaining stanzas?
-

from here to literary

Literal Questions

1. What is shown? What is being described?
2. What is happening? What is going on?
3. What are the details of the event or description?
4. What do the words or images mean?

An explanation of what words mean or what occurs in the text is pointless. Also try not to imagine an actual situation, speculate or invent a back-story. Analyse the text.

Literary Questions

What

1. What is suggested by...?
2. What ideas, concerns or themes are raised by...?
3. What is the role played by a character, in relation to other characters and the world outside the text?
4. What is the significance of a particular part, scene or excerpt in the entire text?

How

1. How does the writer present...?
2. What features or patterns do I see?
3. Which words, lines or images stick out?
4. What is the effect of a particular word, line or image?
5. How does the reader feel or respond to a particular feature?
6. Who is speaking? What is the speaker's tone?
7. What is the mood created by the text?
8. What is the structure of the text? Is there a flow or progression?

Why

1. Why does the writer choose...?
2. How is a particular feature significant?
3. What is the purpose of this feature?
4. How do the effects add to or enhance the meaning of the text?
5. What does the feature and effect suggest about the concern or theme raised?
6. What is being said about the concerns or themes in the text?

All good answers must be backed by *specific evidence* from the text. We ask, 'Where do you see this?' and 'What makes you say that?'

language

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
Nouns	<p>A noun is any word that 'labels' or 'names' a person, thing or idea.</p> <p>There are several types of nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) common nouns (e.g. computer, sandwich, cats); (ii) proper nouns are names for individual nouns (e.g. Coke, London, Simon); (iii) abstract nouns are 'ideas' (e.g. death, hunger, beauty); (iv) concrete nouns are solid objects in the real or imaginary world (e.g. bread, butter, clock); (v) collective nouns name groups of individual or things (e.g. parliament, audience, Liverpool FC).
Pronouns	<p>A word used often - but not always - to replace a noun.</p> <p>Personal pronouns can be first-person (I, me), collective (we, us), second-person (you) or third-person (he, she, they).</p> <p>Possessive pronouns indicate whom something belongs to and can denote power relations (e.g. my, your, his, her, its, our, their).</p>
<i>Voice</i>	<p>A typical sentence will be cast in the active voice (e.g. 'The teacher led the lesson'). In such a sentence, the subject (S) is also the agent of the action told by the verb (V). This action is transferred to the object of the sentence (O).</p> <p>A different type of sentence construction is possible. In this, the subject position can be filled not by the agent but by what, in the active sentence, was the verb's object (e.g. 'The lesson was led by the teacher.') This is called a passive construction.</p>
Verbs	<p>The verb becomes the central element of any sentence or clause.</p> <p>Dynamic verbs tell of an <i>action</i> (to hit, to call, to sing); stative verbs tell of a state of <i>being</i> (to be - am, is, was, were - to think, hope, seem, appear, feel, etc.).</p>
Adverbs	<p>A class of words that add detail about the way an action occurred (e.g. quickly, especially, nearly, there)</p>
Adjectives	<p>A word class which contains words that add detail to a noun or pronoun (e.g. busy, active, tired).</p>

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Intensifiers</i>	Intensifiers are a special kind of adverb. An intensifier is used when the meaning of another adverb or adjective needs to be changed. Examples of intensifiers are: <i>very, quite, absolutely and extremely</i> but there are many more.
Conjunctions	A word used to link words, phrases and clauses. Common conjunctions are <i>and, but, or, either... or, neither...nor</i> .
<i>Diction</i>	Diction refers to a writer's choice of words, or lexical choice. Diction is clearly an important aspect of creating a suitable style or register; we use different vocabulary to mean and suggest different things in different ways.
<i>Style / Register</i>	Style is the result of the choices a writer (or speaker) makes regarding aspects of language, language features and structure to suit a particular genre, context, audience and purpose. Three key aspects of style that are often worthy of comment are a text's degree of formality or informality , its use of <i>standard</i> or <i>non-standard</i> grammar (e.g. archaic, colloquial) and its structure.
<i>Attitude</i>	<p>All writing, through language, style and form, share values and attitudes towards themselves, others and institutions. The ideology behind a text is the writer's 'world view' concerning how things are and how things ought to be.</p> <p>Texts can maintain or reinforce dominant structure and ideas within a society. They can also express discontent, challenge assumptions or subvert these prevailing structures.</p>
Clarity	<p>Words can be ambiguous and have 'more than one possible meaning'. This may create an air of mystery or suspense or confuse the reader.</p> <p>Words can also be explicit and direct, making the point clearly and sharply for the reader.</p>
Sentences	<p>A sentence is a sequence of words constructed within the rules of grammar. It is made up of words, phrases (small clusters of words) and clauses (groups of words that can form a whole sentence or part of a sentence).</p> <p>A sentence can fulfil one of four <i>functions</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It can make a statement. This is called a declarative sentence (e.g. 'I am overweight.') Declaratives usually follow the word order SV (subject first, verb second). 2. It can ask a question. This is called an interrogative sentence, (e.g. 'Am I overweight?') and indicated by a question mark. 3. It can demand an action. This is called an imperative sentence, (e.g. 'Sit down, please.') indicated by a lack of subject (but 'you' is implied). 4. It can make an exclamation. This is called an exclamatory sentence, (e.g. 'What a mess!'), indicated by an exclamation mark.

Feature	Description
Syntax	<p>Syntax refers to the ordering of words into meaningful phrases, clauses, and sentences. Key aspects of syntax to look out for are the <i>sentence type</i> (simple or complex), <i>voice</i> (active or passive) and <i>arrangement</i> of words (to highlight agency, power, importance). A sentence can be of three <i>types</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A simple sentence is a sentence that contains a single subject and verb (e.g. The cat sat down). 2. A compound sentence is a sentence that contains more than one main clause; these clauses must be linked by a conjunction or a semicolon. (e.g. The cat sat down and slept.) 3. A complex sentence is a sentence that contains a mixture of clause types. A complex sentence must contain (as all sentences) at least one main clause but will also contain a second kind of clause acting as a dependent or subordinate clause. Subordinate clauses often begin with a subordinating conjunction such as however, although, even though, because, etc. There is also a special kind of sentence, often used in speech, called a 'minor sentence'. <p>A loose sentence generally contains a main clause plus subordinate clauses. It can be described as cumulative as it adds more and more detail, taking the focus away from the subject. (e.g. 'He went into <i>town</i> to buy <i>groceries</i>, visit his <i>friends</i> and go to the <i>bookstore</i>.')</p> <p>Conversely, a periodic sentence holds the reader's interest by displaying subordinate ideas first and delays the main idea until the end of the sentence. (e.g. 'And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, <i>I am nothing</i>.')</p> <p>A paratactic style translates to short, simple sentences or clauses with few connections, allowing the reader to form their own interpretation. (e.g. 'Sun was shining. We went for a walk.')</p> <p>A hypotactic style, on the other hand, entails sentences or clauses that are dependent on another. This delivers a more structured, rigid form. (e.g. '<i>Let the reader be introduced to Joan Didion</i>, upon whose character and doings much will depend of whatever interest these pages may have, as she sits at her writing table in her own room in her own house on Welbeck Street.')</p>
Rhythm	<p>When considering prose rhythm, we have to take into account <i>syntax</i>, <i>implied pauses and punctuation</i> - commas, semicolons, colons, dashes and full stops. In poetry, lines might be marked by <i>end-stops</i> and <i>caesuras</i>. The 'flow' or feel of a text is often enhanced by how the lines are read. A <i>plodding</i> rhythm can reflect fatigue or boredom, just as a <i>quick</i> rhythm can lend to the urgency or excitement of the speaker.</p>

style

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Genre</i>	<p>A type or category of literature or film marked by certain shared features or conventions.</p> <p>Examples of genres might include comedy, tragedy, naturalism, tragicomedy, melodrama, satire, picaresque and social-realist. <i>The Age of Innocence</i> might be described as a 'naturalistic' modern novel.</p>
<i>Tone</i>	<p>The author's implicit attitude toward the reader or the people, places, and events in a work as revealed by the elements of the author's <i>style</i>.</p> <p>Tone may be characterised as serious or ironic, sad or happy, private or public, angry or affectionate, bitter or nostalgic, or any other attitudes and feelings that human beings experience.</p>
<i>Mood</i>	<p>Evident in poetry, prose and drama, mood is the atmosphere, the feeling, 'experience' created by <i>diction, dialogue, imagery and setting</i>.</p> <p>For instance, the haunting, mysterious sequence of events in William Stafford's 'Travelling through the Dark' bring across the persona's increasing fear and shock at the death of the animal.</p>
<i>Figurative language</i>	<p>Language that varies from the norms of literal language and <i>does not mean exactly what it says</i>, but instead forces the reader to make an imaginative leap in order to understand the writer's ideas. It usually involves a comparison between two things that may not, at first, seem to relate to one another.</p> <p>A metaphor is a literary figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things, without using the word 'like' or 'as'. Metaphors assert the identity of dissimilar things, as when Macbeth asserts that life is a 'brief candle.'</p> <p>A simile is a common figure of speech that makes an explicit comparison between two things by using words such as <i>like, as, than, appears, and seems</i>: 'A sip of Mrs. Cook's coffee is like a punch in the stomach.'</p>
<i>Imagery</i>	<p>Imagery refers to the "mental pictures" that readers experience with a passage of literature. It signifies all the sensory perceptions referred to in a poem, whether by literal description, allusion, simile, or metaphor. Imagery is not just visual, also including auditory (sound), tactile (touch), thermal (heat and cold), <i>olfactory</i> (smell), <i>gustatory</i> (taste), and <i>kinesthetic</i> sensation (movement).</p>

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
Motifs	A recurring object, concept, or structure in a work of literature. A motif may also be two contrasting elements in a work, such as good and evil, light and dark or a concrete item such as a rose.
Symbols	A person, object, image, word, or event that evokes a range of additional meaning beyond and usually more abstract than its literal significance. Common symbols include water, nature, seasons and in <i>Age</i> , fire and ice.
Irony	<p>The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning; a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. verbal irony is when an author says one thing and means something else. 2. dramatic irony is when an audience perceives something that a character in the literature does not know. 3. situational irony is a discrepancy between the expected result and actual results.
Repetition and accumulation	<p>Repetition of the same words, phrases or images or the accumulation of similar words, phrases and images are significant, <i>lending emphasis to the previous word, phrase or image</i> but often producing <i>new meaning</i> on their own. The same can be said of enumeration or listing.</p> <p>More importantly, do pay attention to the word, phrase or image being repeated or enumerated in context. Avoid telling us about ‘emphasis’ when the focus should really be on the very idea being reinforced or new idea being brought out.</p>
<i>Titles</i>	Titles of poems (‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’), plays (<i>All My Sons</i>) and novels (<i>The Age of Innocence</i>) and their parts are significant because they often prefigure the writer’s style and concerns, giving the reader ‘a sense of what is to come’. Whether it suggests the speaker’s attitude or illustrates the events that will unfold before our eyes, a title creates and enhances ‘meaning’.

Feature	Description
<p>Perspective</p>	<p>The way the events of a story are conveyed to the reader. A reader is given multiple 'points of view', which may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first-person narrator is common in many works. The reader only gains access to this character, who may be the protagonist or a 'minor' character, and his or her thoughts. 2. The omniscient narrator is an 'all-knowing' narrator that can enter characters' minds, describe and comment on action in the world of the text. This narrator can be partial or impartial to his / her characters, at times making narratorial interjections to comment on the action. 3. Direct discourse refers to the quoted words of a character given by the narrator. This provides the reader 'direct' access to the characters's thoughts and feelings, even though the narrator does provide commentary through the surrounding text (e.g. She looked at the hotel room and <i>she thought, "It will be nice to will stay here tomorrow."</i>) 4. Free indirect discourse is a method where the features of first person direct speech are combined with those of third person indirect speech. It is the narrator who conveys the character's thoughts and speech in the character's 'voice' - diction and syntax - without any obvious indication (e.g. She looked at the hotel room. <i>It would be nice to stay here tomorrow.</i>) <p>In poetry, the speaker is also known as the persona and is <i>not equivalent</i> to the writer. The persona or speaker is a 'character' crafted by the poet.</p>
<p>Sound</p>	<p>Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds (<i>E.g. Feet sweep by sleep</i>), whereas consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds (<i>E.g a dark deep dread</i>).</p> <p>Liquid consonants ('l', 'r') have a 'fluid' sound and can be <i>prolonged</i> or <i>sharp</i>.</p> <p>Fricatives ('th', 'f', 'ch') and its subset sibilants ('s', 'z', 'j') are 'hiss'-like and tend to be <i>soft</i>.</p> <p>Plosive sounds ('p', 'b', 't') and guttural sounds ('g', 'c', 'k', 'q') are 'oral stops' that tend to be <i>harsh</i> and <i>forceful</i>.</p> <p>Vowels that are short and <u>sharp</u> quicken rhythm, making lines more <i>active, lively, agile</i>.</p> <p>Vowels that are long and <u>soft</u> slow down the lines, making them more <i>serious or mournful</i>.</p>

form

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
Setting	The physical and social context in which the action of a story occurs. The major elements of setting are the <i>time</i> , the <i>place</i> , and the <i>social environment</i> that frames the characters. Setting can be used to evoke a mood or atmosphere that will prepare the reader for what is to come.
Structure	<p>Stanzas, chapters, Parts and Acts are organised for particular effects and purposes.</p> <p>The same can be said of poetic forms. Sonnets (both English and Italian) and villanelles are the two most common poetic forms that you will encounter. Look them up on the Internet.</p> <p>Line arrangement, in the form of run-on lines, end-stopped lines, and caesuras (pauses in a line) can also play a significant part in enhancing the overall experience of a poem.</p>
Progression	A most significant 'feature' to comment on is the connection between chapters, scenes and acts. How does the second stanza build on the first? How does this scene undercut the first Act of the play? How does one chapter reinforce the ideas of another? Never park the text in a silo; connect a particular episode, scene, chapter with similar / different ones in terms of ideas and effects.
Characterisation	<p>Analysis of how a writer presents the characters of the text is far more pertinent than re-describing what characters do.</p> <p>Writers employ a multitude of methods to 'flesh out' their characters, including but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical description, dressing and manner 2. 'Scenic' description of a character's behaviour / action 3. Direct speech that gives unfiltered insight into psyche and attitudes 4. Multiple points of view: (i) how a character sees himself; (ii) how a character sees others; (iii) how other characters see him; (iv) how the omniscient narrator sees him (i.e. narrative commentary) 5. Contrasts and parallels with other characters 6. Names, setting, motifs and imagery
Plot	At the beginning of a narrative, the exposition is the author's providing of some background information to the audience about the plot, characters' histories, setting, and theme.

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
Plot (Cont'd)	<p>The climax is the moment in a play, novel, short story, or narrative poem at which the crisis reaches its point of greatest intensity and is thereafter resolved. It is also the peak of emotional response from a reader or spectator and usually the turning point in the action.</p> <p>A denouement is the final outcome of the main conflict in a play or story. Usually the climax (the turning point) of the work has already occurred by the time the denouement occurs.</p> <p>Closure refers to the <i>sense of completion or finality</i> at the conclusion of a work, especially a feeling that all the problems have been resolved satisfactorily. Closure is traditionally achieved in the <i>denouement</i>.</p>
Poetic form	<p>Poetry written in a specific or traditional pattern according to the required rhyme, meter, line length, line groupings, and number of lines is said to be of a <i>closed poetic form</i>. Examples of a closed-form poetry include Petrarchan sonnets, Shakespearean sonnets, villanelles, haikus and limericks, which have set numbers of syllables, lines, fixed rhyme schemes, and traditional subject-matter such as love and nature.</p> <p>A poem of variable length, one which can consist of as many lines as the poet wishes to write is of an <i>open poetic form</i>. Every poem written in open poetic form is unique, and often composed in free verse <i>with no set structures of metre and rhyme</i>.</p> <p>Poems consist of stanzas, not paragraphs. We commonly refer to couplets (2-line stanzas), tercets (3), quatrains (4), quintet (5), sestet (6), octets (8). The space between stanzas is called a stanza or line break.</p>
Rhyme	<p>Rhyme is a matching similarity of sounds in two or more words, especially when their accented vowels and all succeeding consonants are identical. End rhyme is a rhyme on the final word of the line and can be divided into the following: (i) masculine rhyme is rhyme on the final stressed syllable of words. (E.g. 'Fall' and 'all') and; (ii) feminine rhyme is a rhyme on the two final syllables of words. (E.g. 'Treasure' and 'pleasure')</p> <p>Eye rhyme (also called visual rhyme) is based on the spelling of words that are pronounced differently. (E.g. 'Thorough' and 'rough', 'slaughter' and 'laughter'). An internal rhyme is a rhyme on words within a line rather than at the end.</p>
Rhyme scheme	<p>The pattern of rhyme. The traditional way to mark these patterns of rhyme is to assign a letter of the alphabet to each rhyming sound at the end of each line (e.g. ABAB, AABB, CDECDE) The rhyme scheme and form of different closed poetic forms is detailed on the next page:</p>

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
Rhyme scheme (Cont'd)	<p>Petrarchan sonnet (14 lines, octet plus sestet): ABBA ABBA CDE CDE <i>or</i> ABBA ABBA CDC DCD</p> <p>Shakespearean sonnet (14 lines ending with a heroic couplet) ABAB CDCD EFEF GG</p> <p>Villanelle: A1 b A2 / a b A1 / a b A2 / a b A1 / a b A2 / a b A1 A2</p>
Poetic metre	<p>A pattern of stressed syllables alternating with syllables of less stress. Compositions written in meter are said to be in verse. There are many possible patterns of verse. Each unit of stress and unstressed syllables is called a 'foot.'</p> <p>Iambic: a lightly stressed syllable followed by a heavily stressed syllable. An example: "<i>The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.</i>"</p> <p>Anapestic: two light syllables followed by a stressed syllable: "<i>The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold.</i>"</p> <p>Trochaic: a stressed followed by a light syllable: "<i>There they are, my fifty men and women.</i>"</p> <p>Dactylic: a stressed syllable followed by two light syllables: "<i>Éve, with her basket, was / Deep in the bells and grass.</i>"</p> <p>Iambs and anapests, since the strong stress is at the end, are called "rising meter"; trochees and dactyls, with the strong stress at the beginning with lower stress at the end, are called "falling meter."</p> <p>We name a metric line according to the number of 'feet' in it. If a line has four feet, it is tetrameter. If a line has five feet, it is pentameter. Six feet, hexameter, and so on. English verse tends to be pentameter, French verse tetrameter, and Greek verse, hexameter. When scanning a line, we might, for instance, describe the line as 'iambic pentameter' (having five feet, with each foot tending to be a light syllable followed by heavy syllable), or 'trochaic tetrameter' (having four feet, with each foot tending to be a long syllable followed by a short syllable). Here is a complete list of the various verse structures:</p> <p><i>Monometre:</i> one foot / <i>Dimetre:</i> two feet / <i>Trimetre:</i> three feet <i>Tetrametre:</i> four feet / <i>Pentametre:</i> five feet / <i>Hexametre:</i> six feet <i>Heptametre:</i> seven feet / <i>Octametre:</i> eight feet / <i>Nonametre:</i> nine feet</p>

effects

'I hear this word all the time and you keep writing the word in your comments. Is it important?'

It at once *stagger*s and *tickle*s me, in that very order, how some of my students narrow their comprehension of the world to the surface of things, of sound, of image and of word. When we communicate, we mean more than what our words represent in the dictionary; texts, whether visual, spoken or written, texts have an **effect** on their addressee. The sheer repetition of a particular word does highlight the importance of the concept that hides behind the word but it also *nags*, *numbs* and *pressures* whoever listens in to give in (as you should doubtless have experienced in the Singaporean classroom at one stage or other).

Texts, particularly literary texts, are constructed to make the reader **feel**: writers shape the reader's **experience** of a text, influencing us to respond to characters or circumstances in particular ways. We must be able to read texts at an emotive level and 'think backwards' to truly understand 'how the writing works'. This does require a vast arsenal of words or rather, a suitably literary vocabulary. We must endeavour to describe and appreciate the experience of a text.

Writing about Christina Rossetti's 'Ghostland', a student might comment on the *haunting* quality of its obtrusively *abnormal*, *unnatural* setting. He or she might see how the poem creates *suspense*, evoking *disturbing*, *surreal* images of the poem's speaker in a *trance-like state*. Rossetti's style can be said to reflect the *delirium* and *utter lack of control* evident in her *disquieting* dreamscape. Poetic and narrative texts transport us to different worlds; dramatic texts can accomplish the same overarching effect but come across as more immediate to a reader.

An audience entertained by Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, may deem his wordplay and situational comedy *scandalously*, *uproariously funny*. With no shortage of ornaments in the English language to describe the *comic*, we can decorate Wilde's play with words ranging from *farcical* to *witty*, *droll* to *satirical*.

Adjectives aside, dramatic, poetic and narrative texts are also elicit reactions from their intended audience. We can use **verbs** on an active reader or audience to show we can *enlightened*, *challenged*, *provoked* or *disturbed* by what we read or see. Vivid detail may *immerse* or *overwhelm* us in the writer's imagined world. Conversely, the illusion of fiction is also sometimes *broken* and *intruded upon* by a narrator. Late modern and post-modern drama go so far as to purpose itself towards *destabilising* or *subverting* our expectations. We can also employ **similes** to describe effects: a journey across the streets of Cairo may be rendered *like a battlefield*, just as a character can raise his protest sign *as if he were emerging triumphant from an epic battle*.

The possibilities, while not exactly endless, are for you to explore. *Enjoy* the next page.

Some adjectives

Intensity

Forceful, Emphatic, Resounding, Urgent, Overwhelming, Incessant, Relentless, Persistent, Energetic, Exuberant, Ebullient, Zestful, Immense, Unbridled, Irrepressible, Rich, Evocative, Lurid, Vivid, Majestic, Subdued, Faint, Muted, Uneven, Rippling, Sporadic, Intermittent

Mood and Tone

Hypnotic, Enchanting, Haunting, Mesmeric, Unreal, Surreal, Dreamlike, Phantasmagoric
Realistic, Concrete, Naturalistic, Ambiguous, Ambivalent, Obscure
Emotive, Stirring, Poignant, Lyrical, Joyful, Euphoric, Ecstatic, Rapturous
Pensive, Introspective, Reflective, Nostalgic, Wistful, Sentimental
Mournful, Sorrowful, Distressed, Sombre, Solemn, Gloomy, Grim, Bleak, Dreary, Austere
Despondent, Desolate, Disturbing, Unnerving, Harrowing, Horrific, Sinister, Macabre

Attitude and Treatment

Optimistic, Hopeful, Buoyant, Sanguine, Praising, Acclamatory, Joyful, Celebratory
Pessimistic, Resigned, Acquiescent, Accepting, Nostalgic, Sentimental, Sympathetic
Bitter, Critical, Contemptuous, Virulent

Style

Simple, Plain, Restrained, Understated, Formal, Elevated, Courtly, Elegant
Witty, Teasing, Mocking, Sardonic, Satirical, Comic, Playful, Irreverent
Strong, Exaggerated, Indulgent, Hyperbolic, Visceral, Blithe
Subtle, Muted, Nuanced, Undertone of, Discordant, Fragmented

Sound

Resonant, Reverberating, Sonorous, Whispered, Faint, Rustling, Incantatory, Sensual,
Thunderous, Piercing, Raucous, Musical, Melodious, Harmonic

Some verbs

Evoke

Rouse, prompt, trigger, elicit, excite, entrance, overwhelm, enkindle, reflect, draw.
... the reader's sympathy, fear, condemnation, regard

Invoke

Call to mind, remind, call attention to, emphasise, highlight, reinforce, intensify, inform,
elucidate, clarify, illuminate, illustrate, celebrate, revere

Provoke

Call into question, challenge, unsettle, disturb, shock, agitate, subvert, undercut
...the reader's expectations, preconceptions

Response to an unseen poem

Richard Wilbur's 'The Writer' presents the issues of family and growing up through the eyes of a father and his loving but not very affectionate attitude towards his daughter. The use of metaphors and similes command most of the poem and the speaker seems to be watching his daughter grow up from afar, although this does not mean he does not care. The poem endorses a kind of independence of woman that the men accept and encourage.

The metaphors used in the poem reflect the speaker's attitude of understanding and sympathy towards his daughter. This metaphor is mainly found in the first half of the poem, in which he places his daughter's room 'at the prow of the house'. Her room is symbolically the front of the family 'ship', indicating that she is the main reason for the family to exist and also that the speaker (her father) is not controlling her life. Rather, she steers her own life and has her own directions. The father, conventionally the patriarch of the family, is not controlling or oppressive, but allows his daughter to choose her own life. The fact that he 'pause(s)' in the stairwell instead of entering her room and intruding upon her life, he gives her 'space'. The traditional notion of fathers being controlling is thus subverted. However, it reinforces the notion of fathers being distant and lacking affection.

The father shows sympathy towards his daughter as he points to 'young as she is, the stuff / of her life is a great cargo'. The use of the noun 'stuff' shows ambivalence that points to the father not really knowing about her life but it can also be that it is a form of distancing from perhaps a great tragedy in the family, where the pain would be too much to speak of. This 'great cargo' is a seeming metaphor for the unspeakable tragedy - perhaps the death of her mother - the 'g' sounds create a heavy feeling, like that of being dragged down by a weight. This reinforces the ship metaphor and portrays the father's sympathy and empathy for his daughter. Furthermore, the simile 'Like a chain hauled over a gunwale' conveys an aural effect, that adds to the gravity of what happened in the past. However, this links to the bigger idea of female suffering. The poem shows a shift in attitudes of men towards women; the poet uses an intimate family setting to show how males have become less indifferent and more concerned about 'suffering' women.

The use of pauses and silences present the father's patient attitude and continues to subvert our conventional notions of parenthood. The exchange of 'pauses' between the speaker and his daughter where a 'stillness greatens' creates an atmosphere of tension and anticipation, whereby the father deliberately waits for her to continue 'writing a story'. This symbolic act of 'writing' also means living her life, growing up and maturing. It points to the times when a child is growing up and during the 'pauses' there is uncertainty - will she overcome this obstacle? Yet, the fact that the father does not provoke or intrude shows the patience and love he has for her, not to take over her life but watch as she learns from experience. The personification of 'The whole house seems to be

thinking' intensely heightens the atmosphere of tension and portrays the father's great care for his daughter.

The next half of the poem is also coloured with metaphors, this time the metaphor of 'the dazed starling' representing his daughter and women in general. The father's patient and loving nature is reinforced here, whereby he 'retreated, not to affright it' and watched 'through the crack of the door' the bird's struggle to grow into its wings and fly away. The father believes in letting nature run its course, instead of artificially or forcefully forcing it to fly or helping it to fly, no matter how good the intentions. The symbolism of this 'iridescent creature' of 'brilliance', further marked by words denoting light and brightness, reflects the father's adulation and love of his daughter. The startling 'clearing the sill of the world' symbolically represents the successful growing up of his daughter and her newfound independence in the larger 'world'. This relates to the larger issues of confinement or domestication of women 'trapped' and psychologically 'humped and blood[ied]' by the oppressive world of female stereotypes and conventional ideas of women that limited their 'being'. In Wilbur's more modern 20th century context, women are less subject to the 'helpless hour' and have a freedom and fighting spirit that allow them to chart a 'smooth course for the right window' of opportunity.

In conclusion, 'The Writer' portrays the independence and increasing respect for women through an intimate family setting and symbolism, presenting a father's love for his daughter.

Elizabeth Liew, 2T09 (2010)

Comparison of 2 Poems

Both poems express the love a child has for his father and are in this aspect, similar. However, they also are contrasting in tone, for 'Dad' is written with melancholy lacing the words whereas 'Only a Dad' has a proud and more lively tone. Also significant are the different effects achieved by the titles of both poems and their form.

Both poems are similar in conveying their speakers' love for their respective father. In 'Dad', the speaker speaks of the little things he remembers of his father, for instance, 'those black/fat raisins you liked to press into/my palm', 'I see you staggering back up the path / with sacks of potatoes', small gestures and routine actions that, though little and seemingly insignificant, create a tenderness. Even the 'old hat [that] hurts me' is spoken with love. We are shown how much the speaker loves his father through the remembrance of these many little things and the emotional resonance they have on him. It is not that his father has done much but the fact that he recalls these things with love that shows the speaker's affection for his father. Similarly, in 'Only a Dad', the speaker expresses a great love for his father, in a slightly different manner; the poem speaks of the things his father has done for him like 'Toiling, striving day to day' and 'To smooth the way for his children small', all painstaking, grander acts than in the first poem. The reciting of these acts shows how the speaker takes pride in what his father has done for him and loves him for it. Where Poem A focuses on the little things and Poem B the comparatively 'bigger' things, both seek to present both the speaker's love for the father and the father's love for his child, whether through tender affection (in 'Dad') or the more 'conventional' form of fatherly 'love' – labour and suffering for the child.

Both poems also differ in tone and mood. Poem A is melancholic and 'silent' whereas poem B is more reverberating in expressing the speaker's relationship with his father. These effects are created through form. Poem A uses caesuras especially in the second stanza (the 'quietest' part of the poem). The caesuras in 'You loved to watch the trees. This year' and 'you beached: cold, white-faced, shivering' are employed as 'pockets of silence' filled with longing in the first quote and pain in the second. This pain and longing translates into an intense melancholy which intensifies as the poem progresses, as seen in the final line 'already forfeit, now forever lost'. Here, the comma acts as a cut, severing all contact the child has with his father. Similarly, caesuras are used in Poem B to a very different effect. Whilst the caesura in Poem A creates silence, the caesura in poem B in the lines 'Only a dad, neither rich nor proud' and 'Toiling, striving from day to day' achieve a rather dramatic, heavy-hearted build-up. The lines are like an announcement, where the words before the caesuras are seemingly emphasised and meant to be read aloud. The caesuras thus act not as breaks, but bridges to the next half, elaborating the 'announcement' of the speaker's feelings. For instance, he writes, 'Only a dad' and after the comma 'neither rich nor proud', highlighting the ordinary man his father is and yet how he is still so proud. The caesurae in Poem B thus create a resonating effect of respect and admiration that contrasts the more pained pauses in Poem A.

The structure of both poems should also be taken into consideration. While it is evident that poems A and B are different in the number of stanzas, what is of importance is the way these stanzas are written. In A, the stanzas are not orderly shaped but flow through a variation of long and short lines with an interesting 'dent' in stanzas 2 and 3. In contrast, poem B's stanzas are much more orderly. Despite several lines being slightly longer than the others, they are still largely uniform. Poem A's use of form may be to reflect the passage of memory, the longer lines illustrating longer memories flowing into shorter ones. However, the two 'dents' in stanza 2 and 3 may represent the speaker's pain as it is in those stanzas that he speaks of his memory with pain and melancholy. In contrast, poem A has a more ordered form, probably to illustrate that all his father's achievements are of equal importance to the speaker and hence, expressed in a similar manner.

The perspective in both poems are also significant in shaping meaning in the poem. In poem A, the speaker addresses his father as 'You', 'Your', whereas the speaker in B refers to his father as 'him' and 'he'. A is clearly a more personal poem where B is more general. The use of 'you' intensifies the melancholy of poem A as seen when the speaker says 'You did not see their spring', creating a connection between reader and speaker, allowing the reader to feel and see the father figure as the speaker sees him. This is different from how the speaker of poem B addresses his father, grouping him with all fathers and making it more general. Poem B therefore appears as a general appreciation for all fathers instead of a specific one, with the reader being less able to identify emotionally with the poem but able to associate such attributes with their own fathers. The perspective of both poems has clearly differing effects in presenting the father figure.

Lastly, the titles of both poems are also used to different effects. Poem A is titled 'Dad', short yet encapsulating a sea of emotions. The title reflects the poem in the sense that is as though the speaker is back in 'my childhood', a child lost 'buried' with his father's image, yearning for his father. This emotionally powerful title is similar to B's, with 'Only a Dad' also expressing a deep sense of love that is more subtle. The word 'Only' seems to convey the fact that the subject is ordinary and not up to expectation. If it represents how the world views fathers, the speaker may be seen to challenge the reader to see that fathers are not 'Only' dads, suggesting that fatherhood is an important vocation upon itself. This somewhat ironic title is perhaps more complicated in its effect on the reader, calling upon us to not just admire the role of the 'Dad' (as in Poem A) but consider our own preconceptions of the father and how the seemingly ordinary acts of the father appears only important to us when we grow older. I feel that both titles are nonetheless just as effect and carry equal weight in meaning.

In conclusion, Poem A invites the reader to identify with the speaker and to consider how seemingly little actions can carry great weight and poem B makes us reconsider our opinions of fathers.

Vanessa Lee, 2T20 (2011)

Response to Set Text

Discuss the presentation and role of Hermione in Women in Love.

Truly a woman of D. H. Lawrence's despised new school of knowledge and thought, Hermione Roddice remains an intriguing and ultimately repellent counterpoint to the relationship between Rupert Birkin and Ursula Brangwen, and a contrast to Ursula's sister Gudrun in their similar pursuits of the known and the finite.

Lawrence immediately presents Hermione as a 'woman of the new school, full of the intellectually and heavy, nerve-worn with consciousness' and characterises her as a 'man's woman' - 'it was the manly world that held her'. A reader unfamiliar with the Lawrentian vision of humanity would see her as such and she ostensibly comes across as such throughout her presence in the novel. Her rivalry with the masculine is formidable and unyielding: as long as 'he was male', 'she must exert some kind of power over him', even if it is merely a stag in her garden. Thus her battles with Birkin, 'and they had been lovers now, for years'. Most representative of her constant quest to gain ascendancy over him is her attempt to push a Persian carpet onto him in 'Carpeting', where Lawrence gives her a declarative framed within a question, as he does almost at her every appearance: 'Will you let me give it to you?'. This resolves itself into its real meaning: 'Do I want to give it you'. Having tread the paths of the man's world, Hermione uses a maddeningly polite passivity projected outward in her innocuous questions that allow only assent as an answer, hiding the subtle and aggressive desire for power beneath. In 'Breadalby', she asks her visitors, 'Would you like to come for a walk?', and Lawrence uses the imagery of the military to signify the overtures of her desire for power, further embedding it in the question, 'And they all said yes, feeling somehow like prisoners marshalled for exercise'. Birkin, who resists, mockingly notes that 'I don't like trooping off in a gang'. Gerald manages to accidentally defeat her in 'Sketch-Book', when his 'good-humoured obliviousness' renders him incapable of answering her and 'she was nullified, she could not regain ascendancy'.

For all her desire for power, Hermione's thirst for knowledge and her uplifting of all that is intellectual are attractive to the initially similarly-inclined Birkin; hence their relationship and his willingness to 'go on all those years' with her. Thus, in her most superficial role, Hermione is characterised as a rival to Ursula for Birkin's affections, ultimately thwarted when Birkin choose the latter over her.

Yet the reason why he does so is critically important to a more holistic appreciation of Hermione's role and the apparent 'evil' that she possesses. Lawrence's concern with the presentation of sexual relations lead him to develop the idea of the twin-consciousness that she possesses. Lawrence's concern with the presentation of sexual relations lead him to develop the idea of the twin-consciousness that resides in all his characters, if not all of us. As Birkin explains, each individual possesses mind-consciousness, which is masculine, represented by light and forms our intellect and our knowledge, and our

blood-consciousness, feminine and bound to darkness - our unconscious desires and spontaneity.

Furthermore, Lawrence saw the dissolution of his time as a result of an over-emphasis on the mind and the finite, personified by Man's obsession with machine and war and its destruction of nature and our natural spontaneity left dead and 'rotten' like 'dead sea fruit' with insides full of 'bitter, corrupt ash'. When reimagined in love, as in the relationship between Gudrun and Gerald, the pursuit of knowledge and intellectualised love - embodied by Hermione - is ultimately sterile, finite and damning.

Hence, Birkin's rejection of Hermione is in part due to his realisation of her 'deathly' 'intellectually', as well as the lack of spontaneity in their relationship, which he derides her in 'Class-Room'; 'You and spontaneity! You, the most deliberate thing that has ever walked or crawled!' Indeed, Hermione's pursuit of knowledge makes her finite and limited, incapable of the blood-conscious love and equilibrium of individuals Birkin desires. 'Knowing is everything to you,' he declares and her 'nerve-worn consciousness' suggests an over-emphasis on the mind - which to Lawrence was a 'powerful, consuming, destructive mentality'. The Lawrentian version of knowledge is finite and limited and does not allow for growth. Where Ursula and Birkin achieve the latter's 'star balanced with another finality'. Dynamic and open to growth and changes in both individuals through blood-consciousness, Hermione's love only wants to 'know' and to 'have things in your power', a 'dead quantity of knowledge' and ultimately final. Hence, Hermione is shown again as a rival for Birkin's affections but this time in her temptation of finite mind-consciousness that continues to grip Birkin against the possibility of equilibrium with Ursula.

Hermione's inability to control her desire thus stems from her over-dependence on her mind. Lawrence consistently associates her with demonic imagery and the lexis of torture and cult: she possesses the face of a 'demonical ecstatic' in 'Sisters' and resembles 'a priestess', 'sunk in a heavy half-trance'. She is also almost always 'drugged'. All these imply her inability to control her emotions, as they take control her and hence her alienation from her blood-consciousness, which she has wrested into 'submission'. When it does appear, it is 'savage', 'pure sensation and passion'. As Birkin foretells in 'Class-Room': she gains her 'voluptuous consummation' from the sadistic act of dropping a ball of lapis lazuli onto Birkin's head and Lawrence shows us the flood of 'subterranean' emotions that emerge through free indirect discourse and the repetition of 'must'. Similar imagery is later used to describe the relationship between Gudrun and Gerald, which ultimately kills the latter. While Hermione is overwhelmed by desire, Gudrun is able to distance herself from her emotions and observe them 'coldly'. Thus, Hermione serves as a contrast to Gudrun, both women concerned with knowledge and its power, but both ultimately doomed to its static finality.

Hence, Hermione is characterised as intellectual and power-hungry, and serves as an effective counter to both the Brangwen sisters, almost tempting Birkin into recommencing his relationship with her. Yet, ultimately, her dress 'was both shabby and soiled, even rather dirty' and Birkin chooses Ursula over her, choosing life.

Kevin Martens Wong, 2TII (2010)

extras

Write a critical commentary on the following poems, considering in detail ways in which your response is shaped by the writer's language, style and form.

A sense of place

Other National Virtues

Gwee Li Sui

I asked for teh tarek
Got half the glass in effervescence
Got food poisoning because
Half my mee's in its adolescence
Criticize, complain, condemn
With a hand over the abdomemn.

The players pant like pups
Think they are playing table tennis
The blundering referee
Is giving me tuberculosis
Criticize, complain, condemn
Throughout the National Stadiemn.

Sure, we may know we live
In a kind of modern paradise
But it's hell when we come to
Any bureaucratic exercise
Criticize, complain, condemn
All over on the referendemn.

2 mothers in a hdb playground

Arthur Yap

ah beng is so smart,
already he can watch tv and know the whole story
your kim cheong is also quite smart,
what boy is he in the exam?
this playground is not too bad, but I'm always
so worried, car here and car there.
at exam time, it's worse
because you know why?
kim cheong eats so little.
give him some complan. my ah beng was like that,
now he's different, if you give him anything
he's sure to finish it all up.
sure, sure, cheong's father buys him
vitamins but he keeps it inside his mouth
& later gives it to the cat.
i scold like mad but what for?
if I don't see it, how can I scold?
on saturday, tv showed a new type,
special for children , why don't you call
his father buy some? maybe they are better.
money's no problem, it's not that
we want to save, if we buy it
& he doesn't eat it, throwing money
into the jamban is the same.
ah beng's father spends so much,
takes out the mosaic floor & wants
to make terrazzo floor or what.
we also go new furniture, bought from diethelm
the sofa is so soft, I dare not sit, they all
sit like don't want to get up, so expensive.
nearly two thousand dollars, sure must be good.
that you can't say, my toa-soh
bought an expensive sewing machine,
after 6 months,it is already spoilt,
she took it back but.....beng,
come here, come, don't play the fool.
your tuition teacher is coming,
wah, kim cheong, now you're quite big.
come cheong, quick go home and bathe.
ah pah wants to take you chya-hong in a new motor-car

Void Deck

Alfian Sa'at

Where the neighbourhood wives,
After a morning at the wet market,
Sit facing the breeze
To trade snatches of gossip
About leery shopkeepers,
The local louts,
(Like that fella who's always drilling his walls –
Gives me migraine)
And that mad woman
Who throws things from her window.
With careful put-downs they
Fashion boasts, about stubborn sons,
Lazy daughters, who by some miracle or mistake
Always score well in class.
When words falter,
Gestures take over: pursed lips, rolling eyes,
Animated hands adorned by bangles of
Gold, jade, steel, string.

And children orbit around them
Laugh without diction –
Their games of tag a reassurance
That there has been no hothousing
Of who is unclean, unwashed,
Untouchable. When they break out
Into some kindergarten song,
One almost believes in a generation
Cleansed of skin-deep suspicions,
And free from the superstitions of the tongue –

And old folks sit like sages
To deploy chess pieces with ancient strategies.
In a corner, a caged bird bursts
With the song of its master's pride
And wrinkled women breathe, through
Tai-chi-tuned windpipes, the operatic melody of the air...

All a wanton fantasy.

Eyes reveal a meeting-point
For loners and loiterers:
A sense of things reduced-
Conversations that trickle through
Brief noddings at lift landings,
Teenage rhetoric scrawled, in liquid paper,
On the stone-table chessboard,
(Where the king used to sit)
The grandiose house-selling dreams of residents
Compacted in anonymous letterboxes;
As an afterthought, an old man pees
Under a public phone.

A place to be avoided, this,
How in its vastness it devours hours.
Little wonder then,
Why residents rush through void decks
Back to the cramped comforts of home
As if in fear of what such open space might do
To cosy minds.

Empire State of Mind

Shawn Corey Carter

Yeah I'm up at Brooklyn, now I'm down in Tribeca
Right next to De Niro, but I'll be hood forever
I'm the new Sinatra, and since I made it here
I can make it anywhere, yeah, they love me everywhere

I used to cop in Harlem, all of my Dominicanos
Right there up on Broadway, pull me back to that McDonald's
Took it to my stashbox, 560 State Street
Catch me in the kitchen like a Simmons whipping pastry

Cruisin' down Eighth Street, off white Lexus
Drivin' so slow, but BK is from Texas
Me, I'm out that Bed-Stuy, home of that boy Biggie
now I live on Billboard and I brought my boys with me

Say what up to Ty-Ty, still sippin' mai tais
Sittin' courtside, Knicks and Nets give me high five
Nigga I be spiked out, I could trip a referee
Tell by my attitude that I am most definitely (from)

In New York, concrete jungle where dreams are made of
There's nothin' you can't do, now you're in New York
These streets will make you feel brand new
Big lights will inspire you, let's hear it for New York (New York, New York)

Catch me at the X with OG at a Yankee game
S***, I made the Yankee hat more famous then a Yankee can
You should know I bleed blue, but I ain't a Crip though
But I got a gang of niggas walkin' with my clique though

Welcome to the melting pot, corners where we sellin' rock
Afrika Bambaataa s***, home of the hip-hop
Yellow cab, gypsy cab, dollar cab, holla back
For foreigners it ain't for, they act like they forgot how to act

Eight million stories, out there and they're naked
City, it's a pity, half of y'all won't make it
Me, I got a plug, Special Ed 'I Got It Made'
If Jeezy's payin' LeBron, I'm payin' Dwyane Wade

Three dice, Cee-lo, three card Monte
Labor Day Parade, rest in peace Bob Marley
Statue of Liberty, long live the World Trade
Long live the King yo, I'm from the Empire State that's

In New York, concrete jungle where dreams are made of
There's nothin' you can't do, now you're in New York
These streets will make you feel brand new
Big lights will inspire you, let's hear it for New York (New York, New York)

Lights is blinding, girls need blinders
So they can step out of bounds quick, the sidelines is
Lined with casualties, who sip to life casually
Then gradually become worse, don't bite the apple eve

Caught up in the in-crowd, now you're in style
Anna Wintour gets cold, in Vogue with your skin out
City of sin, it's a pity on the wind
Good girls gone bad, the city's filled with them

Mommy took a bus trip, now she got her bust out
Everybody ride her, just like a bus route
Hail Mary to the city, you're a virgin
And Jesus can't save you, life starts when the church end

Came here for school, graduated to the high life
Ball players, rap stars, addicted to the limelight
MDMA got you feelin' like a champion
The city never sleeps, better slip you an Ambien

In New York, concrete jungle where dreams are made of
There's nothin' you can't do, now you're in New York
These streets will make you feel brand new
Big lights will inspire you, let's hear it for New York (New York, New York)

One hand in the air for the big city
Street lights, big dreams, all lookin' pretty
No place in the world that could compare
Put your lighters in the air, everybody say yeah (yeah, yeah, yeah)

The Tropics of New York

Claude McKay

Bananas ripe and green, and ginger root
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,
And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,

Sat in the window, bringing memories
of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,
And dewy dawns, and mystical skies
In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grow dim, and I could no more gaze;
A wave of longing through my body swept,
And, hungry for the old, familiar ways
I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

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-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's 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 Poet

Amy Lowell

What instinct forces man to journey on,
Urged by a longing blind but dominant!
Nothing he sees can hold him, nothing daunt
His never failing eagerness. The sun
Setting in splendour every night has won
His vassalage; those towers flamboyant
Of airy cloudland palaces now haunt
His daylight wanderings. Forever done
With simple joys and quiet happiness
He guards the vision of the sunset sky;
Though faint with weariness he must possess
Some fragment of the sunset's majesty;
He spurns life's human friendships to profess
Life's loneliness of dreaming ecstasy.

Sonnet 42

Edna St Vincent Millay

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

Syntax

Carol Ann Duffy

I want to call you thou, the sound
of the shape of the start
of a kiss - like this - thou -
and to say, after, I love,
thou, I love, thou I love, not
I love you.

Because I so do -
as we say now - I want to say
thee, I adore, I adore thee
and to know in my lips
the syntax of love resides,
and to gaze in thine eyes.

Love's language starts, stops, starts;
The right words flowing or clotting in the heart.

You

Carol Ann Duffy

Uninvited, the thought of you stayed too late in my head,
so I went to bed, dreaming you hard, hard, woke with your name
like tears, soft, salt, on my lips, the sound of its bright syllables
like a charm, like a spell.

Falling in love

is glamorous hell; the crouched, parched heart
like a tiger ready to kill; a flame's fierce licks under the skin.
Into my life, larger than life, beautiful, you strolled in.

I hid in my ordinary days, in the long grass of my routine,
in my camouflage rooms. You sprawled in my gaze,
staring back from anyone's face, from the shape of a cloud,
from the pining, earth-struck moon which gapes at me

as I open the bedroom door. The curtains stir. There you are
on the bed, like a gift, like a touchable dream.

Funeral Blues

Wystan Hugh Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone.
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling in the sky the message He is Dead,
Put crêpe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever, I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun.
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

The Unknown Citizen

Wystan Hugh Auden

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for he time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

To the Virgins, Make Much of Time

Robert Herrick

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles today
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of Heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run.
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

“Form
follows
function.”

louis sullivan