

POWER AND CONFLICT POETRY

1 (War and Conflict poems)

[War Photographer - Carol Ann Duffy](#)

[Remains - Simon Armitage](#)

[Charge Of The Light Brigade - Alfred Lord Tennyson](#)

[Bayonet Charge - Ted Hughes](#)

[Exposure - Wilfred Owens \(can be in 3 too\)](#)

“Older men declare war.
But it is the youth that must fight and die”
- Herbert Hoover

“All war is a symptom of man’s
failure as a thinking animal” - John Steinbeck

2 (Power poems)

[Ozymandias - Percy Shelly](#)

[My Last Duchess - Robert Browning](#)

[London - William Blake](#)

“Power tends to corrupt
and absolute power corrupts absolutely”
- John Dalberg-Acton

3 (Nature poems)

[Extract From The Prelude - William Wordsworth](#)

[Storm On The Island - Seamus Heaney](#)

“The power of nature can make fun
of the power of man at any time!”
- Mehmet Murat İldan

4 (Identity poems)

[Kamikaze - Beatrice Garland \(can be in 3 too\)](#)

[Emigree - Carol Rumens](#)

[Checking Out Me History - John Agard](#)

5 The Flexibles (poems)

[Poppies - Jane Weir](#) (Can be added to 1 and 2 as “Memories”)

[Tissue - Imtiaz Dharker](#) (Can be added to 3 and 4 as “Transience of Power”)

Themes

- Conflict
- Identity
- Memory
- Power
- War's Impact
- Trauma
- Nature
- Human Nature
- Social Issues
- Loss

War Photographer - Carol Ann Duffy

Language

“In his darkroom he is finally alone” -
“spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.”
“a priest preparing to intone a Mass.” - biblical reference
“Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.” - plosives
“A hundred agonies in black-and-white”
“tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers...they do not care.”

Structure

Follows the actions and thoughts of the photographer in the room. There's a distinct change at the start of the third stanza, where he remembers specific death. In the final stanza, focus shifts to the way his work is received.

Form

4 stanzas and regular rhyme scheme - it is “set out in ordered rows” echoing the care that photographer takes over his work. Enjambment reflects gradual revealing of the photo as it develops.

Remains - Simon Armitage

Language

“And one of them legs it up the road,” - colloquial

“I see every round as it rips through his life” - alliteration

“his bloody life in my bloody hands” - alliteration

“Probably armed, possibly not”

“And the drinks and the drugs won’t flush him out”

“He’s here in my head...dug in behind enemy lines”

Structure

Starts as if going to be an amusing anecdote but turns to graphic description of man’s death. Clear volta at 5th stanza, “End of story, except not really”, tone, thoughts, emotions all changed by his long-lasting guilt

Form

No regular line length or rhyme scheme like telling a story. Starts with “we” a plural pronoun but changes to singular “I” and the poem becomes more personal as if a confession. In the final couplet both lines have the same metre - shows a feeling of finality and hints the guilt will stay with the soldier.

Charge Of The Light Brigade - Alfred Lord Tennyson

Language

“Into the jaws of Death...the mouth of Hell” - metaphor and repetition

“Reel’d from the sabre-stroke Shatter’d and sunder’d” - sibilance

“Cannon to the right...left...behind them” - exaggeration and repetition

“When can their glory fade?”

“Honour the charge they made!”

“Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die”

Structure

Story of battle in chronological order. Final stanza is shorter and summarises their heroism.

Form

Third person narration, hence a story. Regular relentless rhythm makes a fast pace imitating cavalry’s advancement and energy of battle. Rhyming couplets and triplets drive the poem forwards but momentum is broken by unrhymed lines mirroring horses stumbling and soldiers falling. Overall lack of rhyme scheme hints at chaos of war.

Bayonet Charge - Ted Hughes

Language

“Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest” - simile

“In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations” - alliteration

“King, honour, human dignity, etcetera Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm” - listing

“Suddenly he awoke”

“Bullets smacking the belly out of the air”

“The patriotic tear...”

Structure

Starts with media res covering soldier's movement and thoughts over a short space of time. First stanza is a soldier acting on instinct. Time seems to stand still in the second stanza. Soldier thinks about his situation in the final stanza, giving up his thoughts and ideals and seems to have lost his humanity.

Form

Enjambment and caesura used with uneven length creating irregular rhythm mirroring his struggle in running through the mud. Narrator uses the pronoun 'he' to keep anonymous as if a universal figure which could represent any young soldier.

Exposure - Wilfred Owens

Language

“Our brains ache in the merciless iced east winds that knive us” - pronouns, sibilance, violent verb

“We hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire” - personification

“But nothing happens” - repetition

“Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence” - sibilance

Structure

8 stanzas but no real progression. Last stanza ends with the same words as first reflecting the monotony of life in the trenches and absence of change.

Form

Present tense used with first person plural; a collective voice to show how the experience was shared by soldiers across the war. Each stanza has a regular rhyme scheme ABBAC reflecting the monotonous nature of men's experience, but the rhymes are often half rhymes 'snow' and 'renew'. Rhyme scheme offers no comfort or satisfaction - the rhymes are jagged like the reality of men's experience and reflect their confusion and fading energy. Each stanza ends with a half line leaving a gap which mirrors the lack of activity or hope for the men.

Ozymandias - Percy Shelly

Language

“Sneer of cold command” - guttural alliteration

“King of kings” - repetition, biblical reference

“Nothing beside remains” - caesura and short sentence

“Colossal wreck, boundless and bare” - alliteration

“The lone and level sands stretch far away” - alliteration

Structure

Narrator builds up an image of the statue focussing on different parts of it. Ends by describing the enormous desert helping to sum up the insignificance of the statue.

Form

Is a petrarchan sonnet with a volta at “And on the pedestal these words appear:” However does not follow regular sonnet rhyme scheme, reflecting how human power and structures can be destroyed. Uses iambic pentameter but also often disrupted. The second hand account story distances the reader from the dead king more.

My Last Duchess - Robert Browning

Language

“That’s my last duchess painted on the wall” - pronouns

“Will’t please you sit and look at her?” - arrogant language

“too soon made glad, too easily Impressed” - repetition of ‘too’

“Which I have not” - diminutive language to describe the way the Duke behaves

“Notice Neptune ,though, Taming a sea-horse” - allusion to Greek mythology

Structure

About the duke’s gallery but the duke is caught up in talking about the duchess and not the art. Poem builds towards a kind of confession before the identity of the visitor is revealed.

Form

Dramatic monologue written in iambic pentameter. Reinforces the impression that duke be in conversation with visitors. Rhyming couplets show duke’s desire for control, but enjoyment suggests he gets carried away with anger and passions. Creates a picture of a somewhat unstable character, whose obsession with power is unsettling.

London - William Blake

Language

“I wander through each chartered street” - pronoun and metaphor

“Marks of weakness, marks of woe” - repetition

“Mind-forged manacles I hear.” - metaphor

“Every black’ning church appals” - symbolise

“Runs in blood down palace walls.” - symbolise

“Blights with plagues the marriage hearse” - oxymoron

Structure

Relentless images of downtrodden, deprived people. First 2 stanzas focus on people before shifting to institutions he holds responsible. Final stanza looking at people even how newborns are affected.

Form

Dramatic monologue. First person narrator speaks passionately about the suffering he sees. The ABAB rhyme scheme is unbroken and echoes the relentless misery of the city. Regular rhyme reflects the sound of feet as he wanders.

Extract From The Prelude - William Wordsworth

Language

“One summer evening (led by her)” - led by nature- personification

“act of stealth” - hinting that something bad is going to happen/foreshadowing

“Troubled pleasure” - oxymoron, he is taking an exciting risk

“the horizons bound, a huge peak, black and huge” - different language and tone, more scary and threatening

“upreared its head” - personification, the mountain is overpowering him

“Trouble to my dreams” - unsettling image helps empathise with him coz contrast to start

“But huge and mighty forms that do not live like living men” - nature is powerful and conscious

Structure

First section tone is fairly light and carefree. There is a distinct change when the mountain appears, the tone becoming darker and more fearful. In the final section the narrator reflects how experience has changed him.

Form

The 1st person narrative is so personal. Use of blank verse (unrhymed verse in iambic pentameter) makes sound serious and important, and regular rhythm makes sound natural speech.

Storm On The Island - Seamus Heaney

Language

“We are prepared: we build our houses squat,” - arrogance

“Exploding comfortably” - oxymoron and appeals to senses maybe trying to undermine nature

“We are bombarded by the empty air” - combat imagery so nature is powerful

“Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.” - storm in invisible contrasting with solid rock before

Structure

Poem shifts from security to fear. “But no:” maybe be turning point/volta with slow pace of monosyllabic phrase and caesura e.g. “But there are no trees” reflecting the last moments of calm before the storm.

Form

Written in blank verse mirroring everyday speech and making poems seem part of conversation. First person plural “We” also shows how it is a communal, collective experience. Poem is all 1 stanza to show compact and sturdy like the houses.

Kamikaze - Beatrice Garland

Language

“Green-blue translucent” and “pearl-grey” - sensory imagery and semantic field of colour
“Her father embarked at sunrise” - double meaning
“Till gradually we too learned to be silent, to live as though he had never returned” - enjambment
“He must have wondered which had been the better way to die” - key msg
“A shaven head full of powerful incantations” - military power and influence
“Dark shoals of fishes...dark prince, muscular, dangerous” - nature is powerful; tone of nostalgia
“He remembered how he and his brothers...” - memories force him to return

Structure

First five stanzas form one sentence covering the pilot's account of flight as the daughter imagines it. The end sentence represents his landing, and the final two deal with the fallout of the pilot's actions.

Form

Mostly narrated in third person with reported speech of pilot's daughter, voice heard in later stanzas. Absence of pilot's voice shows he is cut off from society, third person emphasises the distance between pilot and daughter.

Emigree - Carol Rumens

Language

“Bright, filled paperweight” - metaphor show memory has no more value
“There was once a country” - effective language echoing child’s story
“The white streets of that city” - colour connotes truthfulness of city
“They accuse me of absence, they circle me.” - anaphora emphasises sense of isolation
“It tastes of sunlight” - gustatory imagery shows delight in the memory
“I have no passport” - alludes to pain of man-made borders
“Accuse” - emphatic repetition shows the persecution she endures

Structure

Speaker’s memory of the city grows and solidifies as the poem moves on - the city becomes a physical presence for the speaker in the final stanza. Each stanza ends with ‘sunlight’ reinforcing that she sees the city in a positive light.

Form

Is written in first person, three eight line stanzas but no regular rhythm or rhyme. The first two stanzas contain lots of enjambment, but there’s more end stopping in the final stanza reflecting the speaker’s feeling of confinement in her new “city of walls”

Checking Out Me History - John Agard

Language

“Dem tell me” - so much repetition tho

“Blind me to me own identity” - colloquial language to refrain from eurocentric view

“Mary Seacole - a healing star” - light symbolism for goodness

“Napoleon battalion and first black republic born toussaint de thorn” - rhyme and broken

Structure

The poem alternates between historical and fictional characters from both cultures emphasising the differences between them. British figures are skipped over quickly with little respect whereas the caribbean figures are covered in more detail.

Form

Narrator uses a mixture of stanza forms suggesting he's breaking the confining language rules that he's been taught. Caribbean history stanzas have shorter lines and more broken syntax than British ones to emphasise them and make them seem more serious. The rhyme scheme also is different where british stanzas have a lot of simple rhymes making them sound childish. A lot of punctuation is missing.

Poppies - Jane Weir

Language

“Crimped petals, spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade of yellow bias binding around your blazer” - colour connotation

“Sellotape bandaged around my hand” - medical semantic field

“I wanted to graze my nose across the tip of your nose” - Eskimos kiss show emotional stuff

“I resisted the impulse to run my fingers through the gelled blackthorns of your hair” - motherly affection

“A split second and you were away, intoxicated” - lack of control, son’s excitement contrasting with her sadness

“The dove pulled freely against the sky, an ornamental stitch” - symbolism for son as small and beautiful

Structure

Is chronological and describes preparations for leaving son. Time frame is ambiguous, the memories of son’s childhood are intermingled with memories of him leaving, often not clearly distinguished.

Form

First-person narrative means the reader gets a strong impression of the mother's emotions. There is no regular rhyme making it sound like the narrator’s thoughts and memories. Long sentences and enjambment give the impression that the narrator is absorbed in own reminiscent thoughts while caesurae show how she tries to hold her emotions together.

Tissue - Imtiaz Dharker

Language

“If buildings were paper, I might feel their drift” -

“Fine slips” and “luminous scripts” - extended metaphor for fragile yet powerful

“Might fly our lives like paper kites” - simile so lives not always in control

“See how easily they fall away on a sigh” - enjambment show time never stops

“Turned into your skin” - last line for humans n stuff

“But let the daylight break through capitals and monoliths” - nature more powerful

Structure

3 main parts to the poem, moving through ideas about history, human experience and creation, ending with the single line standing out focussing on the reader of their own identity and how it is made.

Form

Poetic voice is elusive, focussing on humanity in general rather than a specific person or speaker, lack of rhyme and enjambment across lines and stanzas gives the poem a sense of freedom and openness, reflecting the narrator's desire for freedom and clarity. The short stanzas mean that the poem is built up in layers just as it suggests human life is.