



Power and Conflict Poetry—Personal Responses

Revision Booklet

Student name:

Teacher name:

Form tutor:

Personal responses to conflict



AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:

- maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response
- use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.

AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.

Poppies JANE WEIR

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

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

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

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

Task One

Weir contrasts domestic images with images of conflict. Identify an example of this and analyse it.

Task Two

How many different interpretations can you think of for: "I traced the inscriptions on the war memorial, leaned against it like a wishbone.?"

Task Three

The speaker's mood/emotions are revealed through the poem's use of punctuation. Identify and analyse an example of this.

Remains - SIMON ARMITAGE

On another occasion, we get sent out
to tackle looters raiding a bank.

And one of them legs it up the road,
probably armed, possibly not.

Well myself and somebody else and somebody else
are all of the same mind,
so all three of us open fire.

Three of a kind all letting fly, and I swear

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

pain itself, the image of agony.

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

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

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

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

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

Task One

Armitage uses graphic, violent imagery to show the impact of the war on the soldier. Analyse an example.

Task Two

Armitage discusses the impact the war has on the soldier when he has returned home. Summarise the problems he faces.

Task Three

The poem has organised and controlled quatrains, until the final stanza, which is 'cut short'. What point is Armitage making?

War Photographer—*Carol Ann Duffy*

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

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

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

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

Task One

Most of the poem is very personal, with the pronoun 'he' used constantly. How does Duffy contrast this with the general public's attitude, shown in the final stanza?

Task Two

Duffy uses language to stress the violence/horror of conflict. Identify an example or two, and analyse the language.

Task Three

The poem is structured into consistent, predictable stanzas of six lines. Duffy uses a lot of caesura and enjambment. Write about how these structural choices support Duffy's view on how the war photographer responds to war.

Bayonet Charge - TED HUGHES

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

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

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

Task One

The poem is *full of similes*. What does this suggest about how hard conflict is to understand? Explain, with examples of the similes.

Task Two

What is the symbolism of the 'yellow hare that rolled like a flame' and the 'green hedge'?

Task Three

The poem features enjambment across lines and even between stanzas. What point is Hughes making?

A blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. The paper is framed by a thin black border.