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Language – the antithesis of 'I told my wrath' / 'I told it not' shows how easy it is not to talk about an issue and to let resentment grow.

A Poison Tree William Blake

Meaning – the title is a reference to Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden (it is a religious allusion) and therefore shadows a bad ending.

Meaning – starts with a positive sense of self-control. Juxtaposed with the idea that anger can grow.

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

Structure – juxtaposition of friend and foe emphasises how the speaker deals with his anger in two different situations. This is the first turning point in the poem.

Language – Stanza one – lots of monosyllabic words e.g. friend, foe wrath etc. contrasted with angry which is therefore emphasised. The repeated use of I in the first stanza suggests a personal story. The use of 'And' to start many of the lines helps the story build and increase in intensity.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

Meaning – In stanza two the speaker cultivates and grows his anger. Language – sibilance (repeated S sound) creates a sinister effect and shows how dangerous it is to actively grow one's hatred.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

Meaning – The apple represents the fruit in the garden of Eden. The speaker is therefore like the serpent who tempts his foe into taking the apple (representing anger) which kills him. The apple is also a common fruit which shows how common the feeling of anger is.

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

Structure – The second turning point is the final two lines when we see the speaker's reaction to what has happened. Although it is a new day, the speakers anger is still present.

Imagery – the extended metaphor of the tree growing shows how his anger continues to grow and especially how in stanza two he actively encourages it.

Effect on the reader – the speaker is glad his foe is dead but the poet does not want us to think it is right. The religious references show the poet wants us to be shocked at the outcome.

Structure – the simple, repetitive quatrains and AABB rhyme scheme contrast with the disturbing subject matter.

Meaning – Mary Lamb compares an envious person to that of a rose tree, suggesting that a rose wanting to be like a different flower would be blind to its own beauty. She pictures the rose worrying, and says if it could only appreciate its own red flower and smell its beautiful scent, it would never be unhappy again. This comparison is used to suggest that, if we too could only appreciate our own strengths, talents and beauty, we would have no need to be jealous of others.

Envy
Mary Lamb

Structure – The poem has a simple structure with three short six-line stanzas and a regular rhyme scheme **aabccb** in each stanza. This creates a regular, simple, almost sing-song effect reminding us of nursery rhymes. Many nursery rhymes have a lesson or warning within their simple form. The childlike form allows Lamb's moral message to shine through strongly

Language – The language is straightforward and there is a contrast between beauty and more negative emotions. 'Fair', 'sweet', 'natural', 'gentle', 'pretty' contrast with 'discontent', 'fret', 'blind', 'senseless' and 'envious'. 'Discontent' and 'fret' are repeated twice each to emphasise how unhappy we are if we waste energy on envy.

This rose-tree is not made to bear
The violet blue, nor lily fair,
Nor the sweet mignonet:
And if this tree were discontent,
Or wished to change its natural bent,
It all in vain would fret.

Meaning – The only direct address to the reader in the poem asks the reader to think of their own experience. The conversational tone of 'you would suppose' suggests the rose is foolish not to appreciate its own beauty.

And should it fret, you would suppose
It ne'er had seen its own red rose,
Nor after gentle shower
Had ever smelled its rose's scent,
Or it could ne'er be discontent
With its own pretty flower.

Imagery – Blindness
Envy is presented as having the power to blind us to the good in our own selves.

Like such a blind and senseless tree
As I've imagined this to be,
All envious persons are:
With care and culture all may find
Some pretty flower in their own mind,
Some talent that is rare

Nature
Several beautiful flowers are mentioned in addition to the rose (violet, lily, mignonet) suggesting it would be foolish of the rose to compare itself to them as it has its own beauty. This idea is used to suggest that if humans spend their time being jealous of others, they will not appreciate their own qualities.

Meaning – Speaker refers to personal experience suggesting she may have felt jealousy herself. This is the only use of the pronoun I so attention is drawn to it.

Effect on the reader: The voice of the speaker here is like a teacher giving a moral lesson – the lesson builds towards the end of the stanza.

Language - By suggesting the tree could be 'discontent', Lamb is personifying it which strengthens the link between the tree and envious people. Opening the third stanza with 'Like' emphasises this word, and shows the poem works as a simile comparing 'all envious persons' to the rose tree. Waiting to the last stanza to make this comparison allows readers to picture the rose before considering their own feelings.

Meaning – The poem shows the **spiritual growth of the poet**, how he comes to terms with who he is, and his place in nature and the world. Wordsworth was inspired by memories of events and visits to different places, explaining how they affected him.

This extract describes how Wordsworth went out in a boat on a lake at night. He was alone and a mountain peak loomed over him; its presence had a great effect and for days afterwards he was troubled by the experience.

Boat Stealing (From 1799 Prelude)
William Wordsworth

I went alone into a Shepherd's boat,
A skiff, that to a willow-tree was tied
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
The moon was up, the lake was shining clear
5 Among the hoary mountains; from the shore
I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again
In cadence, and my little boat moved on
Just like a man who walks with stately step
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth
10 And troubled pleasure. Not without the voice
Of mountain echoes did my boat move on,
Leaving behind her still on either side
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
15 Of sparkling light. A rocky steep uprose
Above the cavern of the willow-tree,
And now, as suited one who proudly rowed
With his best skill, I fixed a steady view
Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
20 The bound of the horizon - for behind
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnacle; twenty times
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And as I rose upon the stroke my boat
25 Went heaving through the water like a swan –
When from behind that rocky steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
As if voluntary power instinct,

Structure – *The Prelude* is an example of an epic poem. Epics are very long pieces of writing that usually deal with exciting, action-packed heroic events like wars or explorations. Although many of the events Wordsworth writes about are 'ordinary' they are given an epic quality, to fully describe the impact they had on his life.

There are no stanzas. The writing is continuous to emphasise it is a complete story.

Imagery – Wordsworth effectively describes the night-time atmosphere with his choice of images. He suggests that you can experience things more clearly at night time.

Language: *The Prelude* is conversational, as if Wordsworth is sat next to us, telling us the story himself. The poet uses "and"s throughout to give the verse a breathless quality.

Language: Wordsworth admires the simple beauty of nature and takes time to describe in detail aspects of nature that he particularly likes so we can admire it to.

Language: Wordsworth uses the word 'huge' here and again later in the poem to emphasise the power that nature has over man.

Boat Stealing (From 1799 Prelude)

William Wordsworth

Meaning – **Wordsworth does not view humanity as having authority over nature.** It is the other way round as we can see from his description of the huge mountain. Wordsworth also realises that once an event has happened, that doesn't mean it's over; the effect stayed with him for days afterwards.

Imagery – He uses personification to suggest the mountain peak chasing him which has sinister /nightmare qualities.

Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,
30 And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
With measured motion, like a living thing
Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
35 Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,
And through the meadows homeward went with grave
And serious thoughts; and after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days my brain
40 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts
There was darkness – call it solitude,
Or blank desertion – no familiar shapes |
Of hourly objects, images of trees,
45 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
But huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men moved slowly through my mind
By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.

Language: Wordsworth creates a sense of loneliness and isolation through words such as 'solitude' and 'blank desertion'. The isolation allows him to think more clearly and the events around him have a bigger affect on him because he is alone.

Imagery – The gentle moonlight from earlier becomes darkness as the poet-narrator's state of mind becomes troubled by the end of the extract. This is imagery that could be associated with **gothic (sinister or grotesque) tales, nightmares or even horror.**

Meaning – *The Destruction of Sennacherib* is a short narrative poem retelling a Biblical story from the Old Testament (2 Kings, chapter 19) in which God destroys King Sennacherib's Assyrian army as they attack the holy city of Jerusalem. It is probably as well-known for the way in which the poem is constructed as it is for its subject matter. The speaker sets out events in chronological order. He seems impressed by the might and splendour of the Assyrian army when describing their appearance in the first six lines. However, halfway through the second stanza comes a turning point as he realises the Assyrians' strength is short-lived. He then goes on to tell how the Angel of Death has passed through their camp wiping them out. Although the Assyrians may have been mighty, the speaker realises that the power of God is even mightier.

The Destruction of Sennacherib

Lord Byron

Language: sibilance (s sound) = sinister

Language: gleaming in purple and gold could on the one hand show the Assyrian army to be powerful and regal but on the other hand gleaming and sheen could suggest they are just flashy and not as strong underneath.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
 And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
 And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
 When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
 That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
 Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
 That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
 And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
 And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
 And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

Language: The archaic vocab. and word order is similar to the syntax used in the original bible story and so suggests a definite place and time that the action takes place in.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
 But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride:
 And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
 With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
 And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
 The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
 And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
 And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Language: widows and wail connote death and the effects of death are on going as the wives mourn the loss of their husbands.

Imagery use is made of similes particularly in the early part of the poem (eg 'the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea'). In the descriptions of the Assyrian army (both alive and dead) they are compared to elements of nature such as forest leaves or the surf of the waves. This is highly-effective and suggests that while mankind can easily be destroyed, nature will endure.

Structure – 6 Quatrains with rhyming couplets (AABB) gives the impression of a lively poem. This is in contrast to the tragic content of the poem. This reflects the contrast between the might of a great army and the tragedy of war. Each line is end stopped which gives a military feel to the rhythm and the repeated use of 'and' creates the impression of a story building up to a climax.

Effect on the reader –we might feel sorry for the people of Jerusalem who are depicted as the innocent 'fold' compared to the 'wolf'. On the other hand we might feel sorry for the Assyrians because so many are killed it is horrifying and we also hear about their grieving wives.

Language: alliteration of h sounds slows our reading down for the moment of death.

Language: The Assyrian's aggressive **might** is nothing compared to God's power. God merely has to 'glance' at the enemy to destroy them. '**Melted like snow**' is used to highlight God's power and how easily this destruction is achieved.

Meaning – The poem opens with the idea of there being a certain slant of light in winter afternoons that "oppresses." It kind of feels like the seriousness associated with "Cathedral Tunes." The speaker then compares the light to a kind of "Heavenly Hurt" that leaves no scar. It's impossible to define exactly what the light is or what it's like. But the speaker says it's everywhere, an "affliction" of sorts, that is sent from the air. When the light arrives, the landscape seems to listen and everything kind of stands still. When the light goes, there's something "distant" about it, kind of like death.

There's a Certain Slant of Light **Emily Dickinson**

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons -
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes -

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us -
We can find no scar,
But internal difference -
Where the Meanings, are -

None may teach it - Any -
'Tis the seal Despair -
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air -

When it comes, the Landscape listens -
Shadows - hold their breath -
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death -

Language: The use of light moves away from the uplifting connotations we might normally associate with light to something that is mostly oppressive but with the potential to be enlightening.

Imagery - Winter afternoons – link with death (pathetic fallacy)

Language: the alliteration and capitalisation of Heavenly Hurt demonstrate the personal suffering which, although ironically leaving no visible scar, leads to a personal discovery of 'Meanings'.

Language: Note the 'of' conveys sense of the slant of light being literally part of the air. But there is also the metaphorical meaning that it is 'sent' by God

Language: Using the 'Heft gives a permanence to the heaviness. The simile uses our knowledge of the overbearing weight of cathedral music to present the oppressive nature of that 'certain slant of light'.

Language: the negative tone of 'none' is definite.

Imagery – Shadows — hold their breath — The immobilising personification of shadows on one hand gives them life but on the other, ironically takes away the means of sustaining it. The Slant of light stops movement.

When it goes, 'tis like the Distance The loss of the slant of light is akin to meeting death. The distance is that of eternity. Note the enormity of meaning is prefaced by the casual ellipsis "tis'.

Structure – The dashes in the poem create a sense of conflict and disharmony. However at the same time the dashes create a sense of cohesion bringing the different lines together. This reflects the inner turmoil that the speaker is feeling.

Language: Her ambiguity in words like "certain," "imperial affliction," and "internal difference" serves to reinforce the poem's mystery and intrigue without boxing that elusive "Slant of light" into any specific definitions.

Structure – Stanza one deals with the physical setting of the 'winter afternoon'. Stanzas two and three deal with a more internal setting of the speaker's feelings. The final stanza is back to the physical landscape. The slant of light from the physical setting illuminates the tension and turmoil inside the speaker over what things mean.

Meaning – *The Man He Killed* deals with the futility, or pointlessness, of war. It is told from the point of view of an ordinary working-class soldier, who is reflecting on the idea that the man he killed in battle probably had a lot in common with him. The idea of having a drink together suggests a sense of brotherhood between the ordinary soldiers. The lack of conviction in the narrator's voice about the necessity of killing the enemy man emphasises the idea that the soldiers who fight just follow orders, rather than knowing what it is they are doing.

Meaning – There is a strong anti-war message in the poem. The fact that neither the speaker nor the man who has been killed is named gives it a universal feel – a sense that it could be anyone in this position. The reasons given for killing the man are weak – he was a "foe" but the speaker cannot work out why that is true. This shows the stupidity of war, in that men kill each other because they are ordered to.

Structure – the poet uses a lot of repetition and parallel sentence structures to emphasise the pairings of the speaker and the man he has killed, such as "face to face" and "I shot at him as he at me". This is particularly true in the third stanza, where the repetition of the words "foe" and "because" add to the internal rhyme of "just so" to create the impression that the speaker is trying to convince himself.

The Man He Killed **Thomas Hardy**

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

"I shot him dead because –
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like – just as I –
Was out of work – had sold his traps –
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown."

Effect on the reader – The ordinariness of the speaker brings home the realities of war: it's also an appeal to the reader to consider the similarities between themselves and the Boers against whom the war is being fought. This connects to the poem as a protest against the Boer war – it helps to prevent the dehumanisation of the enemy.

Imagery – In keeping with the simple form of the poem, there are no similes or metaphors. Instead the speaker imagines having met his enemy at the pub instead of on the battlefield. The image of the "ancient inn" gives the sense of a traditional British setting, and of a cosy drink, which contrasts with the reality of the shooting.

Language - written in the first person and the vocabulary suggests a local Dorset man e.g. nipperkin. This increases the sense of the common man being the speaker, and connects the reader to the poem.

Imagery – use of the hesitant "perhaps" and the effect of the multiple dashes is to create a vivid picture of the speaker thinking and imagining without having any direct description at all.

Meaning - Through "Anthem for Doomed Youth", a well known petrarchan sonnet written by Wilfred Owen, the reader sees the horrors of war and how unfortunate it is to die in war. Owen fought in World War I and wrote this poem while in a hospital recovering from shell shock. "Anthem for Doomed Youth" solemnly discusses death in war and shows how those who die in war do not receive the normal ceremonies that are used to honor the dead.

Structure – petrarchan sonnet - this poem is a variation of the Elizabethan sonnet. By using a sonnet for the structure of his poem, Wilfred Owen introduces a touch of irony, because the conventional function of the sonnet is love, and this poem is sort of anti-love, the young soldiers have to spend their time in the trenches. So, their lives are wasted and, overall, the lives of their loved ones at home are also ruined.

Effect on the reader - Owen relates to his audience how horrible going to war is. The title of Owen's poem is "Anthem for Doomed Youth". This meaningful title conveys a strong, gloomy feeling; usually an anthem is a joyous song of celebration but when coupled with "Doomed Youth", anthem takes on a whole new meaning that implies much sorrow. Also, "Doomed Youth" provides a woeful impression because it foretells of young people having no hope.

Anthem for Doomed Youth **Wilfred Owen**

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.

Imagery - The poet depicts a tone that shows strong anger at the futility of war through a significant use of assonance: "doomed youth". The sound is intended to be long and melancholic. Secondly, repetition is used in the poem to make it seem monotonous. Finally, by using personification, Owen makes the enemies' guns seem evil and monstrous. This can cause the reader to feel some of the emotions felt in the trenches.

Imagery - In the last stanza, Owen says "...but in their eyes shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes. The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall". Here Owen illustrates the families' reactions to finding that their loved ones have died. The dead soldiers do not get to be honoured by their family and friends, but all the family can do is grieve at the sorrowful news. Owen communicates how depressing war is by making an effective comparison that the readers can relate to.

The first line of the poem describes the "Doomed Youth" dying "as cattle". This description shows how awful war is. The description depicts multitudes of people being slaughtered and the nature of war to be full of mass deaths. The simile is showing how the soldiers are no more important than cattle which are lead to the slaughter without feeling. Owen gives the sonnet a powerful, negative connotation from the very beginning.

Language - in the first octet Owen makes a catalogue of the sound of war, the weapons of destructions such as "guns" (line 2), "rifles" (line 3) and "shells" (line 7), which are linked to religious imagery such as "orisons" (line 4), "bells" (line 5), "prayers" (line 5). In contrast, in the second stanza the poem talks about the other side of a war: the families of those who die in the war.

Meaning - It is the poet's own account of being at war. As he crosses the battlefield he notices another soldier and he realises it is an old enemy fighter who is now dead. On closer inspection, he finds a photograph of the soldier's girlfriend saying "Vergissmeinnicht" - forget me not, and is sparked into a moment of realisation as he thinks about the role that soldiers have to fulfil.

Vergissmeinnicht Keith Douglas

Meaning – Vergissmeinnicht = forget me not

Structure: The rhyme constantly changes, sometimes being ABBA, AAAA, or ABAB. This unstable rhyme scheme seems to mimic the randomness of war, and the changing conditions and situations. It represents the different feelings of the soldiers, the constantly changing war plays.

Many of the lines also are run-on lines, making it seem like his thoughts are rushing from one thing to the next without stopping. This makes the poem almost like a stream of consciousness.

The photo of his girlfriend is spoilt like their relationship. The fact that the girl is named and he writes "Steffi. Vergissmeinnicht" makes it more personal. She is someone who has said, "Forget me not," but the roles will be reversed and she will be the one who will be unable to forget she lost her boyfriend in battle.

Three weeks gone and the combatants gone
returning over the nightmare ground
we found the place again, and found
the soldier sprawling in the sun.

The frowning barrel of his gun
overshadowing. As we came on
that day, he hit my tank with one
like the entry of a demon.

Look. Here in the gunpit spoil
the dishonoured picture of his girl
who has put: Steffi. Vergissmeinnicht.
in a copybook gothic script.

We see him almost with content,
abased, and seeming to have paid
and mocked at by his own equipment
that's hard and good when he's decayed.

But she would weep to see today
how on his skin the swart flies move;
the dust upon the paper eye
and the burst stomach like a cave.

For here the lover and killer are mingled
who had one body and one heart.
And death who had the soldier singled
has done the lover mortal hurt.

Imagery: Personification of the weapons shows the contrast between the fragility of human flesh and the strength of the weapons that kill.

Structure: The final stanza contains a feminine rhyme ('mingled' / 'singled') and a pararhyme ('heart' / 'hurt'). 'mingled' and 'singled' are opposite'. By contrast, 'heart' and 'hurt' go straight to the point, because this is a romantic tragedy in which Steffi has already been imagined broken-hearted. These tones are jeering, not respectful.

Imagery: 'Nightmare ground'
This metaphor implies the carnage of the event and of how it is indelibly printed in Douglas' mind. The suggestion of "nightmare" illustrates his strong desire to escape from this war ground which is almost comparable to hell. It is clear that horrific events have occurred here and there is a lingering eerie atmosphere.

Language: The repetition of the words gone, found, and one can be seen in lines 1, 3, and 22. When reading these lines, the repetition reminds one of the sound of a machine gun spitting out bullets, the shot and the echo or the hit. From this, the sense of war is further reinforced onto the reader.

The final part of the poem is reflective as it considers the loss people feel during a war. A fatalistic view is given in the final stanza as death is to blame and had the "soldier singled" but it isn't just the soldier who has suffered, but the lover who will continue to suffer.

Effect on the reader - Douglas' vivid word choice, emotive imagery and reflective tone force the reader to think about the point of war and to re-evaluate our perception of soldiers. We can see that there are two sides to soldiers - a private and public life and that the huge sacrifice they make must never be forgotten.

Meaning - Denise Levertov makes the reader think about the effect war has on the population and culture of a country, with specific reference to the Vietnam War (1955 – 75). There are clearly two speakers in this poem (the questioner and the responder) but it is not immediately clear who they are or what attitudes they have. The first speaker, for instance, may be curious, annoyed or calm; the second may be polite, sarcastic or upset.

What Were They Like? **Denise Levertov**

- 1) Did the people of Viet Nam use lanterns of stone?
- 2) Did they hold ceremonies to reverence the opening of buds?
- 3) Were they inclined to quiet laughter?
- 4) Did they use bone and ivory, jade and silver, for ornament?
- 5) Had they an epic poem?
- 6) Did they distinguish between speech and singing?

- 1) Sir, their light hearts turned to stone. It is not remembered whether in gardens stone lanterns illumined pleasant ways.
- 2) Perhaps they gathered once to delight in blossom, but after their children were killed there were no more buds.
- 3) Sir, laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.
- 4) A dream ago, perhaps. Ornament is for joy. All the bones were charred.
- 5) It is not remembered. Remember, most were peasants; their life was in rice and bamboo. When peaceful clouds were reflected in the paddies and the water buffalo stepped surely along terraces, maybe fathers told their sons old tales. When bombs smashed those mirrors there was time only to scream.
- 6) There is an echo yet of their speech which was like a song. It was reported that their singing resembled the flight of moths in moonlight. Who can say? It is silent now.

Language: This repeated phrase in the second section of the poem emphasises that many aspects of the Vietnamese culture have been lost or forgotten.

Structure: The first block contains six questions and the second six responses. The poem concludes with a final twist when the person giving the responses asks a rhetorical question - 'Who can say?' - which the original questioner does not answer. Also of significance is the pause/gap between the two blocks, perhaps indicating the more thoughtful nature of the responder who considers answers before giving them. This contrasts with the hurried and possibly ill-considered questioning in the first block.

The poet's underlying anger at what has taken place is made clear by the horrifying image and the alliteration of 'bitter' and 'burned'.

Language - The harsh realities of war are exposed by the image of bombs being dropped into the paddy fields and the sound of people dying.

Effect on the reader: Levertov uses the power of the question and response format to expose the wrong doing and the crimes against humanity which so appalled her.

The final statement - 'It is silent now' - is firmly in the present and highlights not only the war ending but also the cultural silence which has followed as a result. It also precedes an actual silence as the poem ends and the reader is left to consider their personal reaction.

The vocabulary of the first block is relatively straightforward and simple. All the questions are in the past tense suggesting that the Vietnamese culture no longer exists.

The second section makes use of metaphor, comparison, contrast, alliteration. This makes the responder appear more considered and cultured. It also allows the beauty of the country and its culture to be expressed. The answers are in a mixture of the past and present tense which highlights the sense of confusion caused by the war.

Structure: the structure of the poem lends itself to the title 'Lament'. Each of the seven stanzas begins with the word 'For' as she expresses her sorrow for the losses suffered in the war. Each stanza focuses on an animal or bird or people hurt by the bombing and its aftermath. By repeating the word 'for' Clarke makes her message emphatic and persuasive as the details of death and ruin pile up stanza after stanza.

Lament
Gillian Clarke

For the green turtle with her pulsing burden,
in search of the breeding ground.
For her eggs laid in their nest of sickness.

Language: 'Nest' is usually associated with the 'home' of new born birds and small creatures and we think of it as protective. We are startled and shaken to know that the nest causes illness and possibly death. 'Mortal' shows how deadly the oil slick is

For the cormorant in his funeral silk,
the veil of iridescence on the sand,
the shadow on the sea.

Now Clarke moves from the environmental cost of the war to the human cost. We can suppose that Ahmed is young soldier, perhaps a child soldier who has been recruited to fight with the promise that he will bring glory to himself and his family. Ahmed is probably a popular name among Iraqis and so he represents society. OR Ahmed can be a civilian who cannot leave because of a 'closed border' and could face injury or death though he is innocent. "his uniform of fire". is shocking in painting a picture of a child soldier who is on fire from the fallout of the shelling and bombing.

For the ocean's lap with its mortal stain.
For Ahmed at the closed border.
For the soldier with his uniform of fire.

For the gunsmith and the armourer,
the boy fusilier who joined for the company,
the farmer's sons, in it for the music.

'funeral silk' is a vivid image appealing to our sight. We can see the smooth layer of oil on the cormorant, silken to look at. The appearance is deceptive as the oil can kill the cormorant and become its 'funeral silk', a shroud of silk. 'veil of iridescence' is a visual image that evokes the sight of layers of oil shimmering on the beach. It is ironic because while the shimmering colours seem attractive, we know it is destroying marine life. 'shadow' suggests darkness and despair. When something casts a shadow, it creates misery and wretchedness.

For the hook-beaked turtles,
the dugong and the dolphin,
the whale struck dumb by the missile's thunder.

For the tern, the gull and the restless wader,
the long migrations and the slow dying,
the veiled sun and the stink of anger.

For the burnt earth and the sun put out,
the scalded ocean and the blazing well.
For vengeance, and the ashes of language.

Language "the stink of anger". The author is expressing her own hatred of war and destruction by using the word 'stink' which means a bad smell. The 'anger' expresses the cause of war. The attacking country is angry and wants to take revenge.

Effect on the reader: the last line clinches the message that man in his quest for vengeance by waging war has brought about the 'ashes of language' which Clarke explains to mean the death of truth. This powerful metaphor leaves us feeling appalled that people are deceived by why wars are fought. Her final message is shocking - the truth is cloaked in a web of deceit and lies and as long as that happens, there will be wars

Imagery: the sun is described as 'veiled' to show the smoke from the burning oil wells would have cast a shadow on the sun. It could also suggest a loss of hope and life. 'veiled' is also used for the oil slick on the sand in stanza 2 and in a similar way shows life being covered up.

Meaning - The poem Punishment by Seamus Heaney was inspired by the discovery of a dead body of a young girl who was believed to be killed on the charge of adultery. Heaney takes this discovery as an ancient example of brutality and links it with the modern form of brutality which is evident in the Irish rebels' killing of Irish girls who married British soldiers.

Punishment Seamus Heaney

Language – use of the personal pronoun I makes the subject more personal to the speaker and when he says 'I can see her' it is as if he is witness to a horrific event. He shifts to addressing the girl in stanza six – interestingly stanza 6 is the central stanza in the poem so he makes her the centre of the poem.

Structure 11 quatrains, moving from empathy prompted by the physical presence of the exhumed head, to a description of her head, (blindfold, noose), to an imagined vision of her alive, to a realisation of the speaker's guilt about his silence against brutality (both current and that exacted against the exhumed girl).

Language
I (× 6) "you" (× 3) "your" (× 5) "her" (× 8) – indicating the first person who observes throughout, and the move from definite article ("the nape") to "her" neck to "your" face – suggesting the increasing personal engagement.

I can feel the tug
of the halter at the nape
of her neck, the wind
on her naked front

It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs.

I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,
the floating rods and boughs.

Under which at first
she was a barked sapling
that is dug up
oak-bone, brain-firkin:

her shaved head
like a stubble of black corn,
her blindfold a soiled bandage,
her noose a ring

to store
the memories of love.
Little adulteress,
before they punished you

Language - use of "Little adulteress" – indicates, the patronising, judgemental attitude of those who punished her, contrasting to "My poor scapegoat", the possessive pronoun 'my' suggests a personal engagement and empathy with the girl.

Language - Use of the present tense – creating the immediacy of the speaker's experience, and contrasting to the past tense of "punished". The past tense emphasises the connection between the ancient brutalities inflicted against the girl, and the more recent brutalities inflicted against the women in Ulster.

Language – 'naked' suggests vulnerability. 'amber' is a gemstone used in worry beads which emphasises the girl's plight and also the speaker's worry about brutality in civilisation then but more importantly now.

Imagery: metaphor likening the girl to a young tree – her bones have survived like a hardwood tree, her innocence is emphasised by the link to the young tree and sadness created as she never makes it past youth.

Meaning – the girl was treated as if she was not human and non-living. They used an old knife to share her head. Her eyes were blindfolded so that she could not see the world. Instead of a ring they gave her a noose. And finally she was buried alive.

Language – use of open vowel sounds that evoke suffering e.g.: ("drowned" "body" "bog" "stone" "rods", "boughs" etc.).

Punishment Seamus Heaney

you were flaxen-haired,
undernourished, and your
tar-black face was beautiful.
My poor scapegoat,

I almost love you
but would have cast, I know,
the stones of silence.
I am the artful voyeur
of your brain's exposed
and darkened combs,
your muscles' webbing
and all your numbered bones:

I who have stood dumb
when your betraying sisters,
cauled in tar,
wept by the railings,
who would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge.

Imagery: "Bog" in the poem serves as the central metaphor that is symbolic of the continuation of inhumanity, brutality, cruelty, and killing of innocent people throughout the human history.

Meaning - Heaney mentions in the last two stanzas of the poem that he did nothing as he watched modern women (punished for having relationships with British soldiers) being stripped and tarred in the streets, almost as if he is placing the blame partially on himself; not just himself, but all those, like Heaney who stood by and did nothing.

Effect on the reader - This poem puts brutality at the centre and links past and present. As a reader we realise that what continues from ancient time to modern time are cruelty/ brutality and primitivism.

Meaning: Heaney writes in stanza eight "I almost love you / but would have cast, I know, / the stones of silence." He imagines his own part in the events leading up to her death and they mirror his inaction in reference to the present time. Heaney is making a comment that those who stand by and do nothing are as bad as those who carry out the punishment.

Imagery: Simile (× 1), metaphor (× 10) – the numbers of metaphors suggests the immediacy of the experience: "barked sapling" "stubble of black corn" etc. – use of nature indicates the blending of the body and the land: "rigging" and its connotations with water and sailing foreshadows "drowning" and "floating" in the next verse. Link of bog body and the current brutalities: the speaker recognises the voyeuristic nature of his observations about the girl, and feels complicit in his silence against all tribal revenge, including the recent Irish Troubles.

Meaning - Flag explores **how national symbols bind nations together** – and in doing so also **force people apart**. For Agard this power is a dangerous illusion. Flags do not represent anything real at all.

Effect on the reader - This poem seems to be built on the idea that nationalism is a purely abstract idea (an idea that exists in the head rather than in physical, concrete reality). He draws on views of countries as "imagined communities" – groups of people bound by myths, stories and flags. We are all human and yet certain individuals, powerful leaders, will create divisions simply by giving meaning to a limp and fluttering piece of cloth. The poem is therefore about **the power of symbolism**. Agard admits that the flag is a powerful symbol – but he urges us to see it as just that: a symbol whose ideas are dangerous and an invention of mankind. The word that is repeated most in the poem, for example, is "just". This therefore becomes the most important idea in the poem. It seeks to lessen the power of the flag.

Language - The first sound is the rise and fall of the question and answer: the voice naturally rises at the beginning of each stanza with the question, only to be brought down with the poet's clear, simple answer.

Flag John Agard

Flag What's that fluttering in a breeze?
It's just a piece of cloth
that brings a nation to its knees.

What's that unfurling from a pole?
It's just a piece of cloth
that makes the guts of men grow bold.

What's that rising over a tent?
It's just a piece of cloth
that dares the coward to relent.

What's that flying across a field?
It's just a piece of cloth
that will outlive the blood you bleed.

How can I possess such a cloth?
Just ask for a flag, my friend.
Then blind your conscience to the end.

Language - Repetition is also key, particularly the line "It's just a piece of cloth". It is also as if the poet is trying to deny the symbol of its power – which he then has to accept. His companion wants a flag and the final two lines sound like a kind of defeat.

Language - Another important **contrast** is in the **soft sounds of the flag** ("fluttering", "unfurling", "rising", "flying"). These are drowned out by the **short, sharp, hard sounds** that are emphasised by the use of *alliteration*: "nation/knees" (stanza one); "guts"/"grow" (stanza two).

Structure - The poem is built around a conversation between two voices – one that asks the child-like question of each opening stanza; the other, who responds in the next two lines. In the first four stanzas the response is the same, with the line "It's just a piece of cloth". There is a sense that the poet and the questioner are on some kind of journey – each time they discuss a flag in a different place. The subject matter becomes more personal each time, changing from a general discussion of a "nation" (line 3), to focus on actual "men" (line 6), then specific examples of men ("the coward" in line 9) before focusing on the person asking the questions: "you" (line 12).

Structure - The first and third lines of the first three stanzas rhyme. This suggests a bond between the two voices in the poem. This structure then breaks in the third stanza, where "field" and "bleed" don't rhyme. It is gone by the final stanza which ends on a *rhyming couplet*. This shows how the 'argument' of the poem has been developing and building towards a conclusion and the characters are going in different directions.

Structure - 5 stanzas, of 3 lines. The middle line of each stanza is shorter than the other two. The form therefore mimics the shape of an old medieval flag. The three lines are like the three stripes of many national flags today.

Imagery - The dull piece of "cloth" is the source of all the action and energy in the poem. It is seen "fluttering", "unfurling", "rising" and "flying" – and its effects on people and nations are also active. The flag: "brings", "makes", "dares" and "will outlive". This action and energy has negative consequences, though – a defeated country ("on its knees"), affecting the "guts" of men, which while meaning bravery also means their bloody insides. This association is made clear in the next stanza ("the blood you bleed"). The anger or defeat of the poet is expressed in a final, violent image. He suggests it is very simple to get one ("just ask") but not easy to control its power.

Meaning: The poem 'Phrase Book' was written in early 1991 in response to Operation Desert Storm, part of the First Gulf War. The poem is from the point of view a woman looking at the news footage from a war on her TV. She lives in a country at a distance from the war

Language: There is a wide range of military terminology which contrasts with the innocence of the phrase book language e.g. Human Remains Pouch = Body Bag

BLISS = an acronym taught to pilots to help them remember how to evade enemy radar (the words BLISS stands for are listed in the poem)

SLAR or Side-Looking Airborne Radar = a form of military radar

J-Stars = Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System

Kill Box = the target area for weapons fire

Stealthed, Cleansed, Taken Out = euphemisms for killing people

Pinpoint Accuracy = precise aim at a target

Harms = High-speed Anti-Radiation Missiles

Phrase Book Jo Shapcott

Language: Many of the phrases in the poem are taken directly from an old, 1960s tourist phrase book: e.g. 'Please write it down. Please speak slowly' and 'Let me pass please. I am an Englishwoman.'

I'm standing here inside my skin,
which will do for a Human Remains Pouch
for the moment. Look down there (up here).
Quickly. Slowly. This is my front room

where I'm lost in the action, live from a war,
on screen. I am Englishwoman. I don't understand you.
What's the matter? You are right. You are wrong.
Things are going well (badly). Am I disturbing you?

TV is showing bliss as taught to pilots:
Blend, Low silhouette, Irregular shape, Small,
Secluded. (Please write it down. Please speak slowly.)
Bliss is how it was in this very room

when I raised my body to his mouth,
when he even balanced me in the air,
or at least I thought so and yes the pilots say
yes they have caught it through the Side-Looking

Airbone Radar, and through the J-Stars.
I am expecting a gentleman (a young gentleman,
two gentlemen, some gentlemen). Please send him
(them) up at once. This is really beautiful.

Structure: The poem is not written as a continuous, realistic narrative: it tries to represent the fragmented experience we all have of the world, with pieces of highly charged information flying into our brains from many sources. Language itself breaks down under this pressure, sentences shrinking into short staccato questions, by the end.

Meaning The poem raises a question about individual, human love: is it possible in a world where war is taking place, however far away? As part of this, all the references to passion are distorted - e.g. she's not sure if an intense experience actually happened (lines 13-14), and later, in phrase book language, she's uncertain of the number of lovers involved and, finally, seems to feel that conflict - even at a distance - destroys the possibility of love.

Language – use of ‘the pilots say’ suggests distrust of the military and the idea that governments and military hide the truth.

Yes they have seen us, the pilots in the Kill Box
on their screens and played the routine for
getting us Stealthed, that is, Cleaned, to you and me,
Taken Out. They know how to move into a single room

like that, to send in with Pinpoint Accuracy, a hundred Harms.
I have two cases and a cardboard box. There is another
bag there. I cannot open my case - look out,
the lock is broken. Have I done enough?

Bliss the pilots say is for evasion
and escape. What's love in all this debris?
Just one person pounding another into dust,
into dust. I do not know the word for it yet.

Where is the British Consulate? Please explain.
What does it mean? What must I do? Where
can I find? What have I done? I have done
nothing. Let me pass please. I am an Englishwoman.

Imagery - the bags, cases and boxes are metaphorical, for the speaker herself, though they are suggestive of forced migration.

Effect on the reader – the questions in the final stanza suggest both confusion and a growing sense of unease, panic danger. These feelings could suggest the speaker's feelings towards the first Gulf war or represent the feelings of the civilians caught up in the war and those watching from a distance.

Meaning - In Lahore, Pakistan in the last year of the twentieth century, a woman was shot by her family in her lawyer's office. Her crime was that she had asked for a divorce. The whole Pakistan Senate refused to condemn the act. *They called it an honour killing.* Although inspired by the killing of the woman in Lahore, this poem is representative of women from all cultures and faiths.

Honour Killing **Imtiaz Dharker**

At last I'm taking off this coat,
this black coat of a country
that I swore for years was mine,
that I wore more out of habit
than design.
Born wearing it,
I believed I had no choice.

I'm taking off this veil,
this black veil of a faith
that made me faithless
to myself,
that tied my mouth,
gave my god a devil's face,
and muffled my own voice.

I'm taking off these silks,
these lacy things
that feed dictator dreams,
the mangalsutra and the rings
rattling in a tin cup of needs
that beggared me.

I'm taking off this skin,
and then the face, the flesh,
the womb.

Let's see
what I am in here
when I squeeze past
the easy cage of bone.

Let's see
what I am out here,
making, crafting,
plotting
at my new geography.

Language: repetition of 'I'm taking off' shows the speaker taking control through the personal pronoun 'I'm' and shedding oppression suggested through the various metaphors e.g. coat, veil. The taking off of physical features e.g. skin, flesh, womb have a horrific quality to them and show the pain and hurt the women must endure in shedding the oppression.

The change to 'Let's see in the final two stanzas create a shift in tone to one of hope but also one of uncertainty – this is a daunting new beginning and the speaker and the women she represents are finding themselves for the first time.

The different religious items e.g. veil, mangalsutra show the speaker represents women from all cultures and faiths.

Use of the past tense e.g. wore, believed, tied, beggared show a movement away from oppression towards freedom.

Structure – the stanzas get shorter (both in the number of lines and the length of the lines) as the poet explores women stripping back their external features and seeing who they are inside.

The line length is reduced to just one word – 'plotting' which could be used in the sense of marking a position – in this context women re-marking or defining their position in society.

The final line 'at my new geography' suggests women taking ownership with the possessive personal pronoun 'my' of their own geography (their own self and their position in society).

Imagery – here the 'cage of bone' suggests a woman's spirit being imprisoned by her own body.

Imagery – the verbs making, crafting, plotting show the speaker taking control of her life and place in society.

Imagery – use of an oxymoron 'gave my god a devil's face' to show how religion can be used to oppress women.

Effect on the reader – the horrific language e.g. black, devil, flesh leave us feeling sorry for the speaker and willing her on in the final stanzas.

Imagery – the antithesis in the final two stanzas of 'in here' and 'out here' show the speaker getting to grips with both her inner self and her position in society.

Partition Sujata Bhatt

Meaning - The poem explores Bhatt's mother's memories of growing up in Ahmedabad, at the time of Partition in India. The poem reveals her mother's experience through a retelling of a story that is passed on from mother to daughter. The poem is not only about the partition of India but about all kinds of violent times in history.

She was nineteen-years-old then
and when she stood in her garden
she could hear the cries of the people
stranded in the Ahmedabad railway station.
She felt it was endless - their noise -
a new sound added to the city.
Her aunt, her father's sister,
would go to the station every day
with food and water -
But she felt afraid,
felt she could not go with her aunt -
So she stood in the garden
listening. Even the birds sounded different -
and the shadows cast by the neem trees
brought no consolation.
And each day she wished
she had the courage to go with her aunt -
And each day passed with her
listening to the cries of the people.
Now, when my mother
tells me this at midnight
in her kitchen - she is
seventy-years old and India
is 'fifty'. 'But, of course
India is older than that,' she says,
'India was always there.
But how I wish I had
gone with my aunt
to the railway station
I still feel

Language - Bhatt emphasises the violence and suffering of the partition through descriptions of the sounds in her city: 'she could hear the cries of the people / stranded in the Ahmedabad railway station',

Imagery - the use of nature e.g. birds and trees shows the extent to which the partition effected all parts of India, nature and humans

Language - the dashes create pauses which show the mother's hesitation caused by her fear.

Language - the regret and guilt in the phrase 'how I wish' suggests the mother is carrying an unfair burden created by the partition, something that she was not responsible for. The mention of ages, nineteen and seventy-five emphasise how long she has carried the guilt and so the extent of the impact.

Meaning - the poet seems to question the validity of the decision which caused the bloodshed of civilians on an unprecedented scale.

guilty about that.'
And then she asks me:
'How could they
have let a man
who knew nothing
about geography
divide a country?'

Structure - the poem is written in free verse which gives the impression of a narrative - first it is the story of the speaker's mother and then of the speaker herself.

The narrative becomes more fragmented towards the end of the poem which could represent the fragmentation and frailty of India and its people following the partition. The solid start to the poem could represent the Hindus and Muslims living in harmony before that was destroyed by the partition.

Language - repetition of the word 'and' suggests a build up of stress and angst as she is paralysed by her own fear.

Language - use of the indefinite article 'a man' suggests no man in particular and so attempts to devalue him and show his lack of status/knowledge

Effect on the reader - her mother was young and afraid of becoming involved, so she stayed at home away from the violence. Unlike other women in her family, such as her aunt who went to the train station everyday, Bhatt's mother was physically uninvolved in aiding others during this upheaval. Nevertheless, she is still haunted by the memories of that time, which shows us the effect of the partition on the entire population.

When we hear from the mother herself in the second half of the poem we feel an instant connection to the events.

The end of poem 'How could they...' could be an exclamation of frustration at the politics behind the partition as well as genuine lack of understanding on her behalf. Both of which create sympathy and anger on the part of the reader.