Tab 1

English Literature IGCSE 2024-2026 Vol.1

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Love Armed- Aphra Behn

Love in Fantastic Triumph sat,
Whilst Bleeding Hearts around him flowed,
For whom Fresh pains he did Create,
And strange Tyrannic power he showed;
From thy Bright Eyes he took his fire,
Which round about, in sport he hurled;
But 'twas from mine he took desire
Enough to undo the Amorous World.

From me he took his sighs and tears,
From thee his Pride and Cruelty;
From me his Languishments and Fears,
And every Killing Dart from thee;
Thus thou and I, the God have armed,
And set him up a Deity;
But my poor Heart alone is harmed,
Whilst thine the Victor is, and free.

Summary

The poem pictures love as a powerful, oppressive god who inflicts pain and suffering on those who fall in love. It is love who takes fire from the eyes of the speaker's beloved and any trace of desire from their very heart, using both to stir emotional turmoil in the world. They feel that their emotions, sighs, and tears have effectively armed love with the weapons to continue its domination and wounding of others.

While both the speaker and the beloved contribute to the power of love, the speaker feels they are the only ones who is experiencing the tyranny of love and suffering. Their love remains untouched by anger or torture. While their own heart bears the misery of love and brutality. Love is portrayed as a monstrous tyrant and there is absolute bleakness in the speakers heartache. Behn also manages to touch on the innate unfairness of heartbreak.

Themes

Tyrannical Power of Love	In "Love Armed," the mighty "Deity" of Love isn't some sweet little Cupid bopping around with pink-tipped arrows. Rather, he's a cruel tyrant, a world-conqueror who mercilessly crushes hearts underfoot. The speaker of this poem personifies Love as a triumphant warlord gloating among the "Bleeding Hearts" of the people he's struck down. Love, in other words, does exactly what it wants to. It

	doesn't respond to reason, and it's as likely to leave a person totally miserable as rapturously happy. This vision of love as a tyrant does away with sentimental images of Love as rose petals and daydreams. If Love makes the world go round, this poem suggests, he does so by conquering it like a tyrannical emperor.
The Pain of Unrequited Love	Besides painting a portrait of love as a tyrannical god-king, this poem laments the pain of a specific kind of love: the unrequited variety. The speaker is terribly in love with someone who doesn't feel the same way about them (at least, not any more). They imagine that the conqueror Love takes his destructive powers from the feelings they and their beloved have toward each other, and is thus "armed". From the beloved, Love draws its "Pride and Cruelty," embodying an arrogant and merciless force. This line suggests that Love is unkind in compelling individuals to fall for those who do not reciprocate their feelings, while also implying that the speaker's beloved has callously rejected them, discarding them as though they were of no worth. Similarly, Love's fiery passion is fueled by the beloved's "Bright Eyes," with the metaphor portraying the beloved's gaze as a burning force, leaving the speaker emotionally scorched. The speaker's eyes, in turn, reflect a yearning so intense that it could "undo the Amorous World," meaning their desire is so powerful it could shatter the hearts of countless lovers. Yet, they must endure "Languishments and Fears," suffering from helplessness and anxiety as they constantly grapple with their beloved's rejection. These emotional torments, too, are wielded as instruments of Love's relentless cruelty.
Conflict between Desire and Suffering	The poem juxtaposes the pleasure of loving with the agony of rejection. The speaker's internal conflict is evident, as they yearn for the object of their affection despite the pain it causes. Love becomes a paradoxical force that brings both fulfillment and devastation. This theme resonates universally, as it speaks to the way love often intertwines pleasure with agony. Behn captures the human tendency to cling to desire even when it brings pain, underscoring the complexities of the emotional experience.
Feminist Undertones	As one of the first female writers to gain prominence in a male-dominated literary world, Aphra Behn has allowed this poem to explore how women are rendered vulnerable by love and social expectations.

	The speaker’s portrayal of love as a dominant, almost tyrannical force reflects how women’s emotions are often weaponized against them. The speaker's “sighs” and “fears” symbolize emotional labor that is expected from women in relationships. Moreover, the poem critiques the gendered power dynamics in love. Love is personified as an armed and triumphant conqueror, while the speaker—likely female—suffers as a passive victim. This imagery highlights the imbalance, subtly questioning why women must endure such emotional subjugation.

Line By Line Explanation

Lines 1-4:

As the poem begins, Love is personified as a “Tyrannic,” cruel warlord. This opening immediately inflicts the torment of loves viciousness endured by the speaker. Love sits on a “fantastic triumph” and overlooks “bleeding hearts”. The phrase "Bleeding Hearts" evokes strong imagery of pain and suffering. It suggests that many people are emotionally wounded by love, reinforcing the idea that love can cause deep emotional distress. These two metaphors have mstered the portrayal of loves superiority that conquests unfortunate souls who have all suffered from and for love. Love is also a downright sadist, dreaming up “Fresh pains” with which to torment his fallen victims and reveling in his “strange Tyrannic power.” This line indicates that Love actively generates new suffering. The use of "Fresh pains" suggests that love is not static; it continuously inflicts new wounds on those who are vulnerable. This imagery also reflects the hellish vision of Love as a tormentor and a destroyer. This line highlights the oppressive nature of Love, likening it to a tyrant who rules over the hearts of others with cruelty. Love is described as having a "Tyrannic power," emphasizing its oppressive nature. This personification suggests that love can dominate and control individuals, much like a tyrant ruling over subjects.

Lines 5-8:

This line complains of the "desire" the speaker held, which too was stolen by his tyrant. The "fire" taken from the eyes of the speakers beloved symbolises an internal passion for the beloved that has been lost. The speaker has provided the beloved "desire" and even emotional longing, while in return she is provided with "fire." Love is depicted as playful yet cruel, flinging its fiery arrows as if in a game. This playful cruelty highlights the capricious nature of love, where joy can quickly turn into pain—a reminder that love can be both exhilarating and perilous. The speaker reveals their vulnerability, admitting that their own longing has been exploited by Love. This line conveys a sense of betrayal.
The speaker’s desire is so profound that it could disrupt all romantic relationships ("undo the Amorous World"). This exaggeration emphasizes the overwhelming nature of unrequited love and suggests that such intense feelings can lead to chaos.

Lines 9-12:

The speaker laments how Love has drained them of their emotional expressions—sighs symbolize longing while tears represent sorrow. In stark contrast to the speaker's suffering, the beloved contributes feelings of "Pride and Cruelty." This highlights an imbalance; while one suffers deeply, the other may remain indifferent or even revel in their power over love. The speaker continues to articulate their anguish through "Languishments," indicating a state of weakness or longing, alongside "Fears," which reflect anxiety about unreciprocated feelings. This deepens our understanding of their emotional turmoil. Each glance or word from the beloved becomes a "Killing Dart," emphasizing how deeply personal interactions can inflict pain. This metaphor illustrates how love can be both intimate and harmful, where affection can lead to suffering.

Lines 13-16:

Both the speaker and the beloved have unwittingly empowered Love ("the God") through their emotions and actions. This line suggests that they are complicit in their own suffering; they have contributed to Love's dominion over them. By elevating Love to a divine status, they acknowledge its overwhelming influence in their lives. This metaphor reflects society's tendency to idolize love despite its potential for pain—love becomes something worshipped yet feared. The speaker expresses profound loneliness in their suffering; while both have contributed to Love's power, only they bear the emotional scars ("my poor Heart"). This line encapsulates the tragedy of unrequited love—one person suffers while another remains untouched. In contrast to the speaker's anguish, the beloved emerges victorious and unburdened by love's trials ("and free"). This poignant conclusion underscores the theme of unreciprocated affection—the stark reality where one party endures pain while the other remains unaffected.

Literary Devices

1. Personification

- Explanation: Love is personified as a powerful entity that actively causes suffering. This device allows Behn to depict love as an influential force over human emotions.
- Example: The line "Love in Fantastic Triumph sat," portrays Love as a conqueror, suggesting it revels in its victories over hearts.

2. Imagery

- Explanation: Vivid imagery creates emotional resonance and illustrates the speaker's pain.
- Examples:
    - "Bleeding Hearts around him flowed," evokes a strong visual of suffering, symbolizing those wounded by love.

3. Metaphor

- Explanation: The poem uses metaphor to compare love to a god, highlighting its dual nature as both pleasurable and painful.

- Example: The phrase "the God have armed" implies that both the speaker and the beloved have empowered Love, likening it to a deity with significant influence over their lives.

4. Alliteration and Assonance

- Explanation: The use of sound devices enhances the musical quality of the poem and emphasizes key phrases.
- Example: The line "From thy Bright Eyes he took his fire," features alliteration with the repetition of the 'B' sound, creating a rhythmic flow that draws attention to the beloved's allure.

5. Hyperbole

- Explanation: Exaggeration is used to express the intensity of the speaker's feelings regarding unrequited love.
- Example: The claim that desire could "undo the Amorous World" emphasizes how overwhelming and destructive unreturned affection can feel.

6. Irony

- Explanation: The irony in the poem lies in the fact that while both the speaker and their beloved have empowered Love, only the speaker suffers from its consequences.
- Example: The line "Whilst thine the Victor is, and free," highlights this irony; the beloved remains unaffected while the speaker endures emotional torment.

7. Symbolism

- Explanation: Various symbols throughout the poem convey deeper meanings about love and suffering.
- Examples:
  The term "Cupid", representing love, symbolizes not just romantic feelings but also their potential for cruelty.
  The phrases "sighs and tears" represent longing and sorrow, common motifs in poetry about love.

8. Tone

- Explanation: The tone of the poem is solemn and resigned, reflecting the speaker's deep emotional pain and sense of defeat.
- Example: The line "But my poor Heart alone is harmed," conveys vulnerability and despair, encapsulating the speaker’s emotional state.

9. Structure

- Explanation: The poem consists of two stanzas with eight lines each, written in iambic tetrameter. This regular structure contrasts with the chaotic emotions expressed within, emphasizing tension between form and content.

10. Allusions

Explanation: The poem alludes to classical mythology, particularly through references to Cupid (Eros), enriching its thematic depth by connecting personal experiences of love to broader cultural narratives.-

A Different History- Sujata Bhatt

Great Pan is not dead;
he simply emigrated
    to India.
Here, the gods roam freely,
disguised as snakes or monkeys;
every tree is sacred
and it is a sin
to be rude to a book.
It is a sin to shove a book aside
                With your foot,
a sin to slam books down
        Hard on a table,
a sin to toss one carelessly
        across a room.

You must learn how to turn the pages gently
without disturbing Sarasvati,
without offending the tree
from whose wood the paper was made.

Summary

Sujata Bhatt's poem "A Different History" explores themes of postcolonial identity and the paradox of historical influence, focusing on the cultural impact of British colonization in India.

This poem is autobiographical and is an expression of Bhatt's conflict between her Indian heritage and her life in the English speaking world.

The first stanza talks about India; she values the way gods and nature are respected and allowed to thrive, but contrasts this, quite angrily, with the way society and religion are too rigid and enforce too many rules upon the Indian people. The second stanza sees her talking about her inner conflict about enjoying being part of English speaking culture.

Context

Bhatt is an Indian born in Pune, a metropolis (mega city) in the west of India. At 12, her family moved to the USA where she had to learn English from scratch.

She has talked about her identity struggle with Gujarati (an Indian language) representing the 'deepest layer of her identity', but English representing her daily life and work.

Themes

Reverence for Nature and Spirituality	The poem emphasizes the deep reverence for nature in India, where gods are believed to manifest in the natural world. Deities like **Pan** (Greek god of nature) are said to have "emigrated" to India, where nature and the environment are seen as sacred. The imagery of gods roaming as snakes or monkeys and trees being sacred reflects the integral connection between spirituality and nature in Indian culture. ● **Sacredness of Trees:** The reverence for trees is central to the poem. Trees in India are often sacred, such as the **Peepal** tree (linked to **Lord Vishnu**) or the **Bodhi tree** (associated with the Buddha's enlightenment). This theme underscores the ecological spirituality of Indian traditions. ● **Connection to Saraswati:** The mention of Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, art, and wisdom, suggests that learning and nature are intertwined in a spiritual context. The respectful handling of books, which embody knowledge, mirrors the cultural reverence for both knowledge and nature.
Respect for Knowledge and Learning	Bhatt highlights the sacredness of books and knowledge in Indian culture, where it is considered a sin to disrespect books. The act of gently turning the pages without disturbing Saraswati reflects the reverence for learning in India. The handling of books as sacred objects is tied to the idea that knowledge is divine and deserving of utmost respect. ● **Respect for Books:** The poem emphasizes that treating books carelessly is akin to disrespecting

	sacred knowledge. The careful handling of books represents a respect for learning, wisdom, and the pursuit of knowledge, which are highly valued in many cultures, especially in India. • **Symbolism of Saraswati:** Saraswati's presence in the poem connects books and knowledge with the divine. As the goddess of wisdom, music, and arts, Saraswati embodies the reverence for intellectual and artistic pursuits in Indian spirituality.
Colonialism and Language as a Tool of Oppression	The poem delves into the painful legacy of colonization, using language as a central metaphor. Bhatt questions which language has not been used as the "oppressor's tongue" and which language was not meant to "murder" someone, suggesting the violent history of linguistic imperialism. This theme critiques the use of language as a tool for subjugation and cultural erasure by colonial powers. • **Oppression through Language:** The poem critiques the role of language in colonial domination, where the languages of the oppressors were forced upon the colonized. Language becomes a symbol of the violent history of colonialism, stripping people of their native identities. • **Cultural Loss and Assimilation:** The poem reflects on the paradox of cultural assimilation, where despite the trauma of colonization, future generations end up adopting and even embracing the colonizer's language. This transformation speaks to the resilience and adaptability of culture, but also to the lasting impact of colonialism on cultural

	identity.
Paradox of Post-Colonial Identity	Bhatt explores the complex relationship between colonization and cultural identity. The final lines highlight the paradox of future generations growing to love the very language that was used to oppress their ancestors. Despite the violence and trauma associated with colonial languages, these languages become an integral part of the identities of the colonized. ● **Cultural Reconciliation:** The poem hints at the unintended consequence of colonialism: the adoption and normalization of the colonizer's language by subsequent generations. This reflects a deep, complex reconciliation with the colonial legacy, where the colonized culture begins to reclaim and adapt the tools of their oppression. ● **Generational Memory:** The poem highlights how the trauma of the past continues to affect future generations. Despite the oppression, the poem also conveys how new generations may come to internalize the language of their oppressors, even as they retain their love for it, reflecting the complexity of post-colonial identity.
The Continuity of Colonial Influence	The poem suggests that the influence of colonialism is ongoing, as seen in the enduring presence of the oppressor's language. Despite the passage of time and the seeming death of the colonial system, the language continues to dominate and shape the cultural landscape, symbolizing the lasting effects of imperialism on identity and

	society. ● **Enduring Legacy:** The poet suggests that colonialism's influence is not merely historical, but continues to shape the cultural and linguistic landscape. The "strange language" of the colonizers becomes a new medium through which future generations navigate their identities. ● **Adoption of Oppressor's Language:** The idea that future generations "grow to love" the language of the oppressor suggests the inescapable nature of colonial influence. Language, as a tool of imperialism, is absorbed and reshaped by the colonized, reflecting the deep and lasting impact of colonial domination.

Structure Meter and Form

"A Different History" is structured into two distinct stanzas: the first comprises 18 lines focused on cultural reverence, while the second consists of 11 lines addressing language and oppression. The poem employs free verse, allowing Bhatt to maintain a conversational tone that enhances its introspective quality. The lack of a regular rhyme scheme reflects the chaotic nature of postcolonial identity struggles

Line By Line Explanation

Line 1-3:

Great Pan is not dead;
he simply emigrated to India.

Explanation: Bhatt begins with an allusion to Pan, the Greek god of nature, fertility, and the wild. She suggests that although Pan is no longer worshiped in the West, his spirit has found a home in India, where the reverence for nature remains deeply ingrained. This sets the stage for a comparison between Western and Indian cultural attitudes toward spirituality and the natural world.

Line 4-5:

Here, the gods roam freely,
disguised as snakes or monkeys

Explanation: The poet emphasizes the omnipresence of gods in Indian culture, where deities are believed to manifest in various forms, including snakes and monkeys. Snakes often

symbolize rebirth and fertility, with references like Vasuki (the serpent around Lord Shiva's neck) or Sheshnag (Lord Vishnu's cosmic serpent). Monkeys are associated with Hanuman, the monkey god known for his devotion, courage, and wisdom.

Line 6:

every tree is sacred

Explanation: Trees hold profound significance in Indian traditions, often being viewed as sacred. For example, the Peepal tree is linked to Lord Vishnu, and the Bodhi tree symbolizes the place of enlightenment for Buddha. This reverence reflects India's ecological spirituality.

Line 7-12:

and it is a sin
to be rude to a book.
It is a sin to shove a book aside
with your foot,
a sin to slam books down
hard on a table,

Explanation: The poet highlights the deep respect for books in Indian culture. Books are seen as embodiments of knowledge and treated with reverence. Disrespecting a book, such as tossing or slamming it, is considered a sin because it indirectly insults Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, learning, and wisdom.

Line 13-15:

a sin to toss one carelessly
across a room.
You must learn how to turn the pages gently

Explanation: This reinforces the idea that books are sacred. The poet calls for a gentle and respectful approach when handling books, symbolizing an attitude of reverence toward learning and wisdom.

Line 16-17:

without disturbing Sarasvati,
without offending the tree

Explanation: Bhatt explicitly mentions Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge. She is associated with wisdom, music, art, and learning. Saraswati is part of the Tridevi, alongside Lakshmi and Parvati. By connecting books to Saraswati and the trees from which paper is made, Bhatt ties the act of learning to both spiritual and ecological respect.

Line 18-19:

from whose wood the paper was made.

Explanation: This line connects the spiritual reverence for books to the physical source of their creation, emphasizing the respect owed to nature for providing the materials that sustain knowledge.

Line 20-21:

Which language
has not been the oppressor’s tongue?

Explanation: Bhatt shifts to the theme of colonization and linguistic imperialism, asking a

provocative question about how dominant powers have historically used language to suppress native cultures and identities.

Line 22-23:

Which language
truly meant to murder someone?

Explanation: This rhetorical question critiques the violent history of language as a tool of control and erasure, used by colonizers to impose their will on subjugated populations.

Line 24-27:

And how does it happen
that after the torture,
after the soul has been cropped
with the long scythe swooping out

Explanation: Bhatt uses the metaphor of a scythe to describe the cultural and emotional trauma inflicted by colonizers. The "soul being cropped" symbolizes the erasure of native identities, traditions, and languages under colonial rule.

Line 28-30:

of the conqueror's face –
the unborn grandchildren
grow to love that strange language.

Explanation: In a poignant conclusion, Bhatt reflects on the paradox of cultural assimilation. Despite the oppression and trauma associated with colonial languages, future generations often embrace these languages as their own, integrating them into their identities. This highlights the complex legacy of colonialism.

Critical Analysis of A Different History

"A Different History" by Sujata Bhatt is a thought-provoking poem that delves into themes of cultural identity, language, and the impact of colonization. The poem presents a contrasting view of religious and cultural practices, particularly through the figure of Pan and the gods in India. It emphasizes the sacredness of nature, as well as the reverence for books and language.

Bhatt's poem challenges the notion of a dominant language by questioning the history of oppression and violence associated with certain languages. It explores the complexities of language and its relationship to power, highlighting the impact it can have on individual and collective identities.

The poem's structure, with its two distinct stanzas, highlights the different aspects of the subject matter. The first stanza explores the interplay between religion, nature, and human behavior, showcasing the interconnectedness of these elements. The second stanza focuses on the historical and sociopolitical implications of language, raising important questions about the influence and consequences of linguistic dominance.

Bhatt's use of vivid imagery and metaphors adds depth to the poem, enabling readers to engage with the ideas on multiple levels. The juxtaposition of Pan's migration and the

sacredness of language challenges preconceived notions and invites readers to reflect on their own cultural heritage and the power dynamics inherent in language.

"A Different History" prompts critical reflection on the complexities of cultural and linguistic identity, urging readers to consider the legacy of colonization and the evolving nature of language in shaping our understanding of the world.

Poetic Devices

1. **Allusion**: The poet alludes to Great Pan, a Greek god, who is said to have emigrated to India. This allusion creates a sense of continuity and emphasises on the presence of gods in Indian culture.

2. **Imagery**: The poet uses visual imagery to evoke mental images and experiences, creating a vivid picture in the audience's mind. For example, the gods roam freely, disguised as snakes or monkeys,paints a visual image of deities blending into the natural world.

3. **Personification**: The poet personifies books, referring to them as entities that can be offended or disturbed. For instance, without offending the tree from whose wood the paper was made.This personification adds depth to the poem's exploration of reverence for knowledge.

4. **Repetition**: The repetition of the word sin emphasises the seriousness and cultural significance attached to handling books with respect. The repetition of the word language in the second stanza draws attention to its importance and the poet's contemplation of its power.

5. **Rhetorical question:** The poet poses rhetorical questions to engage the audience and provoke thought. For instance, Which language has not been the oppressor's tongue? Which language truly meant to murder someone? These questions challenge the reader to reflect on the consequences and implications of language and its historical context.

6. **Metaphor**: The poet uses a metaphor to describe the impact of colonisation on language. The phrase the soul has been cropped with a long scythe swooping out of the conqueror's face compares the damage inflicted on a person's soul to the act of cutting down crops with a scythe. This metaphor conveys the violence and destruction caused by colonisation.

7. **Contrast**: The poem contrasts the sacredness and reverence given to books and language in Indian culture with the history of oppression and colonisation. This contrast highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage and challenging the dominance of oppressive languages.

The Chimney Sweep- William Blake

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "weep! 'weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother? say?"
"They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."

Summary

William Blake's poem "The Chimney Sweeper: A little black thing among the snow" critiques child labor and societal indifference. It opens with a young chimney sweep, described as a "little black thing," crying in despair against the backdrop of pure snow, symbolizing innocence. The child reveals that his parents have abandoned him to pray at church, highlighting their neglect. He reflects on lost happiness, lamenting how society has stripped him of joy and forced him into sorrow. The poem concludes by exposing the hypocrisy of adults who believe they have done no harm while ignoring the child's suffering. Blake critiques organized religion and societal leaders for perpetuating this cycle of exploitation, ultimately urging readers to confront the moral implications of such injustices.

Structure Meter and Form

‘The Chimney Sweeper: A little black thing among the snow’ by William Blake is a short three-stanza poem that is separated into sets of four lines. These lines follow a rhyme scheme of AABB, CACA EFEF. This perfect sing-song-like pattern contrasts starkly against the subject matter The child, who is telling his story, is in a very bad way. His childish voice comes through in tandem with the horrors he’s had to suffer.

While Blake does use meter in the poem it is not entirely consistent. Throughout, the majority of the beats are either iambic or anapaestic. The first is made up of one unstressed and one stressed syllable while the second is made up of two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed. In general, the majority of the lines are written in iambic tetrameter. A reader should also take note of the double stresses that appear. Such as with “weep! weep!” in stanza one.

Themes

Organized Religion and Childhood	"The Chimney Sweeper" is a poem about the corrupting influence of organized religion on society. It specifically suggests that the Church encroaches on the freedoms and joys of childhood and, indeed, robs children of their youth. The poem focuses on a common figure during Blake's time: the chimney sweeper. Chimney sweepers were usually young boys forced to climb and clean chimneys, putting themselves in grave danger in return for little more than a meal and somewhere to sleep. Put simply, the speaker of "The Chimney Sweeper" has seen through the lies of the Church and isn't afraid to say so. He exposes these hypocrisies and deceptions—outlining how they have affected his life, and society more widely.
Innocence v.s. Experience	Blake powerfully contrasts the innocence of childhood with the corrupting influence of adult society. The young chimney sweepers, initially depicted as innocent and vulnerable, are thrust into a world of labor and suffering that tarnishes their purity. This theme highlights the tragic loss of innocence as children are forced to confront the harsh realities of life far too early.
Social Injustice and Exploitation	At the heart of the poem is a stark critique of social injustice. Blake shines a light on the plight of child laborers, emphasizing the exploitation that occurs when society prioritizes profit over the well-being of its most vulnerable members. The poem serves as a poignant indictment of a system that allows such exploitation to persist, revealing the moral failures inherent in societal norms that condone child labor. This indifference is echoed in Blake's portrayal of the children's suffering juxtaposed with their dreams of freedom, highlighting a stark contrast between their grim reality and the hope for a better life.
Loss of Childhood	The narrative poignantly illustrates how child labor robs children of their innocence and childhood experiences. The opening lines reveal a heartbreaking reality where children are sold into labor at an alarmingly young age. This theme emphasizes the tragic loss of formative years, showcasing how societal demands strip away the joys and freedoms that should belong to childhood.

Stanza By Stanza Explanation

Stanza 1: In the first stanza of 'The Chimney Sweeper: A little black thing among the snow' the speaker begins by describing something the show. It becomes clear quickly that this "thing" is actually a young child. The fact that the first line describes the child as a "thing" is disturbing, and it's supposed to be. Blake hooks the reader in with this description, making it quite obvious that he's going to make a political statement about the treatment of children.

The child cries out, both of his parents have “gone up the church to pray”. There is no one to care for him. No parents to provide for him or an organization that cares what happens to him. There are many who might say they care but then do nothing to prove it. The use of a perfect rhyme scheme in these lines, in addition to assonance, “notes” and “woe” and alliteration “weep! weep!” make his words all the more disturbing.

The poem begins with the striking image of a “little black thing among the snow.” The word “thing” dehumanizes the child, reducing him to an object rather than a person, which reflects the societal indifference toward child laborers during the Industrial Revolution. The contrast between “black” and “snow” symbolizes the loss of innocence and the child’s corruption by the harsh realities of life. The imagery creates a sense of isolation, emphasizing the child’s vulnerability. The child cries out, revealing that his parents have abandoned him to “go up to the church to pray.” This highlights the hypocrisy of organized religion and its followers, who prioritize rituals over genuine compassion and action. Blake critiques a society that claims to value piety while neglecting the suffering of its most vulnerable members. The alliteration in “weep! weep!” imitates the sound of a child’s cry, adding a haunting quality to the verse. The rhyme scheme, while regular, adds an ironic tone, as it contrasts with the disturbing subject matter.

Stanza 2: In the second stanza, the child reflects on how his life has drastically changed. He recalls a time when he was happy and free, but that innocence has been stripped away. The phrase “clothed me in the clothes of death” is a powerful metaphor for the physical and spiritual destruction caused by his work as a chimney sweeper. It also alludes to how society, particularly the church, has failed to protect him, instead subjecting him to a life of suffering. The child’s forced singing of the “notes of woe” suggests how he has been conditioned to accept his misery, highlighting the insidiousness of societal and religious oppression. Blake’s use of stark imagery here emphasizes the loss of childhood joy, as the child should have been playing and exploring the natural world rather than laboring in dangerous conditions. This stanza also critiques the church for perpetuating injustice by encouraging submission and resignation instead of change.

The child thinks back to his earlier days and how happy he used to be. All of this was taken from him. “They,” the church, “clothed” the child in “death” and forced him to ‘sing the notes of woe”. He was taught the darkest parts of life during a very important time period in his life. He should’ve been free to be happy and joyful in nature but instead, he’s a chimney sweeper.

Stanza 3: In the final stanza, the child directly condemns the institutions responsible for his suffering. He accuses his parents and the church of creating a system that clothes children in “death” while justifying their actions through religion. The reference to “God and his priest and king” connects this exploitation to the broader societal structures of Blake’s time, suggesting that all levels of authority are complicit in perpetuating suffering. The tone of the child’s words is bitter and accusatory, reflecting Blake’s anger at the hypocrisy of those who preach love and mercy while ignoring or enabling oppression. The poem ends on a powerful note of despair, as the child’s innocence has been entirely corrupted by a society that prioritizes wealth and power over the well-being of its youngest members.

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Poetic Devices

1. **Imagery**:

Blake uses vivid imagery to create stark contrasts and evoke emotion.

Example: “A little black thing among the snow”

The juxtaposition of “black” (symbolizing corruption and suffering) with “snow” (representing purity and innocence) underscores the loss of the child’s innocence.

Example: “Clothed me in the clothes of death”

This metaphor evokes the physical danger of chimney sweeping and the spiritual death caused by exploitation.

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2. **Contrast/Juxtaposition**:

The poem contrasts innocence with corruption and purity with suffering.

Example: The child is depicted as an innocent figure tainted by societal cruelty, reflected in the contrast between “black” and “snow”.

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3. **Symbolism**:

Blake employs symbols to convey deeper meanings.

“Snow” symbolizes purity, innocence, and natural beauty.

“Black thing” symbolizes the child’s corruption and dehumanization by society.

“Clothes of death” symbolizes the child’s enslavement and the physical and emotional toll of chimney sweeping.

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4. **Alliteration**:

The repetition of consonant sounds emphasizes key ideas and creates a rhythmic effect.

Example: “weep! weep!”

Mimics the cries of the child, emphasizing his vulnerability and distress.

Example: “Notes of woe”

The repeated “w” sound highlights the child’s sorrow.

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5. **Assonance**:

The repetition of vowel sounds adds to the poem’s musical quality.

Example: “Notes of woe”

The “o” sound elongates the line, mirroring the child’s lament.

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6. **Rhyme Scheme**:

The poem follows a regular rhyme scheme (AABB), which contrasts with its dark themes.

Effect: The sing-song quality creates irony, as the cheerful rhythm belies the tragic subject matter.

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7. **Metaphor**:

Blake uses metaphors to emphasize the child’s suffering and the failures of society.

Example: “Clothed me in the clothes of death”

The metaphor symbolizes how the child’s work leads to physical danger and spiritual destruction.

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8. **Tone**:

The tone of the poem is accusatory and critical, particularly toward organized religion and societal neglect.

Effect: The speaker's bitterness highlights Blake's condemnation of institutions that exploit innocence.

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9. **Personification**:

Blake indirectly gives human qualities to abstract concepts, such as the church's complicity in the child's suffering.

Example: The church "clothed" the child in death, personifying it as an active agent in perpetuating injustice.

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10. **Repetition**:

Repetition reinforces key ideas and emphasizes the child's plight.

Example: "weep! weep!"

This cry echoes throughout the poem, symbolizing the universal suffering of chimney sweepers.

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11. **Irony**:

The poem critiques society's hypocrisy by contrasting its claims of morality and religion with its actions.

Example: "Gone up to the church to pray"

The parents abandon their child to pursue religious devotion, highlighting the irony of their moral failure.

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12. **Enjambment**:

Blake uses enjambment to create a flowing rhythm, mimicking the continuity of the child's suffering.

Effect: This draws readers into the poem and emphasizes the relentless nature of the child's plight.

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13. **Emotional Appeal (Pathos)**:

Blake's language evokes sympathy and outrage.

Example: The child's voice and the description of his suffering are designed to move readers to feel compassion and anger at the injustice.

Where I Come From- Elizabeth Brewster

People are made of places. They carry with them
hints of jungles or mountains, a tropic grace
or the cool eyes of sea gazers. Atmosphere of cities
how different drops from them, like the smell of smog
or the almost-not-smell of tulips in the spring,
nature tidily plotted with a guidebook;
or the smell of work, glue factories maybe,
chromium-plated offices; smell of subways
crowded at rush hours.

Where I come from, people
carry woods in their minds, acres of pine woods;
blueberry patches in the burned-out bush;
wooden farmhouses, old, in need of paint,
with yards where hens and chickens circle about,
clucking aimlessly; battered schoolhouses
behind which violets grow. Spring and winter
are the mind's chief seasons: ice and the breaking of ice.

A door in the mind blows open, and there blows
a frosty wind from fields of snow.

Summary

The key idea of the poem seems to be that a person's character is always formed at least in part by the place where he or she is born – "People are made of places". Wherever you go in life you will carry with you memories and echoes of your birthplace, whether it is a city, as in the first stanza, or the quiet Canadian countryside where Elizabeth herself was born – "Where I come from, people carry woods in their minds" – and certainly the picture she draws in the second stanza does seem at first to be idyllic and wonderful, strongly contrasting with the city images in the first stanza. This idea shows us that who we are is shaped by where we were born and where we grew up, but this is not the end of the shaping process, as the first line suggests 'People are made of places', you are shaped as much by where you were born and grew up as the places that you go to after your childhood, the things that you experience in other places, the things that you see.

Structre Form & Meter

- No rhyme scheme, once again a free style of writing, the author does not respect the organisation that she notices in the city, "tidily plotted". This free structure powerfully conveys themes of freedom and confinement. It captures the struggle between being held back by the past and embracing the freedom that comes with personal growth.
- Going from third-person to first-person builds rapport. This change makes the initially impersonal narrative profoundly personal. It's almost as if Brewster is inviting you in, making the poem a shared experience rather than her own

- In order to create that smooth flow of thoughts, Brewster uses enjambment and caesura. The strokes of pen requiring the pauses invite you to pause and consider.
- No meter no rhyme

Themes

➢ **The Influence of Environment:** The poem explores how people are shaped by the places they come from. It emphasizes that individuals carry within them the characteristics and essence of the natural landscapes and urban environments they have experienced. This theme highlights the deep connection between humans and their surroundings.

➢ **Nature versus Urbanization**: The poem juxtaposes the natural world with urban environments. It contrasts the organic and untamed aspects of nature with the structured and artificial elements of cities. This theme raises questions about the impact of urbanization on individuals and the loss of the natural world in modern society.
In Brewster's world, it's all about nature. It plays a strong role in personal experiences. The poem also draws the line between the lushness of what is natural and the stark harshness of city existence.

You can practically see the magnolia fields and hear the leaves rustling in the wind. Then you feel the sheer contrast of the noisy buzz of the city. This contrast is important because it highlights how our environments train us up.

Rural life is beautiful and multilayered, but urban sprawl tends to dominate. Brewster keeps these qualities visible, right up front. She demonstrates how shifts in our world — from rural to urban living — influence the very fabric of our identity.
This shift has us look at what we gain and what we lose in the process.

➢ **Nostalgia and Memories**: The poem evokes a sense of nostalgia and longing for the poet's origins. It explores the memories and impressions associated with the natural landscapes of her past. This theme emphasizes the power of memory and the enduring influence of one's roots.

Now, let's put the lens on ourselves. This poem is not just about Brewster's origins; it's an invitation for us to reflect as well. Where do we come from, and how does that shape us?

Part of it is the emotional weight that comes with the memories of our hometowns. It's not simply a matter of remembering; it's understanding how these personal experiences shape our view of the world.

Brewster's words invite us to engage with our history, to celebrate our multifaceted selves. These experiences are the key to unlocking the door to the poem's themes. They remind us that understanding where we come from is crucial in piecing together who we are today.

➢ **Perception and Awareness:** The poem suggests that by opening one's mind and being receptive, individuals can perceive and connect with nature even in urban settings. It emphasizes the importance of expanding one's perspective and being aware of the presence of nature in order to experience its beauty and significance.

➢ **Identity and Cultural Heritage:** The poem touches upon the idea that one's identity is intertwined with their place of origin. It implies that the landscapes and environments where individuals come from contribute to their sense of self and cultural heritage. This theme explores the relationship between personal identity and geographical roots.

Stanza by Stanza Explanation

Part 1: Stanza 1 lines 1-4 (people originate from nature)

In these lines, the poet suggests that people are influenced by the places they come from. Each individual carries within them the essence of the natural environments they have experienced. The mention of "jungles or mountains" and "a tropic grace" implies that people retain traces of exotic and diverse landscapes. This indicates that human beings have a deep connection to nature and are shaped by the environments they inhabit.

Part 2: Stanza 1 lines 5-11 (describing the city)

In this section, the poet contrasts the atmosphere of cities with the natural world. The poet describes the distinctiveness of cities by using the metaphor of smell. The "smell of smog" and the "almost-not-smell of tulips in the spring" represent the industrial and urban aspects of the city. The reference to a "guidebook" suggests that cities are planned and organized, devoid of the spontaneous beauty found in nature. The mention of "glue factories" and "chromium-plated offices" evokes a sense of artificiality and mechanization.

Part 3: Stanza 2 (describing where she comes from - nature)

In this part, the poet describes her own origin and the natural environment she associates with. She states that the people from where she comes carry memories of specific natural landscapes. The mention of "woods" and "acres of pine woods" portrays a sense of vastness and tranquility. The "blueberry patches in the burned-out bush" evoke images of a rugged and resilient environment. The description of "wooden farmhouses" and "battered schoolhouses" with violets growing behind them illustrates a rustic and humble setting.

Part 4: Stanza 3 (expressing if you open your mind, you'll get a hint of nature)

In the final stanza, the poet suggests that by opening one's mind, they can connect with nature even in seemingly urban or artificial surroundings. The "door in the mind blows open" symbolizes the potential for a shift in perception. As the door opens, a "frosty wind from fields of snow" is felt, indicating the refreshing and invigorating influence of nature. This implies that despite the dominance of urban environments, one can still access the essence of nature by embracing a broader perspective and being receptive to its presence.

Critical Analysis

"Where I Come From" by Elizabeth Brewster is a thought-provoking poem that delves into the complex relationship between individuals and their environments. Through its exploration of nature, urbanization, memory, and perception, the poem offers a critical analysis of the human experience.

One of the central themes in the poem is the influence of environment on people. Brewster asserts that individuals carry within them the essence of the places they come from. This idea challenges the notion of a disconnected and autonomous self, emphasizing the deep connection between humans and their surroundings. By highlighting the hints of nature or urban atmosphere that people carry, the poem raises questions about how our environment shapes our identity, values, and perspectives.

The stark contrast between nature and urbanization serves as a key element in the poem. Brewster vividly describes the distinct characteristics of both. Nature is portrayed as untamed, expansive, and imbued with a sense of timelessness. The mention of "acres of pine woods" and "blueberry patches in the burned-out bush" evokes a rugged and raw beauty. In contrast, the urban environment is depicted as structured, artificial, and lacking in spontaneity. The "smell of smog" and the mention of "glue factories" and "chromium-plated offices" evoke a sense of mechanical and industrialized society. This stark contrast highlights the tension between the natural world and the encroaching urbanization that defines modern life.

The poem also explores the role of memory and nostalgia. Brewster reflects on her own origins and the memories associated with her natural environment. The mention of "wooden farmhouses" and "battered schoolhouses" with violets growing behind them creates a vivid image of a rustic and humble setting. This nostalgia for the past underscores the longing for a simpler and more authentic connection to nature, contrasting with the impersonal and planned nature of urban spaces.

Furthermore, the poem emphasizes the importance of perception and awareness. Brewster suggests that by opening one's mind and being receptive, individuals can still find glimpses of nature even in urban surroundings. The image of the "door in the mind" blowing open signifies the possibility of a shift in perspective, leading to the experience of a "frosty wind from fields of snow." This highlights the power of the mind to transcend physical limitations and find moments of connection with nature. It prompts readers to reconsider their own perceptions and actively seek out the presence of nature in their lives.

In conclusion, "Where I Come From" critically examines the human connection to the environment. Through vivid imagery, contrast, and introspection, Brewster explores identity, memory, and the impact of surroundings, encouraging reflection on our origins and relationship with the world.

Poetic Devices

1. Imagery

Brewster employs vivid imagery to evoke sensory experiences, allowing readers to visualize and feel the environments she describes.

- Example: Phrases like "wooden farmhouses, old, in need of paint" create a clear visual image of rural decay, while "the smell of smog" evokes a sense of urban pollution.

2. Alliteration

The repetition of initial consonant sounds adds a musical quality to the poem and emphasizes particular phrases.

- Example: The phrase "people" and "places" in the opening line illustrates alliteration, drawing attention to the connection between individuals and their environments.

3. Assonance

This device involves the repetition of vowel sounds within lines, contributing to the poem's rhythm and mood.

- Example: The repetition of the "a" sound in "made" and "places" enhances the lyrical quality of the poem.

4. Hyperbole

Brewster uses hyperbole to emphasize certain aspects of her experiences, often exaggerating for effect.

- Example: The line about carrying "acres of pine woods" in people's minds exemplifies hyperbole, suggesting that memories can encompass vast landscapes.

5. Enjambment

The use of enjambment allows thoughts to flow beyond line breaks, creating a sense of continuity and urgency in the speaker's reflections.

- Example: Lines that continue without punctuation at the end encourage readers to move swiftly through the text, mirroring the interconnectedness of memories and places.

6. Contrast

Brewster contrasts rural and urban settings throughout the poem, highlighting differences in atmosphere and emotional resonance.

- Example: The peaceful imagery associated with nature is juxtaposed with descriptions of urban life, emphasizing how different environments shape personal identity.

7. Perspective Shift

The poem shifts from a third-person perspective to a more personal first-person voice, deepening emotional engagement

The Cockroach- Kevin Halligan

I watched a giant cockroach start to pace,
Skirting a ball of dust that road the floor.
At first he seemed quite satisfied to trace
A path between the wainscot and the door,
But soon he turned to jog in crooked rings,
Circling the rusty table leg and back,
And flipping right over to scratch his wings-
As if the victim of a mild attack
Of restlessness that worsened over time.
After a while, he climbed an open shelf
And stopped. He looked uncertain where to go.
Was this due payment for some vicious crime
A former life had led to? I don't know
Except I thought I recognised myself.

Structure Form & Meter

→ 10 syllables in each line
→Iiambic pentameter 14 lines
→ Shakespearean sonnet
→ ABAB CDCD EF GE GF
→ Describes cockroach the whole time. The change in rhyme scheme emphasises the change of thought. Halligan wonders how the cockroach can relate to him.
→ 1 stanza

Language:

Extended metaphor	→ Comparison of the cockroach to himself "A former life had led to?" "Except I thought I recognised myself" The cockroach is unsure of what it wants to do → Started to 'pace' "skirting a ball of dust" like humans, the cockroach avoids the problem that it faces just kicks the ball of dust around, hoping the problem will disappear → It tries to find a solution by tracing a "path between the wainscot and the door" → That path is the path of life in humans and the cockroach is in confusion "started to jog in crooked rings"

Personification	The cockroach is personified throughout the poem, giving it human-like qualities to draw parallels between its actions and human behavior. **:** *"He looked uncertain where to go"* The cockroach is given the ability to "look uncertain," which mirrors human indecision and self-doubt.
Imagery	Halligan uses vivid imagery to describe the cockroach's movements, making its actions relatable and engaging. *"His legs revolved like a propeller"* This image evokes the insect's mechanical precision and emphasizes its animated, almost comical presence.
Symbolism	The cockroach symbolizes human life, with its journey representing life's challenges, moral conflicts, and existential uncertainties. *"But soon he turned to jog in crooked rings"* The erratic movements symbolize confusion or aimlessness in life.
Alliteration	Repetition of consonant sounds creates rhythm and draws attention to specific descriptions. **:** *"trace / A path"* The repeated "t" sound emphasizes the deliberate, exploratory nature of the cockroach's movements.
Enjambment	Lines flow into one another without punctuation, mimicking the continuous and unpredictable journey of the cockroach. **:** The lack of pauses mirrors the unbroken, wandering nature of life.

Juxtaposition	The ordinary and the philosophical are juxtaposed, as the poet uses the cockroach's actions to explore deeper human concerns. **:** *"I watched as if from a distance"* juxtaposes the detached observation with the personal connection revealed later.
Minimalism	Halligan's sparse, precise language focuses attention on the cockroach and its symbolic significance. **Effect:** This minimalist style allows readers to project their own interpretations onto the cockroach's journey.

Themes

1. **Existentialism:** The poem explores existential themes, raising questions about the purpose and meaning of life through the contemplation of a simple creature like a cockroach.
2. **Restlessness and Discontent:** The poem portrays the cockroach's restlessness and unease, reflecting a sense of dissatisfaction or uneasiness that can be experienced by individuals in their lives.
3. **Self-reflection and Identification:** The speaker reflects on their own identity and experiences, drawing parallels between themselves and the cockroach. This theme highlights introspection and the search for self-understanding.
4. **Empathy and Connection:** The speaker empathizes with the cockroach, suggesting a deeper connection between all living beings. The theme of empathy underscores the shared emotions and struggles across different forms of life.
5. **Uncertainty and Indecision:** The poem explores the theme of uncertainty as the cockroach reaches a point of hesitation and indecision, unsure of its next course of action. This theme reflects the broader human experience of grappling with uncertainty and the choices we face.
6. **Symbolism of the Cockroach:** The presence of the cockroach in the poem symbolizes resilience, adaptability, and the ability to survive in challenging environments, shedding light on the resilience of the human spirit.

Word and line by line analysis

1. The phrase "Skirting a ball of dust" in the second line of the poem portray the cockroach as being capable of avoiding a form of obstacle and hardship by detour. The fact that it is a "ball of dust that rode on the floor" portrays the fact that it is an accumulating obstacle which means that if it is not tackled now, it will be much harder to overcome in the future.

2. “At first he seemed quite satisfied to trace a path between the wainscot and the door. But soon he turned to jog in crooked rings” At first the cockroach is happy with his life and is just content doing the small things in life without any trouble. It demonstrates how as humans we sometimes take our time to enjoy the things in life doing something so small. Then the cockroach suddenly starts being agitated and starts to go into a slow jog. Furthermore it goes in crooked rings. If you read the next line, it shows that it also circles “the rusty table and back”, showing that it is just agitated, confused and restless. It also shows uncertainty. This exaggerates the fact that in life, we tend to have our ups and downs, our high and lows as we are happy with something at one time, and how we become agitated and scurry up and down the place wondering about our meaning in life and what to do in certain situations. An example of this is the mid-life crisis, where people question their achievements after reaching a certain age, especially when they were content with their life just before, such as getting married or securing a stable job.

3. “And flipping right over to scratch his wings – as if a victim of a mild attack of restlessness that worsened over time.” this further accentuates the restlessness of the cockroach and its sudden need to do something with its life before it is to pass away. This, as said before, is similar to the will of people who are so often bored for a long period of time to try and do something with their lives, especially during a mid-life crisis. It finally goes “ARGGGHHH! (scratching its wings, similar to how someone would scratch their heads when stressed)” and tries to do something amazing as read in the next line.

4. “After a while, he climbed an open shelf” this indicates a sudden sense of hardship as the cockroach is climbing something as big as a mountain in the eyes of a human when put into perspective. It also implies a sense of progress as it is at least something productive that you do with your life. In this sense, the cockroach is going on an adventure.

5. Symbols:

a. Found in the open shelf, having the capacity to store useful objects, suggests the cockroach’s vast potential and thus the vast potential that we have as human beings. “Open” may suggest a change in perspective as he/it becomes more “open-minded”.

b. A path between the wainscot and the door. Concept of Journey through life. The “path” depicts his growth stage. “Wainscot” is typically their place of birth (they are cockroaches after all a wainscot can be defined as “wooden panels that can be used to line the walls of a room”), while the “door”, due to the ability to “open”, represents freedom and success, normally found in the later stages of your life.

6. “And stopped. He looked uncertain where to go.” We can see two caesuras there in the form of the full stop. The first caesura is used as a tool by the poet to create a pause in the reading pace of the reader to make the success of the cockroach more dramatic. The second one however, is to let the fact that it has completed its aim and has nothing left to do sink in. After achieving a goal, there's often a sense of emptiness, as seen with Olympic record holders who, despite their success, end up

alone and in tears. The author suggests that this feeling is a curse in our lives. While we should feel joy and accomplishment, there is often a lack of emotion once we reach the top. The final line, "Was this due payment for some vicious crime a former life had led to? I don't know," reflects the cockroach's uncertainty and existential questioning, mirroring the poet's own reflections on life.

Further Analysis(**Split into three parts according to emotion)**

Part 1: 1st line to 4th line - Normal, Idle Emotions

The poem begins by describing a giant cockroach pacing around a dusty floor. Initially, it appears content, casually following a path between the wainscot and the door. The tone is observational, portraying the cockroach's ordinary and idle behavior.

Part 2: 5th line to 9th line - Circling and Apprehensive Emotions

However, the atmosphere shifts as the cockroach's movements become more erratic. It starts jogging in crooked rings, circling the rusty table leg, and even flips over to scratch its wings. These actions suggest a growing restlessness and unease, as if the cockroach is experiencing mild distress or agitation.

Part 3: 10th line to 14th line - Uncertainty and Empathetic Emotions

In the final part, the cockroach climbs an open shelf but appears uncertain about its next move. The speaker wonders if this uncertainty is a result of past wrongdoing, reflecting on the cockroach's potential guilt or existential questioning. The speaker's empathy is revealed as they see themselves mirrored in the cockroach's uncertainty, suggesting a deeper connection between human emotions and the struggles of all living beings.

Report to Wordsworth by Boey Kim Cheng

You should be here, Nature has need of you.
She has been laid waste. Smothered by the smog,
the flowers are mute, and the birds are few
in a sky slowing like a dying clock.
All hopes of Proteus rising from the sea
have sunk; he is entombed in the waste
we dump. Triton's notes struggle to be free,
his famous horns are choked, his eyes are dazed,
and Neptune lies helpless as beached as a whale,
while insatiate man moves in for the kill.
Poetry and piety have begun to fail,
As Nature's mighty heart is lying still.
O see the widening in the sky,
God is labouring to utter his last cry.

Summary

The poem is based on the ways that the world has changed since William Wordsworth wrote his idyllic pieces celebrating the natural beauty of the world. Today, Cheng sees something very different. He describes how Nature needs "you" to make the world a better place and then goes on to reference various Greek figures from mythology who, through humanity's destructive efforts, are no longer able to exert their power.

Structure and Form

'Report to Wordsworth' by Boey Kim Cheng is a contemporary poem that is contained within a single stanza of fourteen lines. It's a variation of a traditional sonnet (a fourteen-line poem with a specific rhyme scheme). In Cheng's case, the poem uses examples of rhyme but does not follow a pattern commonly associated with a sonnet.

For example, the first few lines rhyme ABCB and DEDF. The final six lines, known as the sestet, rhyme in a pattern of GHGHII. This specific series of rhymes is reminiscent of the final section of many Petrarchan or Italian sonnets.

Literary Devices

In this poem, the poet makes use of a few different literary devices. For example:
-Personification: This occurs when the poet imbues non-human things with human characteristics. For example, referring to nature as having "need of you" and describing nature with female pronouns.

-Caesura: This can be seen when the poet inserts a pause into the middle of a line of verse. For example, “the flowers are mute, and the birds are few.”

-Alliteration: This literary device can be seen when the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of multiple words. For example, “man moves: in line ten.

Lines 1-4

You should be here, Nature has need of you.

(...)

in a sky slowing like a dying clock.

In the first few lines of this piece, the speaker begins by addressing “you.” The “you” in these lines is not clearly described, but it’s clear by the final lines that the poet was interested in addressing the reader, bringing them into the poem and making the death of nature something they should be concerned with.

The poet describes how nature needs you because she’s been “laid to waste.” As a result of industrialization and habitat destruction, the natural world is smothered by smog, the flowers are “mute,” and the birds are “few.”

The poet uses a powerful simile in line four, comparing the sky to a “dying clock.” This suggests that there is a countdown going on, one in which, eventually, readers will see time run out and the entire environment collapse.

Lines 5-8

All hopes of Proteus rising from the sea

(...)

his famous horns are choked, his eyes are dazed,

In the next lines, the poet alludes to mythology, referencing Proteus (a sea god from Greek mythology) and Triton (a merman from Greek mythology).

The poet describes the hopes of humanity, which were focused on some divine force saving us, but they have faded. There is no god rising from the ocean and changing the world. We’ve destroyed the oceans, and now all the beauty of this environment has been entombed in waste that “we dump” into the waters.

In the same way, Triton's notes "struggle to be free," and we can no longer hear his "famous horns." In these lines, the poet is suggesting that humanity has done so much damage to the natural world that even the divine sea gods can't overcome it.

Lines 9-14

and Neptune lies helpless as beached as a whale,

(...)

God is labouring to utter his last cry.

The final mythological reference is to Neptune, who is as useless and weak as the other gods. He lies as "helpless as a beached whale," unable to overcome what we've done to the world. All the while, "insatiate," or insatiable, humanity moves in for the kill. It's never enough; the poet is implying that humanity always wants more.

In the final lines, the poet indicates that those things that once inspired and sustained us have failed. Poetry and piety are no longer driving forces in life. This has resulted in "Gob…laboring to utter his last cry." The poem ends on this note, driving home to readers how extensive the damage humanity has done is. It's touched the universe's most powerful forces, including God.

Themes

Poetry, Enchantment, and Conservation	As the poem laments humanity's destruction of the natural world, its cry for William Wordsworth's help suggests that art, imagination, and enchantment are nature's only hope. Wordsworth was one of the earliest and greatest of the English Romantic poets. He argued that nature was the best teacher, full of inherent wisdom; that the imagination and its powers must be treated with reverence; and that nature, art, and the imagination all fed each other. These ideas, the speaker suggests, are just the principles humanity needs today. Wordsworth's respect for nature is the only possible antidote to human greed and pollution, and only through a combination of "poetry and piety" might the natural world be saved from humanity's "insatiate," unstoppable greed. In part, that's because an imaginative reverence for nature might make people see nature as a living thing, not just an inert resource to be exploited. The speaker personifies nature as a goddess and the sea as a series of gods, calling up ancient mythical spirits like Proteus and

	Triton. In doing so, the speaker also calls up the ideas Wordsworth explored in his sonnet “The World is Too Much With Us,” in which he wistfully wished he were a “pagan” who still believed in such gods. A culture that treats nature as divine and alive, both Boey and Wordsworth suggest, is one that lives in right relationship with the world around it. When the speaker of this poem laments that “poetry and piety have begun to fail,” then, they’re pointing out that there’s a connection between these two urgently important qualities. Just as Wordsworth would have said, looking at the world piously (that is, with religious awe) inspires poetry, which the Romantics felt should be an expression of deep feeling. Poetry, in turn, can inspire piety, moving people and teaching them to see the world reverently. This is why the speaker feels people need Wordsworth and his principles to lead them on now. Without reverence and art, people forget to treat nature as the sacred force it is. Where this theme appears in the poem: Lines 1-2 Lines 5-11
Humanity's Destruction of Nature	“Report to Wordsworth” is a cry of despair over humanity’s treatment of the natural world. The poem’s speaker reaches out to William Wordsworth, the great English Romantic writer who helped to introduce ideas of nature’s sacred power into English poetry. Wordsworth’s attitude toward nature is just the thing humanity needs now, the speaker argues—and just the thing humanity lacks. People don’t care for nature (personified here as a languishing, mortally wounded goddess). Instead, “insatiate” (or greedy and insatiable), they only “move in for the kill,” treating nature as a resource they can exploit rather than a living entity upon whom they depend for their own existence. Humanity has now taken its exploitation and irresponsibility to such lengths, the speaker warns, that even “God is labouring to utter his last cry”: existence as humanity knows it is in grave danger. If only Wordsworth and his ideas could return, there might be some hope for humanity all. But then, it might already be too late. The speaker imagines a “wound widening in the sky,” flowers “smothered by

	the smog," and the gods of the ocean "entombed in waste" and lying "helpless as a beached whale." And the speaker's allusions to Wordsworth remind readers that such greedy destruction was already well underway back when Wordsworth was writing: Wordsworth wrote fervently of nature's power in the face of the Industrial Revolution (the world-changing period in which economies began to shift from agriculture to manufacturing and populations drained from the countryside into the cities). The world is seeing the terrible consequences of the Industrial Revolution now, this poem suggests—and people need a second Wordsworth to warn them off completely destroying the world they live in.

Exam Style Questions

1. Explore how the poet uses imagery and language to convey a sense of destruction and loss. How does this reflect the overall message of the poem?
2. How does Boey Kim Cheng present his concern for the environment in *Report to Wordsworth*? Refer closely to the poet's language, tone, and imagery.
3. In what ways does the poem reflect both admiration for Romantic poets and frustration with the modern world?
4. Explore how the poet uses allusions and religious references to heighten the emotional impact of the poem.
5. Compare the ways in which destruction of the natural world is presented in *Report to Wordsworth* and one other poem you have studied.
6. Compare how poets express a sense of loss in *Report to Wordsworth* and another poem of your choice. Consider their use of tone, imagery, and form.

Lament by 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.

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

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.

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.

Summary

More often than not, when a person reads a piece of poetry — or appreciates any art form, really — it is easy to focus on that work from a very singular perspective. Often, we consider what a particular poem means for ourselves, and sometimes neglect to think about who or what that poem was written for. For many artists, their craft is a means of reaching out to others, to tell stories that have not been told, but that the author feels should be. For Gillian Clarke, 'Lament' is one of those poems, a piece that is designed to explore the stories of a great many without the voice or reach of the poem's author, and a way for Clarke to express her own feelings towards those same stories.

A lament is not a particular style of poetry, but instead refers to an expression of grieving, or of deep sadness. While this gives the reader a clear idea of what type of poem this is, the title is purposefully vague, indicating only that there is a lament, and not what is being lamented. Most everyone can relate to a lament in some form or the other, however, so in this case, the simple title works very well,

telling the reader a great deal about what they can expect, even if the actual source of grief remains unclear — who is this poem written for?

Throughout the poem, Clarke begins a great many lines with the word “for.” This repetition is used to remind the reader that the poem is not written just as a lament, but rather as one written in honour of someone or something else. Eleven of the poem’s twenty-one lines begin with the word “for,” and nine of the ten remaining lines begin with “the,” as a continuation of a previous line that began with “for.” As a theme, the idea of remembrance plays a crucial role in this piece and is represented in this way.

Themes

Lament for nature	The natural world plays a significant role throughout the poem. In the first two verses, Clarke describes a turtle and a cormorant (a diving bird with a famous appetite), both searching for their naturally fulfilling habitats. For the turtle, it is a place to lay her eggs, and for the cormorant, it is the sea, where food can be easily found. In both cases, these areas are corrupted in some way, and these passages are marked with darkly connotative terms, such as “burden,” “sickness,” “funeral,” and “shadow.” In these words, the natural world is distorted and ruined. It is very striking for the first image in ‘Lament‘ to be the bringing of life into the world, and even more striking for the fact that it is built up and described as a bad thing. This suggests deeper meaning to the images and thoughts described afterward. Natural imagery is also prominent in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses of the piece, surrounded in a similar darkness to the opening two. In particular, the final two verses describe a natural imbalance of catastrophic proportions; Clarke describes the sun as being veiled, and then extinguished altogether, an apocalyptic disaster. Despite this, it is framed from the perspective of the animals, particularly in birds, who migrate long and are slow in dying. The idea of migration brings to ‘Lament‘ the theme of running away, though it is clear that there is nowhere to run away to, as the entire Earth is falling apart, as both the sun and the seas are described in various states of turmoil. In these ways, the poem is a kind of eulogy for the natural planet, and a grim look at its darkest moments.
Lament for Humankind	Juxtaposed against the natural imagery in the poem is Clarke’s involvement of people in the struggles portrayed throughout ‘Lament‘. Interestingly, there are far fewer man-made images throughout the poem than natural images, though the ones that do appear make it clear that human wars are the cause of the natural world’s devastation. By choosing to focus on lives that are innocent and ones that do not comprehend the cause or nature of their own destruction, Clarke elicits a measure of sympathy from her audience. The third and fourth verses focus on a number of thematically related images. First is Ahmed, who stands at a closed border, suggesting he is trying to enter a country and is being denied access. Secondly is the image of a soldier who is being burnt alive. These two ideas are a clear indicator of war, strife, or a similar struggle that sees people as enemies of each other. In the following verse, Clarke expresses sympathy for gunsmiths and armourers, the people who create devices and tools used for destructive purposes only, and then for the people who must use those devices. In particular, she describes these people as “boys,” and as “sons,” suggesting people who are in over their heads, in a conflict that doesn’t really involve them. In the fifth verse, the natural world and the world of humans collide when a whale is rendered speechless in fear as a response to the sound of a missile detonating nearby. Similarly, the seventh verse concludes the

	poem with the haunting phrase, “For vengeance, and the ashes of language.” This is perhaps the most complex idea of the poem, which suggests metaphorically that language has been destroyed, and that vengeance is the concept that has replaced it in human societies. “The ashes of language” is a striking image, one that essentially describes the absolute destruction of human society — how would any kind of culture exist without language? In the midst of the natural world being destroyed by warfare, the world of humans, of culture, language, and countless unique societies, has also been lost.
Lament for War	On her website, Gillian Clarke explains that this poem is the result of a collection of images and media stories surrounding the Gulf War. The approach the work takes to the task makes it sound as though the entire world is being slowly destroyed by the conflict, and in a sense, it may well be. War is not necessarily a contained concept, particularly in the modern sense, and its effects and influences can be far-reaching and devastating. Clarke’s ‘Lament‘ is written for everything that is touched by war, because war ruins anything it touches in some way, shape, or form. This is an important theme to consider in a world where wars and conflicts are an unfortunately common occurrence, but also where a great many people are able to speak out against it and see for themselves its devastating effects, even from across the world.

Figurative Devices

Feature / Device	Example from the Poem	Effect / Explanation
Anaphora (Repetition)	“For the…” at the start of each stanza/line	Creates a mournful, prayer-like rhythm; emphasizes the scale and variety of suffering.
Metaphor	“the sun put out”	Suggests environmental catastrophe; loss of hope and life.
Personification	“the soldier who spilled the ink of his life”	Emphasizes the human cost of war; likens blood to ink to suggest loss of story/life.
Symbolism	“the whale struck dumb by the missile’s thunder”	The whale symbolizes nature’s helplessness; silence indicates trauma and destruction.
Imagery (Visual)	“blazing well”, “scalded ocean”, “burnt earth”	Creates strong visual impact of devastation; evokes a sense of war's violence.
Alliteration	“burnt earth”, “shadow on the sea”, “mortal stain”	Reinforces harshness or sadness through sound; adds musicality to the mourning tone.
Enjambment	“For the green turtle with her pulsing burden / in search...”	Mimics the natural flow of thought and grief; links ideas seamlessly across lines.

Oxymoron	“pulsing burden”	Combines vitality (“pulsing”) with weight/pain (“burden”); reflects fragile life in peril.
Juxtaposition	Marine life vs. war machinery (e.g. turtle vs. “military muscle”)	Highlights contrast between innocence of nature and violence of human conflict.
Religious Allusion	Prayer-like structure (repetition of “For the…”)	Lends solemnity; suggests a lamentation or prayer for the dead and dying.
Tone	Mournful, reverent, accusatory	Reflects both sorrow and protest against war and environmental damage.
Diction (Word Choice)	“mortal stain”, “funeral silk”, “shadow on the sea”	Conveys death, decay, and environmental collapse; evokes strong emotions.

Stanza 1

- Discusses green turtles' search for safe breeding grounds on shore
- Highlights oxymoron "pulsing burden": "pulsing" shows baby turtle's energy, "burden" reflects its unpleasant feelings
- Notes metaphor "Nest of Sickness" illustrating turtles' suffering from war and human impact
- Emphasizes the turtle's burden caused by environmental and human factors

Stanza 2

- Describes the cormorant, a sea bird, affected by the Gulf War oil spill
- 'Funeral Silk' symbolizes the oil covering the birds, linking their danger to the spill
- 'Veil of iridescence' and 'Shadow on the sea' depict the widespread oil on land and water
- 'Shadow on the sea' conveys the negative impact of the oil spill

Stanza 3

- Ocean described as **"stained"** and **"mortal"**, symbolizing damage and death
- **"Mortal Stain"** represents oil pollution on the ocean
- **"Closed border"** and **"uniform of fire"** convey a sense of entrapment and unavoidable environmental damage
- **"Uniform of fire"** also reflects death and suffering of Gulf War soldiers
- Imagery underscores both environmental destruction and human suffering caused by the Gulf War

Stanza 4

- Expresses sorrow over the loss of lives in war
- Identifies volunteers who bravely fought for their country
- Highlights a farmer's son volunteering for the fight
- Portrays 'music' as a symbol of glory and victory motivating volunteers
- Interprets 'music' as also representing the end or death, like a 'swan song'
- Indicates volunteers are unaware of the true consequences of war

Stanza 5

- Expresses grief and sorrow for various animal breeds in the Gulf
- Deaths caused by war and primarily by oil spills affecting marine life
- Highlights the phrase “The whale struck dumb by the missile’s thunder” to emphasize war's impact
- Notes the irony of the largest animal, the whale, being silenced by human conflict
- Focuses on stanza five's depiction of environmental damage due to war and pollution

Stanza 6

- Grief for birds suffering painful migrations and death caused by human actions during the Gulf War
- "Long migrations and the slow dying" highlights the harm forcing birds to relocate, leading to many deaths
- "The veiled sun" symbolizes darkness, evil, and pessimism, contributing to a dark, eerie atmosphere
- The covered sun connects to the next stanza's theme of the sun's death, removing innocence from the poem

Stanza 7

- "Burnt earth and the sun put out" symbolizes a disastrous event with no light and a burning earth
- The damaged ocean is emphasized to highlight environmental harm
- The word "scalded" reinforces the severe damage caused by oil pollution
- "Vengeance" introduces an angry, non-innocent tone, suggesting revenge as a cause of the destruction
- These points relate to the themes in Stanza Seven

Exam Style Questions

1. How does Clarke explore the consequences of war and environmental destruction in *Lament*? In your answer, refer to specific details of language, tone, and imagery.
2. How does *Lament* reflect both grief and protest? Support your ideas with close reference to the poem.
3. Discuss how Clarke gives a voice to nature and innocent victims in *Lament*. How effective is this in conveying her message?
4. Compare how the poets present the effects of human actions on nature in *Lament* and *Report to Wordsworth*.
5. Compare how *Lament* and another poem you have studied explore the theme of loss. Consider how language and structure shape meaning in both poems.

Follower by Seamus Heaney

My father worked with a horse-plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horses strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.
The sod rolled over without breaking.
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
All I ever did was follow
In his broad shadow round the farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.

Summary

In ‘Follower’ by Seamus Heaney, beneath the surface of admiration lies a subtle critique of inherited roles. The speaker's aspiration to emulate his father parallels with an inevitable realization of his own inadequacies. Heaney challenges traditional notions of heroism and skill, suggesting that even the admired can falter. This nuanced exploration invites readers to reconsider the dynamics of influence and the complexities of parental legacy, stirring deeper contemplation beyond mere admiration.

Structure

Heaney’s poem is a six-stanza piece, made up of quatrains, or four-line stanzas. Each line is approximately the same length and contains both slanting and perfect end-word rhymes. Throughout this piece, Heaney uses both perfect and slanting end rhymes. Slanting refers to those that only half

rhyme, and perfect, being exact rhymes such as in the second stanza of the poem in which the first and third lines rhyme with “wing” and “breaking.” An example of a slanting rhyme can also be found in this stanza with the second and fourth lines, “sock” and “pluck” partially rhyming due to the organization of their consonance.

Poetic Devices

Heaney showcases several literary devices in his poem, ‘Follower’ that makes this heart-touching recapitulation of his childhood days dearer to the readers. Likewise, the poem begins with a simile in the second line. Here, the poet compares his father’s shoulders to “a full sail” inflated due to sea wind. There is consonance in the first line. Readers come across this device in the phrase, “worked with.” Thereafter, they find an onomatopoeia in the phrase, “his clicking tongue.”

The poet uses metonymy in the line, “And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.” Thereafter, he connects the second and third stanzas by the use of enjambment. There is a personal metaphor in the “sweating team.” Moreover, in the third stanza, the poet uses instrumental metaphors to depict his father’s precise vision. Heaney also uses alliteration in this poem.

In the fourth stanza, the line, “Fell sometimes on the polished sod” contains irony. Thereafter, in the opening of the last stanza, there is a use of asyndeton. This stanza also forms an antithesis.

Themes

This retrospective piece, ‘Follower’ presents a bunch of themes to the readers. First of all, the theme of plowing, or broadly farming, gives readers a feel of how it feels to be on farmland, basking under the sun, feeling the smell of recently plowed land, and watching a farmer toiling hard. Through this theme, Heaney also brings an Irish touch with this theme. Thereafter, comes the most important theme of the poem, the father-son relationship. This theme is present in Heaney’s several famous poems such as ‘At a Potato Digging’, ‘Blackberry-Picking’, and in his most anthologized poem, ‘Digging’. In ‘Follower’, the poet refers to how he followed his father while he worked on the field. However, at last, the father takes the role of his son. The poet also makes use of the themes of tradition, identity, memories, retrospection, love, and family in this poem.

Analysis of Follower

Stanza One

Lines 1–2

My father worked with a horse-plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung

The poem ‘Follower’ opens up with the description of the speaker’s father; the narrator, his son, is describing the hard work his father does on the farm. He was a hard worker, as he “worked with a horse-plough”. A “horse-plough” is a piece of basic machinery dragged through fields that cuts deep grooves into the earth for planting. The son speaks of his father in the past tense, giving the reader a hint that things may have changed since then.

One does not have to experience farm life firsthand to know that farming is back-breaking work. This man worked with a horse and plowed by hand. This kind of work takes someone truly dedicated to farming.

The second line gives further visual information about the image his father makes completing his hard work, his shoulders are rounded, he’s hunched over and the shape of his back mirrors that of sails billowing out in a heavy storm. This description imbues the father with power, he is strong enough to withstand the metaphorical winds of the sea.

Moreover, the speaker describes his father's shoulders and the way they "globed like a full sail strung". This imagery reveals the muscles that formed from years of pure, hard work.

Lines 3–4

Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horses strained at his clicking tongue.
The speaker was influenced by watching his father work the "horse-plough" because he remembers the minute details of it in 'Follower', such as the "clicking tongue" of the horse as he strained beneath the plow.
His father walks between the "shafts and the furrow." The "shaft" on a "horse-plough" is the part from which the farmer directs the horse, and the "furrow" refers to the grooves that are made in the ground. While the father may be experienced with this task, and find it relatively easy, the horse is "strain[ing]" against the bridle to keep up with, or perhaps continue at all, where the farmer wants him to go. One may interpret this line in two ways, as the horse resisting, or as the horse struggling to comply with the father's "clicking tongue."
In the second, third, and fourth lines Heaney uses the technique of alliteration, in this case, of the S sound. The words, "sail," "strung," "shafts," "strained," and "shoulders," come in quick succession giving a flow to these three lines. This technique is used to mirror the movement of the plow itself as it slides through the ground.
While the first and third lines are only a very slight slanting rhyme, depending on the vowels of the words "plough" and "furrow." The perfect rhymes at the end of the second and fourth lines, "strung" and "tongue," are strong.

Stanza Two

Lines 1-2

An expert. He would set the wing
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.
The second stanza gives little room for interpretation regarding the skill level of the father. The son or the speaker immediately refers to him as "An expert" in the first line. The next few lines add another few technical farming terms into the description of the scene. The use of these words that today, will not be known to many, but very well known to few, lend an additional element of realism to this piece. The speaker respects his father immensely, considering him an expert behind the plow. He describes the specifics of his father's job in a way that allows the reader to understand that his father's job took more than just back-breaking hard work. It took skill as well.
The speaker refers to "wing," the "steel-pointed sock," the "sod," and "headrig." These terms will be broken down throughout each line. The next lines of the poem incorporate these terms and go into deep detail on the processes, and pieces, of plowing.
The first line of this stanza ends with a reference to "the wing." The father is described as setting "the wing," and fitting the "bright steel-pointed sock." These pieces of the plow are those that do the actual digging in the ground.

Lines 3-4

The sod rolled over without breaking.
At the headrig, with a single pluck

The speaker describes the finesse behind plowing in a way that would roll the sod without breaking it and makes the single straight lines in the field with the first attempt. This description continues to characterize the speaker as a man who takes pride in his work, is dedicated, and works hard day in and day out. The reader can quickly begin to acquire the same respect for this man that his son has for him.
However, here the speaker remarks his father sets the “wing” and “steel-pointed sock” so efficiently that “The sod rolled over without breaking.”
The final line of the second stanza leads into the third and the speaker draws attention to the “headrig.” This refers to the starting point of each plowed line, continuing into the third stanza this thought is finished.
The slanting rhyme is stronger in this stanza with the second and fourth line ending words, “sock” and “pluck,” coming very close to rhyming due to the organization of the consonance. Just as in the first stanza, the first and third line end words are a perfect rhyme.

Stanza Three

Lines 1-2

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye
The first line of the third stanza continues the thought started in the second in which the speaker is describing how his father “At the headrig, with a single pluck/ Of reins, the sweating team turned round/ And back into the land.”
More simply, the speaker is taking advantage of the term, “headrig” and giving the reader an image of the “team,” his father and the horse, taking a turn at the end of a row. Again the father’s skill is demonstrated as with only a “pluck” of the reins he can control the horse.
To sum up, in these two lines of ‘Follower’, the speaker continues to describe the work his father did, and the way that he and the horse were together “the sweating team”. His sweat went back into the land, so he put his sweat into his work quite literally. In the next two lines, the speaker’s father was also “mapping the furrow exactly”. Therefore, this description continues the characterization of the speaker’s father as hard-working and skilled.

Lines 3-4

(...)
Mapping the furrow exactly.
The last two lines of the third stanza describe the determination in his father’s eyes and the set of his body. This narrator is in awe of the power and ability that his father possesses. His father maps “the furrow exactly” knowing where and what to do.
Apart from that, this stanza continues the same rhyming pattern found in the second stanza. The first and third ending words rhyme perfectly, “round” and “ground.” While the second and fourth end words are slanting rhymes, “eye” and “exactly,” this time more dependent on the vowels than the consonance.

Stanza Four

Lines 1-2

I stumbled in his hobnailed wake,
(…)
At this point in the poem, ‘Follower’ the narration takes a turn. The speaker now takes on the first-person perspective using words such as, “I” and “my.” He begins this half of the poem by contrasting his missteps to the skill his father possesses. He “stumbled in his hobnailed wake,/ Fell sometimes on the polished sod.”
His clumsy, amateur mistakes are a point of embarrassment to the speaker. He is taking off-balance steps in the holes made by his father’s own feet, and is falling on the sod that has just been plowed to a “polish.”
With this stanza, the speaker reveals that he is different from his father. Although he admires him greatly and tries to be like him, he seems to stumble around behind him, and he sometimes “fell…on the polished sod”.

Lines 3-4

(...)
Dipping and rising to his plod.
While the speaker may be embarrassed, the father does not seem to mind his mistakes and carries his son around on his back. The speaker describes this motion of being a part of his father, the “dipping” and “rising” he experienced as his father plowed.
Reading these lines, it also appears that, at times, the speaker was allowed to ride on his father’s back as he worked. This gives further insight into both the father and the son. The son, on one hand, did not seem to be inclined to the same kind of work his father seemed to love and thrive in.
His father, however, was devoted to his son enough to take on the extra weight of the boy riding on his back as he plowed the land. This reveals a devoted father and an admiring son, different as they may be.
In this stanza, the first and third end words make a slant rhyme, “wake” and “back.” While the second and fourth make a perfect rhyme with “sod” and “plod.”

Stanza Five

Lines 1-2

I wanted to grow up and plough,
(…)
The fifth quatrain of this poem, ‘Follower’ speaks on the boy’s wishes for his future. The speaker reveals his childhood desires here, claiming that he “wanted to grow up and plough” and to be just like his dad. He wanted “to close one eye” as he focused on the detailed parts of farming life. Besides, he wanted to “stiffen [his] arm” as he went behind the plow. To summarize, he wants to emulate his father perfectly, plowing just as he did with one of his eyes closed, and a stiff arm.
The rhyme for the overall stanza is the same as the previous with the first and third lines rhyming only partially with “plough” and “follow.” While the second and fourth lines are perfect rhymes with, “arm” and “farm.”

Lines 3-4

(…)
In his broad shadow round the farm.

This stanza concludes with a statement from the boy that alludes to the inferiority he may have felt around his father. The speaker reveals that he never did grow up to be a farmer. He admits, “All I ever did was follow/ In his broad shadow round the farm” meaning that he never did tend the farm by himself.
This implies that the speaker grew up to do something other than farming, even though he had always wanted to be like his father. It appears that he had always known that he was inherently different and not meant to be a farmer.
Each time the speaker describes the father he is only spoken of in the best and strongest of terms, this time, “broad.” He is more than a father figure, he’s closer to an embodiment of the kind of person this speaker wants to be.

Stanza Six

Lines 1-2

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
(…)
The final stanza of ‘Follower’ brings the narrative to a close and makes a tight loop on all of the desires professed by the son. He describes once more his actions as a child, how he “was a nuisance, tripping, falling,/ Yapping always.”
When the speaker looks back on his life, he realizes that as much as he admired his father, he was always more of a nuisance when he tried to help, always tripping and falling and “yapping”. Looking back, he was aware that he never could have made the kind of farmer that his dad was. He made his way, however, and his father’s work ethic and drive did influence him as he found his path in life.
In the following lines, the tables are going to turn. Even though the speaker did not exactly follow in his father’s footsteps, he was still greatly influenced by his father’s example in his life.

Lines 3-4

(…)
Behind me, and will not go away
He is no longer this boy though, now he has become the man that his father follows. The father now looks to his son as someone he is proud of and depends on, just as the speaker did when he was young. It is now his father behind him, “and will not go away.”
Now, as an adult, the speaker is the one to whom his father looks up. In whatever the speaker has found to do in life, it is now his father who looks up to him. His father is not experienced in his son’s profession, and yet he takes an interest and “keeps stumbling” around behind him.
In this turn of events, the two have switched roles. The father, now perhaps too old to farm, has taken an interest in his son’s life, and the son can experience some of what his father had felt.
The speaker says that his father, “will not go away” but the tone of the poem and this line is one of soft reminiscence, and so it seems as though he says this is a good-natured way, and that he rather enjoys the way his father shows exceeding interest in his life.
Just as the father did not mind his son following him, so too the speaker treats his much older father. The whole narrative has come full circle leaving the reader with both a hopeful and solemn message. Hopeful, that one may become more than they currently are, and solemn that even when one is strong beyond measure, they may become weaker and dependent on others.

Historical Context

Seamus Heaney's one of the best-known poems, 'Follower' was published in the book of poetry, "Death of a Naturalist" in 1966. To know the context of the poem, one has to be aware of Heaney's early life. He was born and brought up at his family farmhouse called Mossbawn. Being the first of nine children in his family, he was close to his father, Patrick Heaney who was a farmer.
When he used to go a-plowing, his eldest son, Seamus followed him to his land. What the poet observed on the field, he wrote in this poem. This poem not only contains the scenic description of the plot, rather it is about his father. Therefore, here, he details his father's agile movements that stroke him the most when he was a child. His father appeared to him as an awe-inspiring figure who taught him many lessons through his commitment to his work.

Exam Style Questions

Essay-Style Questions

1. How does Heaney explore admiration and changing relationships in *Follower*? Refer closely to the poem's language and structure.
2. Discuss how Heaney uses structure and form in *Follower* to reflect the relationship between father and son.
3. How does *Follower* reflect themes of identity, childhood, and the passing of time?

Comparative Questions

4. Compare how the relationship between parent and child is presented in *Follower* and one other poem you have studied.
5. Compare how the poets explore the theme of admiration in *Follower* and *Piano* by D.H. Lawrence (or any relevant comparative poem).

Storyteller by Liz Lochead

she sat down
at the scoured table
in the swept kitchen
beside the dresser with its cracked delft.
And every last crumb of daylight was salted away.

No one could say the stories were useless
for as the tongue clacked
five or forty fingers stitched
corn was grated from the husk
patchwork was pieced
or the darning was done.

Never the one to slander her shiftless.
Daily sloven or spotless no matter whether
Dishwater or tasty was her soup.
To tell the stories was her work.
It was like spinning,
gathering air to the single strongest
thread. Night in
she'd have us waiting, held
breath, for the ending we knew by heart.

And at first light
as the women stirred themselves to build the fire
as the peasant's feet felt for clogs
as thin grey light washed over flat fields
the stories dissolved in the whorl of the ear
but they
hung themselves upside down
in the sleeping heads of the children
till they flew again
in the storytellers night.

Summary

'Storyteller' by Liz Lochead describes the impact of a storyteller whose stories influence all those who hear them. In this poem, the speaker begins by describing the setting where a storyteller is sitting by

a dresser. The tales the storyteller tells are not just entertainment, the speaker suggests. Instead, they are part of daily life. As she speaks, the others who are working on sewing, cooking, etc, are listening. Despite the storyteller's modest circumstances, she is never praised or criticized. The poet suggests that the storyteller's primary value lies in her storytelling. She spins stories as someone spins yarn. It's one that uses lyrical and figurative language in order to remind readers how important stories are for those who hear them, enjoy them, and even those who tell them. They are a source of meaning, a way to understand the world, and a long-lasting form of entertainment. For the characters in this poem, the stories are highly influential and maintain their meaning throughout the day.

Structure and Form

'Storyteller' by Liz Lochead is a four-stanza poem that's written in free verse and uses varied stanzas of different lengths. For example, stanza one is five lines long, stanza two is six lines long, stanza three is nine lines long, and stanza four is ten lines long.

This piece is written in free verse. This means that the poet chose not to use a specific rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. The lines end in very different end sounds. For example, "down," "table," "kitchen," and "delft" are seen in the first stanza.

Literary Devices

In this poem, the poet makes use of a few different literary devices. For example:

1. Enjambment: this literary device is seen when the poet cuts off a line before its natural stopping point. For example, the transition between lines one, two, three, and four in stanza one.
2. Sibilance: this occurs when the poet repeats the same "s" sound multiple times within a poem. For example, "she sat" in stanza one.
3. Alliteration: this is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of multiple lines. For example, "five or forty fingers" in stanza one.
4. Personification: This can be seen when the poet describes the storyteller's stories with human-specific language.
5. The diction Lochhead employs is archaic, drawn from the world of fairy stories: 'delft' is a Scottish dialect word for clay pottery; 'swept kitchen' alludes faintly to the story of Cinderella; 'dresser' is an old-fashioned word. Lochhead writes in the literary tradition of magical realism.

Stanza One

"she sat down - salted away."

In the first stanza of this poem, the speaker begins by describing the setting. The storyteller, only referred to as "she," sits down at a table in the clean and "scoured" kitchen next to a dresser that's covered in "cracked deft," a reference to a specific kind of pottery. To make the scene more intense, the speaker also depicts the sun setting. It's the last few moments of the day before it's clearly nighttime. The lines imply that this is the perfect setting for storytelling. It's in the next lines that the poet starts describing what these stories were like and why they were so impactful.

Stanza two

"No one could say - darning was done"

In the second stanza, the speaker says that everyone agrees that the stories are purposeful. They had a value in and of themselves. The next lines list out what those listening to the stories were

doing. Everyone was doing a specific kind of work. Some were stitching, some were cooking, and some were cleaning.

These daily tasks are interwoven with the act of storytelling. This implies that storytelling is just as important as any of these acts the speaker is describing.

Stanza three

“Never the one - knew by heart”

In the third stanza, the speaker continues to build on the character of the storyteller. She was someone above petty judgments and concerns about her appearance. The speaker indicates that she had more important things to focus on. Her cooking wasn’t great, the poet adds, and was irrelevant, especially in comparison to her storytelling. The poet goes on to describe how storytelling was more than a way to pass the time; it was an art form. It was her craft like spinning thread. She turns nothing into something important and useful. Every night, the poet says, those who were there to listen to her stories would wait until she was ready. Although they knew the “ending…by heart,” they were still filled with joy and anticipation while waiting for her to start speaking. In these lines, readers can see how important the storytelling is to those who were a part of it. It was an element of their daily lives that was highly valuable to them.

Stanza four

“And at first light - in the storytellers night.

In the final section of the poem, the speaker takes readers to the next morning when everyone is waking up to start a new day. The poet uses anaphora in these lines to create a sense of repetition. The same things happen in the same way every morning. The stories from the night before disappeared to a degree during the day, but they came back every night. In these lines, the speaker depicts the stories as having an everlasting impact. They hung upside down in the heads of children until they flew again, like bats, at night. This is a wonderful example of a metaphor that leaves readers with the space to consider how important the stories were to those who heard them. In the final section of the poem, the speaker takes readers to the next morning when everyone is waking up to start a new day. The poet uses anaphora in these lines to create a sense of repetition. The same things happen in the same way every morning. The stories from the night before disappeared to a degree during the day, but they came back every night. In these lines, the speaker depicts the stories as having an everlasting impact. They hung upside down in the heads of children until they flew again, like bats, at night. This is a wonderful example of a metaphor that leaves readers with the space to consider how important the stories were to those who heard them.

Exam Style Questions

1. How does Liz Lochhead present the power and influence of storytelling in *The Storyteller*? Support your ideas with close reference to the poem.
2. Explore how *The Storyteller* captures the magic of memory and the act of listening. How does the poet use language and structure to convey this?
3. How does Lochhead use contrast between the storyteller’s world and the children's world to highlight the role of imagination?
4. Compare how memory and childhood are explored in *The Storyteller* and *Follower* by Seamus Heaney.
5. Compare the role of imagination in *The Storyteller* and one other poem you have studied. How do the poets use language to express this theme?

Before the Sun by Charles Mungoshi

Intense blue morning
promising early heat
and later in the afternoon,
heavy rain.

The bright chips
fly from the sharp ax
for some distance through the air,
arc,
and eternities later,
settle down in showers
on the dewy grass.

It is a big log:
but when you are fourteen
big logs
are what you want.

The wood gives off
a sweet nose-cleansing odor
which (unlike sawdust)
doesn't make one sneeze.

It sends up a thin spiral
of smoke which later straightens
and flutes out
to the distant sky: a signal
of some sort,
or a sacrificial prayer.

The wood hisses,
The sparks fly.

And when the sun
finally shows up
in the East like some
latecomer to a feast

I have got two cobs of maize
ready for it.

I tell the sun to come share
with me the roasted maize
and the sun just winks
like a grown-up.

So I go ahead, taking big
alternate bites:
one for the sun,
one for me.
This one for the sun,
this one for me:
until the cobs
are just two little skeletons
in the sun.

Summary

Before the Sun is a reflective and nostalgic poem in which Boey Kim Cheng recalls a moment from his youth when he helped his father prepare for work before dawn. The poem paints a vivid picture of a quiet, intimate routine—sharpening tools, cleaning shoes, and silently working together in the dim light before sunrise.

This daily ritual becomes a symbol of respect, love, and admiration for his father, who is portrayed as hardworking, humble, and dignified. The poem captures the warmth of their relationship without the need for words. The father's dedication and silent strength deeply influence the speaker, who looks back on the moment with reverence.

As the sun begins to rise, it signifies not only the start of another laborious day for his father but also a growing understanding in the son of the depth of his father's sacrifice. The poem is both a tribute to the father and a meditation on memory, labor, and familial love.

Feature	Example	Effect / Explanation
Meter / Rhythm	Free verse (no regular meter or rhyme)	Mimics the natural rhythm of memory and reflection; adds realism and intimacy.

Imagery (Visual)	"The blade / honed to a fine / edge"	Vividly depicts routine tasks; reflects precision and respect for work.
Tactile Imagery	"The leather of the belt / is warm with your body heat"	Suggests closeness and warmth in their relationship; evokes sensory memory.
Metaphor	"You wore the sun on your back"	Implies hard work under the sun; symbolic of burden, strength, and endurance.
Enjambment	Used throughout the poem	Creates a flowing, meditative tone; reflects continuity of memory and thought.
Tone	Quiet, reverent, reflective	Shows deep admiration for the father; creates emotional intimacy.
Alliteration	"blade / honed to a fine / edge"	Enhances sound and rhythm; draws attention to the care in sharpening and memory.
Symbolism	"Sun" as a symbol of labor and life	Represents both the physical challenge of work and the constancy of the father's effort.
Contrast	Silence of the scene vs. the inner emotion	Highlights the unspoken bond and the quiet depth of their connection.
Structure	Single stanza, irregular line lengths	Reflects memory as a continuous, flowing experience; no clear breaks or interruptions.

Personification	"Before the sun / touched the rooftops"	Gives the sun a gentle, active role; adds to the poem's lyrical quality.

Themes

Father–Son Relationship	**Topic Sentence:** Boey Kim Cheng explores the quiet yet powerful bond between father and son through shared morning rituals. **Evidence & Analysis:** The son watches and assists his father in a wordless routine — sharpening blades, cleaning shoes, and preparing for the day. The line "the leather of the belt is warm with your body heat" shows the physical closeness and the emotional intimacy they share, even without dialogue. This portrays a relationship built on respect, habit, and silent understanding rather than spoken affection.
Admiration and Respect	**Topic Sentence:** The speaker expresses deep admiration for his father's dedication and strength, portraying him almost heroically. **Evidence & Analysis:** The metaphor "you wore the sun on your back" suggests a burden carried with grace and perseverance. It elevates the father's labor to something noble and dignified, showing how the son reveres his father not just for what he does, but for how he does it — quietly, consistently, and without complaint.
Memory and Nostalgia	**Topic Sentence:** The poem is suffused with nostalgia, as the speaker reflects on a meaningful moment from his youth. **Evidence & Analysis:** Boey uses vivid sensory imagery — the sound of the whetstone, the feel of the belt, the light before sunrise — to recreate a moment long past. The use of free verse and enjambment mirrors the natural flow of memory. This nostalgic tone allows the reader to feel the speaker's yearning for a time when life was simpler and relationships more grounded.
Hard Work and Silent Masculinity	**Topic Sentence:** The father's character embodies a quiet form of masculinity grounded in labor, routine, and responsibility. **Evidence & Analysis:** The tools and preparations before sunrise represent his role as a provider. The absence of words and the focus on action suggest that strength is shown not through dominance or power, but through quiet commitment. This challenges loud, traditional notions of masculinity and celebrates a subtler, more enduring model.

Critical Analysis
Boey Kim Cheng's *Before the Sun* is a tender and reflective poem that captures a poignant childhood memory of the speaker's father preparing for work before dawn. Through rich sensory imagery and a quiet, introspective tone, the poem becomes both a **tribute to paternal love** and a **meditation on memory, labor, and unspoken connection**.

The poem opens in **medias res**, with the son observing his father in the pre-dawn light, creating a still, sacred atmosphere. The poet uses **free verse** and **enjambment** to mirror the natural, flowing rhythm of memory. The absence of a fixed rhyme scheme adds to the realism, emphasizing that this is not a polished or dramatized event, but a lived and deeply felt recollection.

One of the poem's most powerful techniques is its **sensory detail**. Visual and tactile imagery — such as "the leather of the belt / is warm with your body heat" — draws the reader into the physical closeness of the moment. It is not just a description of routine but an evocation of **love expressed through action**, not words. The **father's silence** is meaningful: it reflects his humility, his groundedness, and the strength he conveys through action rather than language.

The **metaphor** "you wore the sun on your back" is especially significant. It transforms the literal image of his father walking out into the day into a symbolic one: his father carries the weight of labor, of life itself. The sun becomes a symbol of both **burden and purpose** — something endured with quiet grace.

Structurally, the poem is **one continuous stanza**, reinforcing the flow of time and memory. The poet captures a fleeting moment that lingers in the speaker's mind, suggesting that such memories define and shape identity. The final image of the father leaving the house as the sun rises is deeply moving: it signals both the beginning of another hard-working day and the son's growing understanding of what his father's actions truly meant.

At its heart, *Before the Sun* is a **meditative elegy** to a father whose love was never declared but always shown. Boey Kim Cheng captures the **beauty of simplicity**, the strength in silence, and the enduring nature of love rooted in care, ritual, and respect. It is a poem of **deep emotional restraint**, yet its understated tenderness resonates with anyone who has looked back and realized the weight of unnoticed love.

Exam Style Questions

"You sharpen the blade, / whet it on the stone / with a precise rhythm…"
Q1. How does Boey Kim Cheng use imagery and language in this extract to convey admiration for the father?
"You wore the sun on your back, / the earth heeled under, / took the road…"
Q2. How does the poet use metaphor and symbolism in this extract to explore themes of work and sacrifice?
Q3. How does Boey Kim Cheng explore memory and respect for the father in *Before the Sun*? Refer closely to the poet's use of language and structure.
Q4. In what ways does *Before the Sun* celebrate ordinary routines and silent expressions of love?
Q5. Discuss how Boey Kim Cheng presents the theme of hard work in *Before the Sun*. How does the poet's choice of form contribute to this message?
Q6. Compare how parent-child relationships are explored in *Before the Sun* and *Follower* by Seamus Heaney.
Q7. Compare how *Before the Sun* and one other poem you have studied explore the theme of memory and its emotional impact.

A Married State by Katherine Philips

A married state affords but little ease:
The best of husbands are so hard to please
This in wifes Carefull faces you may spell,
Tho they desemble their misfortunes well
A virgin state is crown'd with much content,
It's allways happy as it's inocent
No Blustering husbands to create your fears,
No pangs of child birth to extort your tears,
No children's crys for to offend your ears,
Few worldly crosses to distract your prayers
Thus are you freed from all the cares that do
Attend on matrymony and a husband too.
Therefore, madam, be advised by me:
Turn, turn apostate to love's Levity.
Suppress wild nature if she dare rebell,
There's no such thing as leading Apes in hell.

Summary

The poem begins by declaring marriage offers little comfort, with even the best husbands being difficult to please. The speaker then contrasts this with the contentment of virginity, listing various troubles that unmarried women avoid: demanding husbands, childbirth pains, crying children, and worldly distractions from prayer. The poem concludes with direct advice to “madam” to reject love’s fickleness, suggesting that remaining single is preferable to the traditional warning that unmarried women would “lead apes in hell.” What makes ‘A Married State’ so striking is how it uses a calm, measured tone to present a serious challenge to traditional ideas about marriage. The poem feels controlled and deliberate, which matches the speaker’s steady refusal to idealize married life. Each couplet builds on the last, creating a strong, reasoned warning rather than an emotional outburst. The speaker’s voice feels grounded in experience, making the advice more persuasive. What stays with me is how the poem quietly defends independence in a time that rarely allowed women to choose it.

Structure, Meter and Rhyme

Written in strict iambic pentameter throughout, ‘A Married State‘ consists of sixteen lines organized in rhyming couplets, with a unique extension where the same B rhyme returns in the final couplet, creating a frame for the argument. This structured regularity reinforces the speaker’s authoritative tone and controlled argument. The meticulous construction – combining unvaried iambic pentameter with consistently rhyming couplets – provides a formal, reasoned quality to what is essentially a subversive message against marriage.

Line by Line Analysis

1-2

“A married state affords but little ease
The best of husbands are so hard to please.”

The opening lines of A Married State by Katherine Philips reveals a rather negative outtake on marriage. While the majority of young girls dream about their wedding day, few think about the

realities of what marriage really means. Many poems were written about love. They contain romanticized notions of marriage. These opening lines contradict the theory that marriage is happily ever after. In fact, right away the speaker lets the readers know that it is not easy being married. She claims that being a married woman “affords but little ease”. She also makes the proclamation that even the best of husbands cannot make marriage easy, for they “are so hard to please”. It becomes clear at this point in A Married State that the speaker believes that her job in marriage is the please her husband, and she clearly believes that he is hard to please.

3-4
“This in wives’ careful faces you may spell
Though they dissemble their misfortunes well.”

With these lines, the speaker reveals that this unfortunate circumstance is one that is a well-kept secret. She suggests that new wives hide their disappointment, and hide it well. She also suggests that marriage is in fact a “misfortune”. However, she also implies that the discontent can be seen on the faces of wives. If only people would look more closely, they would see that the faces of wives are “careful”. The speaker does not reveal exactly what she means by the use of the word “careful” to describe the faces of the wives, but readers can gather from the context of A Married State, that the wives are very careful never to let the disappointment show on their faces.

5-6
“This in wives’ careful faces you may spell
Though they dissemble their misfortunes well.”

With these lines, the speaker reveals that this unfortunate circumstance is one that is a well-kept secret. She suggests that new wives hide their disappointment, and hide it well. She also suggests that marriage is in fact a “misfortune”. However, she also implies that the discontent can be seen on the faces of wives. If only people would look more closely, they would see that the faces of wives are “careful”. The speaker does not reveal exactly what she means by the use of the word “careful” to describe the faces of the wives, but readers can gather from the context of A Married State, that the wives are very careful never to let the disappointment show on their faces.

7-8

“No blustering husbands to create your fears;
No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears;”

With these lines, the speaker explains her reasons for making such a claim as she made in lines five and six. She explains that “blustering husbands” actually “create…fears” in their wives. She also goes on to explain the “pangs of childbirth”. The speaker does not mention childbirth as miraculous and joyful as many women do. Rather, she presents the other side of this experience and paints a picture of a woman in the pangs of childbirth, crying tears of pain. The use of the word “your” in line eight allows the reader to step into this position. A Married State, in fact, seems to be written for the sake of virgins who pine for marriage. Here, the speaker explains that they will live in fear of their husbands, and will have to experience the pain of childbirth which will “extort [their] tears”. She does not mention any of the joys of childbirth or marriage. Perhaps this is because she has not experienced joy in either marriage or childbirth, or perhaps this is because she believes that virgins have heard enough about the joys and not enough about the pain and the fear. For whatever reason, the speaker leaves out any trace of joy in marriage or childbirth and focuses on the physical and emotional pain that both bring about.

9-10

“No children’s cries for to offend your ears;
Few worldly crosses to distract your prayers:”

In these lines, the speaker continues to describe marriage and the result of marriage: motherhood. She does not speak of the joy that her children bring to her. Rather, she tells those young virgins that if they remain single, they will never have to hear “children’s cries to offend [their] ears”. Then, the speaker references the Bible in her pleas with virgins to remain single. She claims that without a husband, there are “few worldly crosses to distract your prayers”. This inadvertently corresponds to 1 Corinthians 7:8 which says, “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” It would seem that the speaker is only able to understand the truth of those words when it is too late.

11-12
“Thus are you freed from all the cares that do
Attend on matrimony and a husband too.”

In these lines, the speaker continues on the theme of the freedom that comes with the single life. She explains that an unmarried woman is “freed from all the cares that do attend on matrimony and a husband too”. Thus, rather than viewing marriage as something to be sought after, the speaker views it as something to be given up in favor of the freedom offered by the single life.

13-14
“Therefore Madam, be advised by me
Turn, turn apostate to love’s levity,”

Until this point in A Married State, the speaker has pointed out all of the difficulties of marriage, but she had not outrightly advised against it. Therefore, the reader could still wonder whether the speaker would shift tone and begin to expound upon the blessings of marriage. She does not. In these lines, she explicitly advises her single counterparts against marrying. She blatantly asks them to “turn apostate to love’s levity”, which means to turn against the idea that love is a frivolous or light matter. She asks the single women in her audience to renounce love and to give up the idea of marriage in favor of the single life of a virgin.

15-16
“Suppress wild nature if she dare rebel.
There’s no such thing as leading apes in hell.”

With these closing lines, the speaker leaves the reader wondering what her exact meaning really is. It is clear that she calls her single counterparts to suppress any sexual feeling that may arise within them. She calls sexual desire “wild nature” and pleads with virgins to suppress her “if she dare rebel”. The last line of A Married State is vague. Reader’s wonder what the “apes” refer to and why it matters that there is no “leading [them] in hell”. It is possible the speaker views marriage as leading her husband, and then claims that there is no marriage in hell, and so there will be no need to lead her husband there. It is also possible that “ape” refers to the wild sexual desire she referred to in line fifteen. In this case, the last line would mean that there is no sex in hell.

It is interesting that she uses the term “hell” rather than “heaven” for it would seem that both would make her point. After all, the Bible does say that there is no marriage of man and wife in heaven. It is also implied that there is no sexual intercourse in heaven. Therefore, it is possible that the speaker intends to proclaim not only her contempt for marriage but also her lack of belief in God. She must conclude that this will result in her going to hell, if there is such a place. Therefore, she ends her poem by stating that her single counterparts should refrain from marrying because it will only cause

discontent on earth, and because there is no marriage in hell, the place she believes she will be going if there is such a thing as an afterlife.

Themes

As a Representative of Reality	The poem revolves around the dangers awaiting women if they marry. The speaker tells the readers that it is not easy being married, and she supports her argument by providing relatable examples. She believes that one cannot please even the best husband and those who try, end up in despair. It is because people start their journey having fictional views about marriage, but when they come out of this imaginative bubble, it becomes difficult for them to manage their discontent. Furthermore, the speaker compares a married woman with a virgin lady, believing a virgin lady enjoys more freedom as compared to the married one. For instance, they do not tend to please their aggressive or annoying husbands, and they do not face the pain-staking and childbirth experiences. To her, a virgin is blessed with a special kind of freedom. Therefore, she advises single women to abandon the idea of marriage and live their lives according to their wills. Keeping the afterlife in mind, she states there will be no marriage in hell.
Marriage as a Burden	**Point:** Katherine Philips presents marriage as a burdensome and oppressive state for women. **Evidence:** “No sooner match’d, but straight enslav’d.” **Explanation:** The use of the word “enslav’d” implies a loss of freedom and autonomy for women once they are married. Philips criticizes the institution as one-sided, where men retain freedom while women become bound by domestic duties. This harsh imagery challenges idealized views of marriage, especially in the 17th century when such critiques were rare from women
Female Independance	**Point:** The poem promotes single life as more peaceful and fulfilling than marriage. **Evidence:** “A single life doth equal pleasures bring.” **Explanation:** Philips reclaims singleness as a desirable state, not one of pity or failure. The phrase suggests that unmarried women enjoy equal, if not greater, pleasures than those in marital relationships — free from household burdens, childbirth, and subservience. This view would have been radical at the time, highlighting the poet’s proto-feminist stance.

Gender Inequality	**Point:** Philips critiques the unequal expectations placed on women within marriage. **Evidence:** "Marriage does but slightly tie men's hands, / But chains your feet and heart." **Explanation:** This comparison between the light binding of men and the heavy 'chains' on women reinforces the gendered imbalance in marriage. Men retain a degree of freedom, while women are emotionally and physically restricted, with the word "chains" symbolizing both emotional restraint and social oppression.

Analysis of Literary Devices Used in A Married State

Katherine Philips has used various literary devices to enhance the intended impacts of his poem. Some of the major literary devices are analyzed below.

1. Assonance: Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line such as the sound of /e/ in "Though they dissemble their misfortunes well" and the sound of /uh/ in "Turn, turn apostate to love's levity."
2. Alliteration: It is the use of consonant sounds in the initials of words falling close to each other such as /f/ in "Thus are you freed from all the cares."
3. Anaphora: It refers to the repetition of a word or expression in the first part of some verses. For example, 'no' is repeated in the middle of the poem to emphasize the point such as,

"No blustering husbands to create your fears;
No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears;
No children's cries for to offend your ears."

4. Consonance: Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as the sound of /th/ in "Though they dissemble their misfortunes well" and the sounds of /r/ and /s/ in "No blustering husbands to create your fears."
5. Enjambment: It is defined as a thought in verse that does not come to an end at a line break; rather, it rolls over to the next line. For example,
6. "A married state affords but little ease
   The best of husbands are so hard to please."
7. Imagery: Imagery is used to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. For example, "No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears", "There's no such thing as leading apes in hell" and "This in wives' careful faces you may spell."
8. Metaphor: It is a figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between the objects that are different. The poet has used marriage as an extended metaphor to show the bitter reality of this relationship.
9. Symbolism: Symbolism is using symbols to signify ideas and qualities, giving them symbolic meanings that are different from literal meanings. "Blustering husbands" and "pangs of childbirth" symbolize the grinding realities we have to face once we completely surrender ourselves to married life.

Analysis of Poetic Devices Used in A Married State

Poetic and literary devices are the same, but a few are used only in poetry. Here is the analysis of some of the poetic devices used in this poem.

Couplet: There are two constructive lines of verse in a couplet, usually in the same meter and joined by rhyme.

End Rhyme: End rhyme is used to make the stanza melodious. For example, “ease/please”, “ears/tears” and “do/too.”

Stanza: A stanza is a poetic form of some lines. There are sixteen lines in this poem with no stanza break.

Essay Style Questions

1. How does Katherine Philips use *A Married State* to explore the challenges faced by women in marriage? Refer closely to language, tone, and structure.
2. In what ways does *A Married State* present a cynical view of love and companionship?
3. Explore how Philips uses satire and irony in *A Married State* to challenge traditional views of marriage.
4. Compare how gender roles and expectations are explored in *A Married State* and *Follower* by Seamus Heaney (or any poem featuring family roles).
5. Compare the attitudes toward love and relationships in *A Married State* and one other poem you have studied. How do the poets use tone and structure to express their views?

Carpet Weavers, Morocco by Carol Rumens

The children are at the loom of another world.
Their braids are oiled and black, their dresses bright.
Their assorted heights would make a melodious chime.

They watch their flickering knots like television.
As the garden of Islam grows, the bench will be raised.
Then they will lace the dark-rose veins of the tree-tops.

The carpet will travel in the merchant's truck.
It will be spread by the servants of the mosque.
Deep and soft, it will give when heaped with prayer.

The children are hard at work in the school of days.
From their fingers the colours of all-that-will-be fly
and freeze into the frame of all-that-was.

Summary
Carol Rumens' 'Carpet-weavers, Morocco' simultaneously explores the sense of wonder and awe while also shining a light on child exploitation around the world. The poem, and the carpets made by the children, are examples of how incongruous it can be when beautiful things are born out of mistreatment and pain. The poem begins by describing the children at work where they make carpets. Rumens focuses on broad descriptions of their hair, clothes, and heights rather than describing any individuals in particular. As the poem progresses, Rumens' attention shifts to the carpets themselves and speculates as to where they will end up before returning to the children in the final stanza. These final lines are concerned with the children more broadly as the poet ponders their future prospects.

Context

Carol Rumens is a British poet who was born in London in 1944. In a long and varied career, she has published poems, novels, plays, and works of non-fiction. Her oeuvre is broad and lacks a single narrative thread as her interests have evolved over the decades in which she has been publishing work. Having traveled widely, Rumens' experiences of different environments and customs have influenced her work enormously. As a developing nation, the prevalence of child labor in Morocco is more common than in more economically developed countries.

Stana by Stanza

1	The children are at the loom of another world. Their braids are oiled and black, their dresses bright. Their assorted heights would make a melodious chime.

	Rumens begins the poem using a metaphor to describe the children “at the loom of another world.” This could have been intended to emphasize the differences between Morocco and the UK, where child labor is illegal. However, it could also be intended to showcase how, despite many readers’ aversion to child labor, they are able to create amazing and beautiful fabrics that seem almost mystical. Rumens juxtaposes the darkness of the children’s hair with the bright colors of their clothes as a microcosm of the poem’s central concern- there is both beauty and vitality alongside mistreatment and darkness. This notion is further reinforced by the reference to how the children could create a “melodious chime” which again speaks to the beauty and creativity that can emerge from unexpected places, even when there is pain and unfair treatment.
2	They watch their flickering knots like television. (…) Then they will lace the dark-rose veins of the tree-tops. The second stanza begins with a simile that likens the children’s work to watching television, an activity that children in more affluent nations would likely be more familiar with. Rumens thereby remind the reader that their perception of what is normal is actually very specific to them and their environment and is certainly not something they can universally apply. The reference to Islam is the first sign that the carpet will have some religious function, yet it also conflates the act of making the carpet with worship and devotion. Rumens could be using this reference to suggest that, through artistic creation, a person can become closer to the divine. Finally, the personification of the tree tops in the fabric imbues the carpet with life, further emphasizing the talent of the children who made it.
3	The carpet will travel in the merchant’s truck. (…) Deep and soft, it will give when heaped with prayer. The repetition of the word “will” suggests a degree of certainty concerning the eventual destination of the carpet once it is finished. It could be said that certainty is a pleasant, comfortable presence as it suggests familiarity and consistency. However, the unwavering nature of the description could also imply that the children are trapped in a system that they cannot influence. The use of sibilance in the second line evokes a sinister atmosphere to support this interpretation, as it reinforces the notion that the workers are being exploited.
4	The children are hard at work in the school of days. (…) and freeze into the frame of all-that-was. Rumens’ decision to refer to the “school of days” rather than the more common formulations ‘school-day’ or ‘day at school’ is significant. It implies that they are learning from the days themselves, as though the passage of time is their only teacher because they are working rather than actually attending school. The final two lines metaphorically situate the children at the epicenter of the passage of time, where they seemingly craft the future by permanently

	affixing it to the fabric. This incongruous ending creates an unsettling effect on the reader, who is unsure whether they ought to be outraged by the treatment of these children or impressed by their achievements. Ultimately, Rumens' poem encourages the reader to feel both.

Analysis of Literary Devices Used in Carpet-weavers, Morocco

Literary devices are tools that can transform simple poems into enchanting poetic pieces. Carol Rumens used various literary devices in the poem. The analysis is as follows.

1. Assonance: Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line, such as the sound of /i/ in "Deep and soft, it will give when heaped with prayer" and the sound of /uh/ in "The children are at the loom of another world."
2. Alliteration: Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line, such as the sound of /t/ in "the tree-tops."
3. Consonance: Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line, such as the sound of /r/ in "From their fingers the colours of all-that-will-be fly" and the sound of /f/ in "and freeze into the frame of all-that-was."
4. Enjambment: It is defined as a thought in verse that does not come to an end at a line break; rather, it rolls over to the next line. For example;

"From their fingers the colours of all-that-will-be fly
and freeze into the frame of all-that-was."

5. Irony: Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning. The writer used this device in the opening line of the poem while talking about the working children, such as "The children are at the loom of another world."
6. Imagery: Imagery is used to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. For example, "The carpet will travel in the merchant's truck", "Their braids are oiled and black, their dresses bright" and "Deep and soft, it will give when heaped with prayer."
7. Simile: It is a device used to compare a person or an object with something else to make the meanings clear to the readers. For example, "They watch their flickering knots like television."

Themes

Theme	Explanation	Supporting Evidence / Imagery
Child Labour	The poem critiques the use of children in intricate, exhausting craftwork.	"The children are at the loom of another world" – suggests loss of childhood.

Innocence vs. Oppression	The contrast between the children's youth and the demanding labor they face.	"Their flickering knots like television" – modern, playful simile in a grim setting.
Beauty vs. Suffering	The carpets are beautiful, yet the process of creating them is harsh and tiring.	"The colours of all-that-will-be-used are subdued to a mulberry hue."
Tradition and Culture	Reflects on how traditional crafts can mask exploitation.	"The children's foreheads are ribboned with the sacred thread."
Lack of Freedom	Children are bound to a system that denies them personal agency.	"They watch their flickering knots / like television."
Future and Fate	Suggests the children's futures are predetermined, tied to their labor.	"Their children's children will touch the rugs and say: 'This is prayer.'"

Critical Analysis of *Carpet-Weavers, Morocco* – Carol Rumens

Carol Rumens's Carpet-Weavers, Morocco offers a haunting portrayal of child labor masked behind the beauty of traditional craftsmanship. Through vivid imagery, symbolic language, and a quiet, detached tone, Rumens critiques a system that exploits children in the name of culture and economic survival.

The poem opens with the line:

"The children are at the loom of another world,"
immediately setting a surreal, almost otherworldly tone. This metaphor reflects how the children are removed from the reality of a normal childhood. They exist in a world of labor, tradition, and expectation — not play or freedom. The phrase "another world" also evokes spiritual or cultural symbolism, linking the carpets to religious or sacred practices, which contrasts sharply with the grim reality of the workers behind them.

Rumens employs visual and tactile imagery to describe the precision and delicacy of the children's work. For example,

"Their flickering knots like television"
suggests speed and repetition, while the simile ironically evokes a device of entertainment — which these children likely do not enjoy. This comparison brings modern, Western imagery into an ancient Eastern craft, creating a tension between global perceptions and local realities.

Throughout the poem, Rumens builds a quiet critique of childhood lost to labor. The children are described not as individuals but as collective parts of a system — their identities replaced by the function they serve. Their work is romanticized in the final lines, where it is revealed that:

“Their children’s children will touch the rugs and say: / ‘This is prayer.’”
This ending is deeply ironic. The carpets will be admired for their sacred or aesthetic value, yet no trace of the suffering and sacrifice of the children who wove them will remain. It’s a criticism of cultural commodification, where beauty is preserved but pain is forgotten.

The poem is structured in four unrhymed stanzas, mirroring the mechanical repetition of knotting carpets. The tone is restrained, almost observational — Rumens doesn’t dramatize the children’s plight but instead lets the imagery and subtle irony speak for itself. This quiet tone enhances the disturbing nature of what is being shown.

In essence, Carpet-Weavers, Morocco is a powerful and layered commentary on child exploitation, the illusion of cultural beauty, and the erasure of suffering from history. Through minimal yet rich poetic techniques, Rumens draws attention to those who remain unseen behind the luxuries the world admires.

Exam Style Questions

Q1. How does Carol Rumens present the theme of child labour in Carpet-Weavers, Morocco? Refer closely to the poem’s language, imagery, and tone.
Q2. Explore how Carpet-Weavers, Morocco portrays the contrast between beauty and oppression.

Q3. How does the poet use structure and symbolism to highlight the children's experiences in Carpet-Weavers, Morocco?

Q4. Compare how work and hardship are portrayed in Carpet-Weavers, Morocco and Before the Sun by Boey Kim Cheng.

Q5. Compare the presentation of innocence and experience in Carpet-Weavers, Morocco and another poem you have studied. Consider how imagery and tone are used in both.

Q6. Compare how the poets explore control or restriction in Carpet-Weavers, Morocco and A Married State by Katherine Philips.

Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Summary

The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer's day: he is "more lovely and more temperate." Summer's days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by "rough winds"; in them, the sun ("the eye of heaven") often shines "too hot," or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as "every fair from fair sometime declines." The final quatrain of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever ("Thy eternal summer shall not fade...") and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved's beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live "as long as men can breathe or eyes can see."

Analysis

This sonnet is certainly the most famous in the sequence of Shakespeare's sonnets; it may be the most famous lyric poem in English. Among Shakespeare's works, only lines such as "To be or not to be" and "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" are better-known. This is not to say that it is at all the best or most interesting or most beautiful of the sonnets; but the simplicity and loveliness of its praise of the beloved has guaranteed its place.

On the surface, the poem is simply a statement of praise about the beauty of the beloved; summer tends to unpleasant extremes of windiness and heat, but the beloved is always mild and temperate. Summer is incidentally personified as the "eye of heaven" with its "gold complexion"; the imagery throughout is simple and unaffected, with the "darling buds of May" giving way to the "eternal summer", which the speaker promises the beloved. The language, too, is comparatively unadorned

for the sonnets; it is not heavy with alliteration or assonance, and nearly every line is its own self-contained clause—almost every line ends with some punctuation, which effects a pause.

Read more about the weather and seasons as symbols.

Sonnet 18 is the first poem in the sonnets not to explicitly encourage the young man to have children. The “procreation” sequence of the first 17 sonnets ended with the speaker’s realization that the young man might not need children to preserve his beauty; he could also live, the speaker writes at the end of Sonnet 17, “in my rhyme.” Sonnet 18, then, is the first “rhyme”—the speaker’s first attempt to preserve the young man’s beauty for all time. An important theme of the sonnet (as it is an important theme throughout much of the sequence) is the power of the speaker’s poem to defy time and last forever, carrying the beauty of the beloved down to future generations. The beloved’s “eternal summer” shall not fade precisely because it is embodied in the sonnet: “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,” the speaker writes in the couplet, “So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

Themes	1. Poet contrast the imperfections of a summer’s day with the perfections of his patron/friend. 2. The fleeting nature of beauty and youth 3. Love and time – Love outlasts time 4. The immortality of poetry – poetry outlasts love and time. The immortality that the speaker offers the young person is the immortality of the memory of beauty and youthfulness. 5. Summer is a time of change and transcience, but art is timeless and permamnent/lasting. 6. Other: beauty, death, mortality, friendship.
Tone	1. Calm, victorious, triumphant, awestruck throughout. 2. Admiring / respectful 3. From line 9 onwards his tone is one of quiet conviction and confidence. 4. It becomes disparage/belittling when he addresses death.
Mood	1. Poem starts on a joyous mood. Speaker feels happy and enthusiastic about his beloved and the comparison he is about to create. 2. The use of ‘thee’ which was a word used for somebody you know really well, creates a mood and tone of gentleness, intimacy or closeness.

Analysis

1. The Central Comparison: Summer and the Beloved

The poem begins with the famous question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" This line sets up the central metaphor of the sonnet: comparing the beloved's beauty to a summer's day. Summer is traditionally associated with warmth, brightness, and beauty, but Shakespeare quickly moves to differentiate the beloved from summer in a number of ways. The answer to his question is not straightforward, as the poet immediately declares that the beloved is "more lovely and more temperate." "Thou art more lovely and more temperate" : The beloved is more beautiful and more gentle than a summer day. "Temperate" refers to being mild and moderate, suggesting that the beloved's beauty is not subject to the extremes and unpredictability of nature, like the summer weather.

2. The Impermanence of Summer

Shakespeare next highlights the limitations of summer. He explains that summer is fleeting and imperfect: "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May" : Summer can be disrupted by harsh winds that spoil the early bloom of flowers. The idea here is that beauty, like the spring season, is fragile and subject to forces beyond control. "Summer's lease hath all too short a date" : This line suggests that summer has a limited duration, just like human beauty and youth. "Lease" is a term used for renting, implying that summer, like everything in life, is temporary. "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines" : The "eye of heaven" refers to the sun, which can be too hot, just as beauty can be overwhelming or excessive. Sometimes the sun can be so strong that it's oppressive.

Sonnet 18 Analysis: Literary Devices

The poet adopts a thematic structure technique to express his lover's beauty. A line-by-line analysis of Sonnet 18 shows that the first stanza acts as an eye-opener of the poet's attempt to compare his lover with summer. He goes on to state why his lover is better. Stanzas 1-6 give a solid reason as to why one cannot compare his lover to summer. Though summer appears to be beautiful, it is not constant and can be very disappointing if solely relied upon. It also does not last as long as his lover's beauty would.

The stanzas give detailed answers to his rhetorical question posed at the beginning of the poem. The poet's praises and awe are well expressed in these stanzas by revealing all the beautiful qualities seized by his mistress. Her beauty is constant and can neither be shaken by strong winds nor can it become unpredictable like the hot sun. It doesn't waiver in the eyes of the beholder like the clouds swallow the summer hence losing its beauty.

Stanzas 7-14 indicates everlasting beauty, which he says cannot be claimed by anything, not even a natural calamity such as death. In the conclusion of the Sonnet 18, W. Shakespeare admits that 'Every fair from fair sometime decline,' he makes his mistress's beauty an exception by claiming that her youthful nature will never fade (Shakespeare 7). Interestingly, the author takes a different twist in the ending when he no longer compares the beauty to the summer but rather to the immortality of his poems (Shakespeare 14).

Symbolism and Imagery in the Sonnet 18

The poet uses metaphor and personification to bring life to the Sonnet 18. For example, he uses figurative speech to presume change, fate, and immortality. He speaks of how he will internally save his lover's beauty from fading from the face of the earth (Shakespeare 12). 'Summer' as a literary device is used to mean the life of the mistress that should be safe from fate. Fate, in this case, is portrayed by the use of scorching sun and rough winds.

The imagery of the Sonnet 18 includes personified death and rough winds. The poet has even gone further to label the buds as 'darling' (Shakespeare 3). Death serves as a supervisor of 'its shade,' which is a metaphor for 'after life' (Shakespeare 11). All these actions are related to human beings. 'Eternal lines to lines though growest' (Shakespeare 12) is a praise of the poet's poems which he says will last forever so long as 'men can breathe or eyes can see,' a metaphor symbolizing 'poet lovers' will be there to read them (Shakespeare 13).

He views beauty as an art that cannot diminish despite all the hurdles in life. However, beauty does not apply to everything but only to images that appeal more to the eyes of the beholder than nature itself. That kind of beauty is immortal and surpasses all tribulations caused by nature itself.

Literary Analysis of Sonnet 18: Conclusion

This essay on the Sonnet 18 by Shakespeare analyzed the poem's tone, imagery, meaning, and main themes. In summary, the poet is fascinated by his mistress's beauty, such that he cannot imagine that very beauty fading from his eyes. He argues that beauty is constant and, unlike a 'summer day,' is not affected by any changes or fate at all. He, however, seems to be praising his poem as characterized at the end of the poem, where he only compares the everlasting beauty to his text. The Sonnet eighteen's conclusion indicates that beauty can only end only when the poem ceases to exist.

Themes

Theme	Explanation	Supporting Evidence / Imagery
Love and Beauty	The speaker admires the subject's beauty and declares it greater than nature's.	"Thou art more lovely and more temperate" – compares the beloved to summer.
Immortality through Poetry	The poem asserts that written verse can preserve beauty forever.	"So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."
Time and Transience	While natural beauty fades, the poem preserves the beloved against time.	"Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May" – natural beauty is fragile.
Nature vs. Human Art	Nature is imperfect and changes, but poetry can capture and freeze perfection.	"Summer's lease hath all too short a date" – seasons are temporary.
The Power of Art and Language	Shakespeare presents poetry as a tool to overcome mortality.	"Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade" – defies death with verse.

Critical Analysis of *Sonnet 18* – William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18* is one of the most famous love poems in the English language. It begins with a rhetorical question — *"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"* — and then unfolds into an extended metaphor, ultimately praising the beloved's beauty and declaring its immortality through verse.

At first glance, the speaker compares the subject to a summer's day, a typical symbol of warmth and beauty. However, he quickly subverts the image:

“Thou art more lovely and more temperate.”
Here, the beloved is not just equal to summer, but superior. Summer is shown as inconsistent — it has *“rough winds,”* and its beauty fades too soon:
“Summer’s lease hath all too short a date.”
By contrast, the speaker claims that the beloved’s beauty is eternal and unchanging.

A central theme of the sonnet is the **transience of nature versus the permanence of art**. Time is personified as a destructive force, but the speaker’s poetry resists it. The line:

“Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade”
boldly claims that the beloved will not be claimed by death, thanks to the poem that will preserve them.

The sonnet ends with an emphatic couplet:

“So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”
Here, Shakespeare is confidently asserting the **immortality of poetry**. As long as the poem is read, the beauty it describes will live on.

The poem’s form — a **Shakespearean sonnet** (14 lines, iambic pentameter, and a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCDEFEFGG) — reflects its theme of structured, timeless beauty. The meter flows smoothly, and the controlled form mirrors the poet’s attempt to control time through language.

While the tone is affectionate and admiring, it is also **bold and self-assured**. Shakespeare is not only complimenting the beloved; he is celebrating the power of his own art. The poem becomes a dual tribute — to love, and to poetry itself.

Exam Style Questions

How does Shakespeare present the theme of immortality in *Sonnet 18*?

In what ways does the poet compare the beloved to nature, and with what effect?

Explore how Shakespeare uses language and structure to praise the subject’s beauty in *Sonnet 18*.

To what extent is *Sonnet 18* a celebration of poetry as much as of the beloved?

How does Shakespeare use imagery to contrast the permanence of poetry with the transience of life?

Hunting Snake by Judith Wright

Sun-warmed in this late season’s grace
under the autumn’s gentlest sky

we walked, and froze half-through a pace.
The great black snake went reeling by.

Head-down, tongue flickering on the trail
he quested through the parting grass;
sun glazed his curves of diamond scale,
and we lost breath to watch him pass.

What track he followed, what small food
fled living from his fierce intent,
we scarcely thought; still as we stood
our eyes went with him as he went.

Cold, dark and splendid he was gone
into the grass that hid his prey.
We took a deeper breath of day,
looked at each other, and went on.

Summary

The poem “Hunting Snake” by Judith Wright tells us about a surprising meeting with a snake during a walk in autumn. The poem describes how the poet and a friend see a large black snake moving through the grass. They are amazed and a bit scared as they watch the snake’s smooth, shiny scales and its graceful movement. The poem shows how the snake moves quickly and silently, and how it disappears into the grass. After seeing the snake, the poet and her friend take a deep breath and continue their walk, feeling a mix of wonder and awe.

→ Split into 2 parts according to emotion

Part 1: First 2 stanzas (admiration/fascination of the creature)

In the first two stanzas of the poem, the speaker expresses a sense of admiration and fascination towards the hunting snake. The imagery of the sun-warmed late season and the gentle autumn sky sets a serene backdrop for their encounter. As the snake glides past, its presence captivates the observer, who is mesmerized by its sleek movements and the glimmering diamond scales. The speaker is in awe, momentarily frozen in their tracks, as they witness the snake's graceful and powerful presence.

Part 2: Last 2 stanzas (curiosity/apprehension of the snake’s potential ferocity)

The last two stanzas shift the focus towards the curiosity and apprehension surrounding the snake's true nature. Although the observers are enamored by its beauty, they are also aware

of its predatory instincts. The snake's questing nature and the mention of its fierce intent raise questions about its purpose and the potential prey it seeks. Despite these thoughts, the observers remain intrigued, their eyes following the snake's path. As the snake disappears into the grass, a sense of unease lingers, and the observers take a deeper breath, reflecting a mix of curiosity and apprehension before continuing on their way.

Major Themes

The major themes in the poem "Hunting Snake" by Judith Wright include:

1. **Fascination with Nature:** The poem explores the speaker's admiration and fascination with the hunting snake. It reflects the awe-inspiring power and beauty of the natural world, highlighting the captivating allure of wild creatures.
2. **Coexistence of Beauty and Danger:** The poem juxtaposes the beauty of the snake with the potential danger it represents. It explores the complex relationship between admiration and apprehension, emphasizing the inherent risks and realities of the natural world.
3. **Human-Nature Connection:** The encounter with the snake prompts reflections on the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world. It raises questions about our place in nature, our curiosity about the wild, and the delicate balance between fascination and fear.
4. **Transience and Fragility:** The poem evokes a sense of the transient nature of life and the passing of seasons. It highlights the fleeting moments of observation and the fragility of existence, reminding us of the impermanence of experiences and encounters.
5. **Symbolism of the Snake:** The snake symbolizes both power and vulnerability. It represents primal instincts, the cycle of life and death, and the duality of nature. The snake serves as a metaphor for the broader themes explored in the poem.

Critical Analysis

"Hunting Snake" by Judith Wright is a contemplative and evocative poem that explores the encounter with a snake in nature. The poem highlights the complex emotions and thoughts that arise when faced with the presence of a wild creature.

The poem begins with vivid imagery of the late season and the gentle autumn sky, setting a tranquil atmosphere. The speaker's admiration and fascination with the hunting snake are evident as they describe its graceful movements and the glint of its diamond scales. The snake becomes a symbol of both beauty and power, captivating the observers and momentarily holding them in awe.

However, as the poem progresses, a subtle shift occurs. The focus turns to the curiosity and apprehension surrounding the snake's predatory nature. The questing tongue and the mention of its fierce intent hint at the snake's potential ferocity. The observers, while captivated by the snake's presence, also become aware of the possible danger it represents. This juxtaposition of admiration and apprehension adds

depth to the poem, prompting reflections on the coexistence of beauty and the harsh realities of the natural world.

Wright's skillful use of vivid imagery and sensory details allows readers to experience the encounter with the snake firsthand. The language is precise and evocative, drawing the reader into the scene and creating a sense of intimacy with the observations. The poem's structure, consisting of four stanzas with a consistent rhyme scheme, contributes to its lyrical quality and enhances the flow of the narrative.

Thematically, "Hunting Snake" explores the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. It invites contemplation on the delicate balance between fascination and fear, highlighting our inherent curiosity about the wild while acknowledging the potential risks and dangers it entails. The poem serves as a reminder of the awe-inspiring power of nature and our place within it.

In conclusion, "Hunting Snake" is a beautifully crafted poem that explores the intersection of admiration, curiosity, and apprehension in the face of the natural world. Judith Wright's skillful use of imagery and her thought-provoking portrayal of the encounter with the snake make this poem a captivating exploration of human emotions and our connection to the wild.

Language

• Past tense and 1st person plural suggesting that it is the persona's memory
• Very literal language, few language devices:
• Personification: 'season's grace'
• Hyperbole: 'sun glazed his curves of diamond scale'
• Juxtaposition: 'Cold, dark and splendid'

Repetition

• Repeating use of 'breath' for dramatic effect: 'we lost breath' and 'took a deeper breath'
• Repeating use of 'sun' for an affect of awe: 'sun-warmed' and 'sun glazed'
• Repeated focus on 'eyes' and 'watching': 'watch him pass', 'our eyes went with him' and 'looked at each other'

Structure

• Enjambment is evident in all stanzas
• Consistent rhyme scheme of ABAB until last stanza where it changes to ABBA
• Suggests that the whole experience with the snake was actually scary
• Interesting that it was realized after the snake disappeared
• The Poem is a 4 stanza ballad

Sound devices

• Alliteration: 'we walked', abundance of alliteration in 3rd stanza ('w' and 'f')
• Sibilance: 'scarcely thought; still as we stood' emphasis on the hissing of a snake
• Power of 3: 'Cold, dark and splendid'

Attitudes/feelings

• Main three persona impressions are Fascination, Admiration and Fear

- Fascinated by the snake: ‘lost breath to watch him pass’ and ‘great black snake’
- Curious of the snake’s path: ‘our eyes went with him’
- Admires the superficial beauty of the snake: ‘sun glazed his curves of diamond scale’ and ‘Cold, dark and splendid’
- Also in fear of the snake (apprehensive): ‘froze half-through a pace’ and ‘fierce intent’
- Marveled by the creatures presence

Literary Device	Example	Effect / Purpose
Alliteration	“sun glazed his curves of diamond scale”	Creates musicality and emphasises the snake’s beauty and danger.
Imagery	“great black snake went reeling by”	Vivid visual imagery conveys awe and fear.
Metaphor	“cold dark stare” (of the snake)	Suggests emotionless, threatening nature of the snake.
Enjambment	Throughout the poem	Mirrors the smooth, continuous movement of the snake.
Personification	“froze half-through a pace” (humans freezing in awe/fear)	Suggests human vulnerability and instinctive reaction.
Symbolism	The snake	Can represent nature’s power, danger, or even forbidden knowledge (Biblical allusion).
Tone shift	From admiration to fear	Reflects how nature can be both beautiful and deadly.
Caesura	“We walked, and froze.”	Abrupt break in rhythm emphasizes shock and sudden change in emotion.
Rhyme and Rhythm	Free verse, no fixed rhyme scheme	Reflects unpredictability of nature; organic feel.

1. **How does Judith Wright use imagery and structure to present the snake in *The Hunting Snake*?**
2. **In what ways does the poem explore human reactions to the natural world?**

3. **How does the poet present both beauty and danger in the description of the snake?**

Syllabus

Set texts for examination in 2026 – Paper 1

Section A: Poetry

Candidates answer on **one** set text in Section A (Poetry).

From *Songs of Ourselves Volume 1*, the following 15 poems:

Aphra Behn, 'Song: Love Armed'

Sujata Bhatt, 'A Different History'

William Blake, 'The Chimney-Sweeper'

Elizabeth Brewster, 'Where I Come From'

Boey Kim Cheng, 'Report to Wordsworth'

Gillian Clarke, 'Lament'

Kevin Halligan, 'The Cockroach'

Seamus Heaney, 'Follower'

Liz Lochhead, 'Storyteller'

Charles Mungoshi, 'Before the Sun'

Katherine Philips, 'A Married State'

Alexander Pope, From 'An Essay on Man'

Carol Rumens, 'Carpet-weavers, Morocco'

William Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 18'

Judith Wright, 'Hunting Snake'

These may be found in *Songs of Ourselves Volume 1: The University of Cambridge International Examinations Anthology of Poetry in English* (Cambridge University Press). Poems printed in the paper will be as printed in this text.

Section A: Poetry continued

From *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2*, Part 3, the following 15 poems:

Nancy Fotheringham Cato, 'The Road'
Sarah Jackson, 'The Instant of My Death'
Arun Kolatkar, 'The Bus'
Julius Chingono, 'At the Bus Station'
Imtiaz Dharker, 'These are the Times We Live in'
Elizabeth Jennings, 'The Enemies'
Sampurna Chattarji, 'Boxes'
W H Auden, 'The Capital'
Arthur Yap, 'an afternoon nap'
Elizabeth Smither, 'Plaits'
Elizabeth Daryush, 'Children of Wealth'
Thomas Love Peacock, 'Rich and Poor or, Saint and Sinner'
Musaemura Zimunya, 'A Long Journey'
Stevie Smith, 'Touch and Go'
George Szirtes, 'Song'

These may be found in *Songs of Ourselves Volume 2: The University of Cambridge International Examinations Anthology of Poetry in English* (Cambridge University Press). Poems printed in the paper will be as printed in this text.

Kayo Chingonyi, the following 15 poems:

The Colour of James Brown's Scream
Broomhall
The N Word (I.)
Waves
A Proud Blemish
Andrews Corner
'Round Midnight
This poem contains gull song
Fisherman's Song
Some Bright Elegance
Curfew
Kumukanda
Grief
Kung'anda
Baltic Mill

You can find these poems in *Kumukanda*, by Kayo Chingonyi (Chatto & Windus). Poems printed in the paper will be printed as in this text.

Set texts for examination in 2026 – Paper 1 continued

Section B: Prose

Candidates answer on one set text in Section B (Prose).

Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart*
Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice*
Anita Desai *Fire on the Mountain*
Kiran Desai *Hullaballoo in the Guava Orchard*
Susan Hill *I'm the King of the Castle*
Harper Lee *To Kill a Mockingbird*
H G Wells *The War of the Worlds*

From *Stories of Ourselves Volume 2*, the following 10 stories:

no. 3 Christina Rossetti, 'Nick'
no. 14 Olive Schreiner, 'The Woman's Rose'
no. 26 Ralph Ellison, 'The Black Ball'
no. 30 Mulk Raj Anand, 'The Gold Watch'
no. 35 Margaret Atwood, 'When It Happens'
no. 37 J G Ballard, 'The Man Who Walked on the Moon'
no. 38 Jamaica Kincaid, 'A Walk to the Jetty'
no. 40 Jane Gardam, 'Showing the Flag'
no. 47 Aminatta Forna, 'Haywards Heath'
no. 49 Romesh Gunesekera, 'Fluke'

This selection of 10 short stories may be found in *Stories of Ourselves Volume 2: The University of Cambridge International Examinations Anthology of Short Stories in English* (Cambridge University Press); passages from these stories in the paper will be printed as in this text.

Set texts for examination in 2026 – Paper 2

Candidates must answer on **two** different set texts from the following:

Pearl Cleage *Blues for an Alabama Sky*
Shelagh Delaney *A Taste of Honey*
William Shakespeare *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
William Shakespeare *Antony and Cleopatra*
Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*

4 Details of the assessment

Paper 1 – Poetry and Prose

1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This is a **compulsory** written paper. It is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge International.

Candidates answer **two** questions: one from Section A (Poetry) and one from Section B (Prose). All questions carry equal marks (25 marks each).

There is a choice of two questions on each text.

Relevant passages/poems are printed on the question paper.

Set texts for this component are listed in Section 3 of this syllabus.

Candidates may **not** take their set texts into the exam room.

All questions encourage an informed personal response and test all four assessment objectives.

Candidates will have to demonstrate the following:

- knowledge of the content of the text – through reference to detail and use of quotations from the text (AO1)
- understanding of characters, relationships, situations and themes (AO2)
- understanding of the writer's intentions and methods – response to the writer's use of language (AO3)
- personal response – sometimes directly (answering questions such as 'What do you think?', 'What are your feelings about …?') and sometimes by implication (answering questions such as 'Explore the ways in which …') (AO4).

Paper 2 – Drama

1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This is an **optional** written paper. It is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge International.

Candidates answer **two** questions on two texts. All questions carry equal marks (25 marks each).

There is a choice of two questions on each text: either (a) a passage-based question or (b) an essay question. Candidates must answer one passage-based question and one essay question.

Relevant passages are printed on the question paper.

Set texts for this component are listed in Section 3 of this syllabus.

Candidates may **not** take their set texts into the exam room.

All questions encourage an informed personal response and test all four assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1

Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary texts in the three main forms (drama, poetry and prose), supported by reference to the text.

AO2

Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.

AO3

Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects.

AO4

Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts.

Copy of Tab 1

Love Armed- Aphra Behn

Love in Fantastic Triumph sat,
Whilst Bleeding Hearts around him flowed,
For whom Fresh pains he did Create,
And strange Tyrannic power he showed;
From thy Bright Eyes he took his fire,
Which round about, in sport he hurled;
But 'twas from mine he took desire
Enough to undo the Amorous World.

From me he took his sighs and tears,
From thee his Pride and Cruelty;
From me his Languishments and Fears,
And every Killing Dart from thee;
Thus thou and I, the God have armed,
And set him up a Deity;
But my poor Heart alone is harmed,
Whilst thine the Victor is, and free.

Summary

The poem pictures love as a powerful, oppressive god who inflicts pain and suffering on those who fall in love. It is love who takes fire from the eyes of the speaker's beloved and any trace of desire from their very heart, using both to stir emotional turmoil in the world. They feel that their emotions, sighs, and tears have effectively armed love with the weapons to continue its domination and wounding of others.

While both the speaker and the beloved contribute to the power of love, the speaker feels they are the only ones who is experiencing the tyranny of love and suffering. Their love remains untouched by anger or torture. While their own heart bears the misery of love and brutality. Love is portrayed as a monstrous tyrant and there is absolute bleakness in the speakers heartache. Behn also manages to touch on the innate unfairness of heartbreak.

Themes

Tyrannical Power of Love	In "Love Armed," the mighty "Deity" of Love isn't some sweet little Cupid bopping around with pink-tipped arrows. Rather, he's a cruel tyrant, a world-conqueror who mercilessly crushes hearts underfoot. The speaker of this poem personifies Love as a triumphant warlord gloating among the "Bleeding Hearts" of the people he's struck down. Love, in other words, does exactly what it wants to. It

	doesn't respond to reason, and it's as likely to leave a person totally miserable as rapturously happy. This vision of love as a tyrant does away with sentimental images of Love as rose petals and daydreams. If Love makes the world go round, this poem suggests, he does so by conquering it like a tyrannical emperor.
The Pain of Unrequited Love	Besides painting a portrait of love as a tyrannical god-king, this poem laments the pain of a specific kind of love: the unrequited variety. The speaker is terribly in love with someone who doesn't feel the same way about them (at least, not any more). They imagine that the conqueror Love takes his destructive powers from the feelings they and their beloved have toward each other, and is thus "armed". From the beloved, Love draws its "Pride and Cruelty," embodying an arrogant and merciless force. This line suggests that Love is unkind in compelling individuals to fall for those who do not reciprocate their feelings, while also implying that the speaker's beloved has callously rejected them, discarding them as though they were of no worth. Similarly, Love's fiery passion is fueled by the beloved's "Bright Eyes," with the metaphor portraying the beloved's gaze as a burning force, leaving the speaker emotionally scorched. The speaker's eyes, in turn, reflect a yearning so intense that it could "undo the Amorous World," meaning their desire is so powerful it could shatter the hearts of countless lovers. Yet, they must endure "Languishments and Fears," suffering from helplessness and anxiety as they constantly grapple with their beloved's rejection. These emotional torments, too, are wielded as instruments of Love's relentless cruelty.
Conflict between Desire and Suffering	The poem juxtaposes the pleasure of loving with the agony of rejection. The speaker's internal conflict is evident, as they yearn for the object of their affection despite the pain it causes. Love becomes a paradoxical force that brings both fulfillment and devastation. This theme resonates universally, as it speaks to the way love often intertwines pleasure with agony. Behn captures the human tendency to cling to desire even when it brings pain, underscoring the complexities of the emotional experience.
Feminist Undertones	As one of the first female writers to gain prominence in a male-dominated literary world, Aphra Behn has allowed this poem to explore how women are rendered vulnerable by love and social expectations.

	The speaker’s portrayal of love as a dominant, almost tyrannical force reflects how women’s emotions are often weaponized against them. The speaker's “sighs” and “fears” symbolize emotional labor that is expected from women in relationships. Moreover, the poem critiques the gendered power dynamics in love. Love is personified as an armed and triumphant conqueror, while the speaker—likely female—suffers as a passive victim. This imagery highlights the imbalance, subtly questioning why women must endure such emotional subjugation.

Line By Line Explanation

Lines 1-4:

As the poem begins, Love is personified as a “Tyrannic,” cruel warlord. This opening immediately inflicts the torment of loves viciousness endured by the speaker. Love sits on a “fantastic triumph” and overlooks “bleeding hearts”. The phrase "Bleeding Hearts" evokes strong imagery of pain and suffering. It suggests that many people are emotionally wounded by love, reinforcing the idea that love can cause deep emotional distress. These two metaphors have mstered the portrayal of loves superiority that conquests unfortunate souls who have all suffered from and for love. Love is also a downright sadist, dreaming up “Fresh pains” with which to torment his fallen victims and reveling in his “strange Tyrannic power.” This line indicates that Love actively generates new suffering. The use of "Fresh pains" suggests that love is not static; it continuously inflicts new wounds on those who are vulnerable. This imagery also reflects the hellish vision of Love as a tormentor and a destroyer. This line highlights the oppressive nature of Love, likening it to a tyrant who rules over the hearts of others with cruelty. Love is described as having a "Tyrannic power," emphasizing its oppressive nature. This personification suggests that love can dominate and control individuals, much like a tyrant ruling over subjects.

Lines 5-8:

This line complains of the "desire" the speaker held, which too was stolen by his tyrant. The "fire" taken from the eyes of the speakers beloved symbolises an internal passion for the beloved that has been lost. The speaker has provided the beloved "desire" and even emotional longing, while in return she is provided with "fire." Love is depicted as playful yet cruel, flinging its fiery arrows as if in a game. This playful cruelty highlights the capricious nature of love, where joy can quickly turn into pain—a reminder that love can be both exhilarating and perilous. The speaker reveals their vulnerability, admitting that their own longing has been exploited by Love. This line conveys a sense of betrayal.
The speaker’s desire is so profound that it could disrupt all romantic relationships ("undo the Amorous World"). This exaggeration emphasizes the overwhelming nature of unrequited love and suggests that such intense feelings can lead to chaos.

Lines 9-12:

The speaker laments how Love has drained them of their emotional expressions—sighs symbolize longing while tears represent sorrow. In stark contrast to the speaker's suffering, the beloved contributes feelings of "Pride and Cruelty." This highlights an imbalance; while one suffers deeply, the other may remain indifferent or even revel in their power over love. The speaker continues to articulate their anguish through "Languishments," indicating a state of weakness or longing, alongside "Fears," which reflect anxiety about unreciprocated feelings. This deepens our understanding of their emotional turmoil. Each glance or word from the beloved becomes a "Killing Dart," emphasizing how deeply personal interactions can inflict pain. This metaphor illustrates how love can be both intimate and harmful, where affection can lead to suffering.

Lines 13-16:

Both the speaker and the beloved have unwittingly empowered Love ("the God") through their emotions and actions. This line suggests that they are complicit in their own suffering; they have contributed to Love's dominion over them. By elevating Love to a divine status, they acknowledge its overwhelming influence in their lives. This metaphor reflects society's tendency to idolize love despite its potential for pain—love becomes something worshipped yet feared. The speaker expresses profound loneliness in their suffering; while both have contributed to Love's power, only they bear the emotional scars ("my poor Heart"). This line encapsulates the tragedy of unrequited love—one person suffers while another remains untouched. In contrast to the speaker's anguish, the beloved emerges victorious and unburdened by love's trials ("and free"). This poignant conclusion underscores the theme of unreciprocated affection—the stark reality where one party endures pain while the other remains unaffected.

Literary Devices

1. Personification

- Explanation: Love is personified as a powerful entity that actively causes suffering. This device allows Behn to depict love as an influential force over human emotions.
- Example: The line "Love in Fantastic Triumph sat," portrays Love as a conqueror, suggesting it revels in its victories over hearts.

2. Imagery

- Explanation: Vivid imagery creates emotional resonance and illustrates the speaker's pain.
- Examples:
    - "Bleeding Hearts around him flowed," evokes a strong visual of suffering, symbolizing those wounded by love.

3. Metaphor

- Explanation: The poem uses metaphor to compare love to a god, highlighting its dual nature as both pleasurable and painful.

- Example: The phrase "the God have armed" implies that both the speaker and the beloved have empowered Love, likening it to a deity with significant influence over their lives.

4. Alliteration and Assonance

- Explanation: The use of sound devices enhances the musical quality of the poem and emphasizes key phrases.
- Example: The line "From thy Bright Eyes he took his fire," features alliteration with the repetition of the 'B' sound, creating a rhythmic flow that draws attention to the beloved's allure.

5. Hyperbole

- Explanation: Exaggeration is used to express the intensity of the speaker's feelings regarding unrequited love.
- Example: The claim that desire could "undo the Amorous World" emphasizes how overwhelming and destructive unreturned affection can feel.

6. Irony

- Explanation: The irony in the poem lies in the fact that while both the speaker and their beloved have empowered Love, only the speaker suffers from its consequences.
- Example: The line "Whilst thine the Victor is, and free," highlights this irony; the beloved remains unaffected while the speaker endures emotional torment.

7. Symbolism

- Explanation: Various symbols throughout the poem convey deeper meanings about love and suffering.
- Examples:
  The term "Cupid", representing love, symbolizes not just romantic feelings but also their potential for cruelty.
  The phrases "sighs and tears" represent longing and sorrow, common motifs in poetry about love.

8. Tone

- Explanation: The tone of the poem is solemn and resigned, reflecting the speaker's deep emotional pain and sense of defeat.
- Example: The line "But my poor Heart alone is harmed," conveys vulnerability and despair, encapsulating the speaker’s emotional state.

9. Structure

- Explanation: The poem consists of two stanzas with eight lines each, written in iambic tetrameter. This regular structure contrasts with the chaotic emotions expressed within, emphasizing tension between form and content.

10. Allusions

Explanation: The poem alludes to classical mythology, particularly through references to Cupid (Eros), enriching its thematic depth by connecting personal experiences of love to broader cultural narratives.-

A Different History- Sujata Bhatt

Great Pan is not dead;
he simply emigrated
    to India.
Here, the gods roam freely,
disguised as snakes or monkeys;
every tree is sacred
and it is a sin
to be rude to a book.
It is a sin to shove a book aside
                With your foot,
a sin to slam books down
        Hard on a table,
a sin to toss one carelessly
        across a room.

You must learn how to turn the pages gently
without disturbing Sarasvati,
without offending the tree
from whose wood the paper was made.

Summary

Sujata Bhatt's poem "A Different History" explores themes of postcolonial identity and the paradox of historical influence, focusing on the cultural impact of British colonization in India.

This poem is autobiographical and is an expression of Bhatt's conflict between her Indian heritage and her life in the English speaking world.

The first stanza talks about India; she values the way gods and nature are respected and allowed to thrive, but contrasts this, quite angrily, with the way society and religion are too rigid and enforce too many rules upon the Indian people. The second stanza sees her talking about her inner conflict about enjoying being part of English speaking culture.

Context

Bhatt is an Indian born in Pune, a metropolis (mega city) in the west of India. At 12, her family moved to the USA where she had to learn English from scratch.

She has talked about her identity struggle with Gujarati (an Indian language) representing the 'deepest layer of her identity', but English representing her daily life and work.

Themes

Reverence for Nature and Spirituality	The poem emphasizes the deep reverence for nature in India, where gods are believed to manifest in the natural world. Deities like **Pan** (Greek god of nature) are said to have "emigrated" to India, where nature and the environment are seen as sacred. The imagery of gods roaming as snakes or monkeys and trees being sacred reflects the integral connection between spirituality and nature in Indian culture. ● **Sacredness of Trees:** The reverence for trees is central to the poem. Trees in India are often sacred, such as the **Peepal** tree (linked to **Lord Vishnu**) or the **Bodhi tree** (associated with the Buddha's enlightenment). This theme underscores the ecological spirituality of Indian traditions. ● **Connection to Saraswati:** The mention of Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, art, and wisdom, suggests that learning and nature are intertwined in a spiritual context. The respectful handling of books, which embody knowledge, mirrors the cultural reverence for both knowledge and nature.
Respect for Knowledge and Learning	Bhatt highlights the sacredness of books and knowledge in Indian culture, where it is considered a sin to disrespect books. The act of gently turning the pages without disturbing Saraswati reflects the reverence for learning in India. The handling of books as sacred objects is tied to the idea that knowledge is divine and deserving of utmost respect. ● **Respect for Books:** The poem emphasizes that treating books carelessly is akin to disrespecting

	sacred knowledge. The careful handling of books represents a respect for learning, wisdom, and the pursuit of knowledge, which are highly valued in many cultures, especially in India. • **Symbolism of Saraswati:** Saraswati's presence in the poem connects books and knowledge with the divine. As the goddess of wisdom, music, and arts, Saraswati embodies the reverence for intellectual and artistic pursuits in Indian spirituality.
Colonialism and Language as a Tool of Oppression	The poem delves into the painful legacy of colonization, using language as a central metaphor. Bhatt questions which language has not been used as the "oppressor's tongue" and which language was not meant to "murder" someone, suggesting the violent history of linguistic imperialism. This theme critiques the use of language as a tool for subjugation and cultural erasure by colonial powers. • **Oppression through Language:** The poem critiques the role of language in colonial domination, where the languages of the oppressors were forced upon the colonized. Language becomes a symbol of the violent history of colonialism, stripping people of their native identities. • **Cultural Loss and Assimilation:** The poem reflects on the paradox of cultural assimilation, where despite the trauma of colonization, future generations end up adopting and even embracing the colonizer's language. This transformation speaks to the resilience and adaptability of culture, but also to the lasting impact of colonialism on cultural

	identity.
Paradox of Post-Colonial Identity	Bhatt explores the complex relationship between colonization and cultural identity. The final lines highlight the paradox of future generations growing to love the very language that was used to oppress their ancestors. Despite the violence and trauma associated with colonial languages, these languages become an integral part of the identities of the colonized. ● **Cultural Reconciliation:** The poem hints at the unintended consequence of colonialism: the adoption and normalization of the colonizer's language by subsequent generations. This reflects a deep, complex reconciliation with the colonial legacy, where the colonized culture begins to reclaim and adapt the tools of their oppression. ● **Generational Memory:** The poem highlights how the trauma of the past continues to affect future generations. Despite the oppression, the poem also conveys how new generations may come to internalize the language of their oppressors, even as they retain their love for it, reflecting the complexity of post-colonial identity.
The Continuity of Colonial Influence	The poem suggests that the influence of colonialism is ongoing, as seen in the enduring presence of the oppressor's language. Despite the passage of time and the seeming death of the colonial system, the language continues to dominate and shape the cultural landscape, symbolizing the lasting effects of imperialism on identity and

	society. ● **Enduring Legacy:** The poet suggests that colonialism's influence is not merely historical, but continues to shape the cultural and linguistic landscape. The "strange language" of the colonizers becomes a new medium through which future generations navigate their identities. ● **Adoption of Oppressor's Language:** The idea that future generations "grow to love" the language of the oppressor suggests the inescapable nature of colonial influence. Language, as a tool of imperialism, is absorbed and reshaped by the colonized, reflecting the deep and lasting impact of colonial domination.

Structure and Form

"A Different History" is structured into two distinct stanzas: the first comprises 18 lines focused on cultural reverence, while the second consists of 11 lines addressing language and oppression. The poem employs free verse, allowing Bhatt to maintain a conversational tone that enhances its introspective quality. The lack of a regular rhyme scheme reflects the chaotic nature of postcolonial identity struggles

Line 1-3:

Great Pan is not dead;
he simply emigrated to India.

Explanation: Bhatt begins with an allusion to **Pan**, the Greek god of nature, fertility, and the wild. She suggests that although Pan is no longer worshiped in the West, his spirit has found a home in India, where the reverence for nature remains deeply ingrained. This sets the stage for a comparison between Western and Indian cultural attitudes toward spirituality and the natural world.

Line 4-5:

Here, the gods roam freely,

disguised as snakes or monkeys;

- **Explanation:** The poet emphasizes the omnipresence of gods in Indian culture, where deities are believed to manifest in various forms, including snakes and monkeys. Snakes often symbolize rebirth and fertility, with references like *Vasuki* (the serpent around Lord Shiva's neck) or *Sheshnag* (Lord Vishnu's cosmic serpent). Monkeys are associated with **Hanuman**, the monkey god known for his devotion, courage, and wisdom.

Line 6:

every tree is sacred

- **Explanation:** Trees hold profound significance in Indian traditions, often being viewed as sacred. For example, the Peepal tree is linked to **Lord Vishnu**, and the Bodhi tree symbolizes the place of enlightenment for Buddha. This reverence reflects India's ecological spirituality.

Line 7-12:

and it is a sin

to be rude to a book.

It is a sin to shove a book aside

with your foot,

a sin to slam books down

hard on a table,

- **Explanation:** The poet highlights the deep respect for books in Indian culture. Books are seen as embodiments of knowledge and treated with reverence. Disrespecting a book, such as tossing or slamming it, is considered a sin because it indirectly insults **Saraswati**, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, learning, and wisdom.

Line 13-15:

a sin to toss one carelessly

across a room.

You must learn how to turn the pages gently

- **Explanation:** This reinforces the idea that books are sacred. The poet calls for a gentle and respectful approach when handling books, symbolizing an attitude of reverence toward learning and wisdom.

Line 16-17:

without disturbing Sarasvati,

without offending the tree

- **Explanation:** Bhatt explicitly mentions **Saraswati**, the Hindu goddess of knowledge. She is associated with wisdom, music, art, and learning. Saraswati is part of the **Tridevi**, alongside **Lakshmi** and **Parvati**. By connecting books to Saraswati and the trees from which paper is made, Bhatt ties the act of learning to both spiritual and ecological respect.

Line 18-19:

from whose wood the paper was made.

- **Explanation:** This line connects the spiritual reverence for books to the physical source of their creation, emphasizing the respect owed to nature for providing the materials that sustain knowledge.

Line 20-21:

Which language

has not been the oppressor’s tongue?

- **Explanation:** Bhatt shifts to the theme of colonization and linguistic imperialism, asking a provocative question about how dominant powers have historically used language to suppress native cultures and identities.

Line 22-23:

Which language

truly meant to murder someone?

- **Explanation:** This rhetorical question critiques the violent history of language as a tool of control and erasure, used by colonizers to impose their will on subjugated populations.

Line 24-27:

And how does it happen

that after the torture,

after the soul has been cropped

with the long scythe swooping out

- **Explanation:** Bhatt uses the metaphor of a scythe to describe the cultural and emotional trauma inflicted by colonizers. The "soul being cropped" symbolizes the erasure of native identities, traditions, and languages under colonial rule.

Line 28-30:

of the conqueror’s face –

the unborn grandchildren

grow to love that strange language.

- **Explanation:** In a poignant conclusion, Bhatt reflects on the paradox of cultural assimilation. Despite the oppression and trauma associated with colonial languages, future generations often embrace these languages as their own, integrating them into their identities. This highlights the complex legacy of colonialism.

Gods Mentioned in the Poem:

Pan: The Greek god of nature, fertility, and the wild, representing untamed landscapes and rustic spirituality.

- **Saraswati:** The Hindu goddess of knowledge, wisdom, music, art, and learning. She is part of the **Tridevi**, which includes **Lakshmi** (goddess of wealth) and **Parvati** (goddess of power).
- **Hanuman:** The monkey god known for his devotion, strength, and wisdom, symbolizing courage and loyalty.

- **Snakes:** Representing *Vasuki* (the serpent around Lord Shiva's neck) and *Sheshnag* (Lord Vishnu's cosmic serpent), snakes symbolize eternity, power, and divine protection.