

# Poetry Anthology

The Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature  
Poetry Anthology

should be used to prepare for Component 2 of your assessment

# Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature Poetry Anthology

The Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature Poetry Anthology should be used to prepare students for assessment in:

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# Relationships

## La Belle Dame Sans Merci

- O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
Alone and palely loitering?  
The sedge has withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.
- 5 O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
So haggard and so woe-begone?  
The squirrel's granary is full,  
And the harvest's done.
- I see a lily on thy brow,  
10 With anguish moist and fever-dew,  
And on thy cheek a fading rose  
Fast withereth too.
- I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful – a faery's child,  
15 Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.
- I made a garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;  
She looked at me as she did love,  
20 And made sweet moan.
- I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long,  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
A faery's song.
- 25 She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna-dew,  
And sure in language strange she said –  
'I love thee true'.
- She took me to her elfin grot,  
30 And there she wept and sighed full sore,  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four.
- And there she lulled me asleep  
And there I dreamed – Ah! woe betide! –  
35 The latest dream I ever dreamt  
On the cold hill side.
- I saw pale kings, and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
They cried – 'La Belle Dame sans Merci  
40 Thee hath in thrall!'
- I saw their starved lips in the gloam,  
With horrid warning gapèd wide,  
And I awoke and found me here,  
On the cold hill's side.
- 45 And this is why I sojourn here  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

*John Keats*

## A Child to his Sick Grandfather

Grand-dad, they say you're old and frail,  
 Your stocked legs begin to fail:  
 Your knobbed stick (that was my horse)  
 Can scarce support your bended corse,  
 5 While back to wall, you lean so sad,  
     I'm vexed to see you, dad.

You used to smile and stroke my head,  
 And tell me how good children did;  
 But now, I wot not how it be,  
 10 You take me seldom on your knee,  
 Yet ne'ertheless I am right glad,  
     To sit beside you, dad.

How lank and thin your beard hangs down!  
 Scant are the white hairs on your crown;  
 15 How wan and hollow are your cheeks!  
 Your brow is rough with crossing breaks;  
 But yet, for all his strength be fled,  
     I love my own old dad.

The housewives round their potions brew,  
 20 And gossips come to ask for you;  
 And for your weal each neighbour cares,  
 And good men kneel, and say their prayers;  
 And everybody looks so sad,  
     When you are ailing, dad.

25 You will not die and leave us then?  
 Rouse up and be our dad again.  
 When you are quiet and laid in bed,  
 We'll doff our shoes and softly tread;  
 And when you wake we'll aye be near  
 30      To fill old dad his cheer.

When through the house you shift your stand,  
 I'll lead you kindly by the hand;  
 When dinner's set I'll with you bide,  
 And aye be serving at your side;  
 35 And when the weary fire turns blue,  
     I'll sit and talk with you.

I have a tale both long and good,  
 About a partlet and her brood,  
 And cunning greedy fox that stole  
 40 By dead of midnight through a hole,  
 Which slyly to the hen-roost led –  
     You love a story, dad?

And then I have a wondrous tale  
 Of men all clad in coats of mail,  
 45 With glittering swords – you nod, I think?  
 Your fixed eyes begin to wink;  
 Down on your bosom sinks your head –  
     You do not hear me, dad.

*Joanna Baillie*

# Relationships

## She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
5 Thus mellow'd to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impair'd the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
10 Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
15 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

*Lord Byron*

## A Complaint

There is a change—and I am poor;  
Your love hath been, nor long ago,  
A fountain at my fond heart's door,  
Whose only business was to flow;  
5 And flow it did; not taking heed  
Of its own bounty, or my need.

What happy moments did I count!  
Blest was I then all bliss above!  
Now, for that consecrated fount  
10 Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,  
What have I? shall I dare to tell?  
A comfortless and hidden well.

A well of love—it may be deep—  
I trust it is,—and never dry:  
15 What matter? if the waters sleep  
In silence and obscurity.  
—Such change, and at the very door  
Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.

*William Wordsworth*

# Relationships

## Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;  
    – They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

5 Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles of years ago;  
And some words played between us to and fro  
    On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing  
10 Alive enough to have strength to die;  
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
    Like an ominous bird a-wing...

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me  
15 Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,  
    And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

*Thomas Hardy*

## Sonnet 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways! –  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace.  
5 I love thee to the level of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight –  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right, –  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;  
I love thee with the passion, put to use  
10 In my old griefs, ... and with my childhood's faith:  
I love thee with the love I seemed to lose  
With my lost Saints, – I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

# Relationships

## My Last Duchess

*Ferrara*

That's my last duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
5 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
10 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
15 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff  
20 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
25 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each

30 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked  
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
35 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—which I have not—to make your will  
Quite clear to such a one, and say, 'Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let  
40 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse  
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
45 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
50 Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
55 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

*Robert Browning*

# Relationships

## 1st Date – She

I said I liked classical music.  
It wasn't exactly a lie.  
I hoped he would get the impression  
That my brow was acceptably high.

5 I said I liked classical music.  
I mentioned Vivaldi and Bach.  
And he asked me along to this concert.  
Here we are, sitting in the half-dark.

I was thrilled to be asked to the concert.  
10 I couldn't care less what they play  
But I'm trying my hardest to listen  
So I'll have something clever to say.

When I glance at his face it's a picture  
Of rapt concentration. I see  
15 He is totally into this music  
And quite undistracted by me.

## 1st Date – He

She said she liked classical music.  
I implied I was keen on it too.  
Though I don't often go to a concert,  
It wasn't entirely untrue.

5 I looked for a suitable concert  
And here we are, on our first date.  
The traffic was dreadful this evening  
And I arrived ten minutes late.

So we haven't had much time for talking  
10 And I'm a bit nervous. I see  
She is totally lost in the music  
And quite undistracted by me.

In that dress she is very attractive –  
The neckline can't fail to intrigue.  
15 I mustn't appear too besotted.  
Perhaps she is out of my league.

Where are we? I glance at the programme  
But I've put my glasses away.  
I'd better start paying attention  
20 Or else I'll have nothing to say.

*Wendy Cope*

**Valentine, by Carol Ann Duffy**

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# Relationships

## One Flesh

Lying apart now, each in a separate bed,  
He with a book, keeping the light on late,  
She like a girl dreaming of childhood,  
All men elsewhere – it is as if they wait  
5 Some new event: the book he holds unread,  
Her eyes fixed on the shadows overhead.

Tossed up like flotsam from a former passion,  
How cool they lie. They hardly ever touch,  
Or if they do it is like a confession  
10 Of having little feeling – or too much.  
Chastity faces them, a destination  
For which their whole lives were a preparation.

Strangely apart, yet strangely close together,  
Silence between them like a thread to hold  
15 And not wind in. And time itself's a feather  
Touching them gently. Do they know they're old,  
These two who are my father and my mother  
Whose fire from which I came, has now grown cold?

*Elizabeth Jennings*

## i wanna be yours

let me be your vacuum cleaner  
breathing in your dust  
let me be your ford cortina  
i will never rust  
5 if you like your coffee hot  
let me be your coffee pot  
you call the shots  
i wanna be yours

let me be your raincoat  
10 for those frequent rainy days  
let me be your dreamboat  
when you wanna sail away  
let me be your teddy bear  
take me with you anywhere  
15 i don't care  
i wanna be yours

let me be your electric meter  
i will not run out  
let me be the electric heater  
20 you get cold without  
let me be your setting lotion  
hold your hair  
with deep devotion  
deep as the deep  
25 atlantic ocean  
that's how deep is my emotion  
deep deep deep deep de deep deep  
i don't wanna be hers  
i wanna be yours

*John Cooper Clarke*

# Relationships

## Love's Dog

What I love about love is its diagnosis

What I hate about love is its prognosis

What I hate about love is its me me me

What I love about love is its Eat-me/Drink-me

5 What I love about love is its petting zoo

What I love about love is its zookeeper – you

What I love about love is its truth serum

What I hate about love is its shrinking potion

What I love about love is its doubloons

10 What I love about love is its bird-bones

What I hate about love is its boil-wash

What I love about love is its spin-cycle

What I loathe about love is its burnt toast and bonemeal

What I hate about love is its bent cigarette

15 What I love about love is its pirate

What I hate about love is its sick parrot

*Jen Hadfield*

## Nettles

My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.  
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,  
That regiment of spite behind the shed:  
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears  
5 The boy came seeking comfort and I saw  
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.  
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.  
At last he offered us a watery grin,  
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade  
10 And went outside and slashed in fury with it  
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade  
Stood upright any more. And then I lit  
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,  
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain  
15 Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:  
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

*Vernon Scannell*



# Relationships

## The Manhunt

After the first phase,  
after passionate nights and intimate days,  
only then would he let me trace  
the frozen river which ran through his face,  
5 only then would he let me explore  
the blown hinge of his lower jaw,  
and handle and hold  
the damaged, porcelain collar-bone,  
and mind and attend  
10 the fractured rudder of shoulder-blade,  
and finger and thumb  
the parachute silk of his punctured lung.  
Only then could I bind the struts  
and climb the rungs of his broken ribs,  
15 and feel the hurt  
of his grazed heart.  
Skirting along,  
only then could I picture the scan,  
the foetus of metal beneath his chest  
20 where the bullet had finally come to rest.  
Then I widened the search,  
traced the scarring back to its source  
to a sweating, unexploded mine  
buried deep in his mind, around which  
25 every nerve in his body had tightened and closed.  
Then, and only then, did I come close.

*Simon Armitage*

## My Father Would Not Show Us

*Which way do we face to talk to the dead?*

Rainer Maria Rilke

My father's face  
five days dead  
is organised for me to see.

It's cold in here  
5 and the borrowed coffin gleams unnaturally;  
the pine one has not yet been delivered.

Half-expected this inverted face  
but not the soft, for some reason  
unfrozen collar of his striped pyjamas.

10 This is the last time I am allowed  
to remember my childhood as it might have been:  
a louder, braver place,  
crowded, a house with a tin roof  
being hailed upon, and voices rising,  
15 my father's wry smile, his half-turned face.

My father would not show us how to die.  
He hid, he hid away.  
Behind the curtains where his life had been,  
the florist's flowers curling into spring,  
20 he lay inside, he lay.

He could recall the rag-and-bone man  
passing his mother's gate in the morning light.  
Now the tunnelling sound of the dogs next door;  
everything he hears is white.

25 My father could not show us how to die.  
He turned, he turned away.  
Under the counterpane, without one call  
or word or name,  
face to the wall, he lay.

*Ingrid de Kok*



# Conflict

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## A Poison Tree

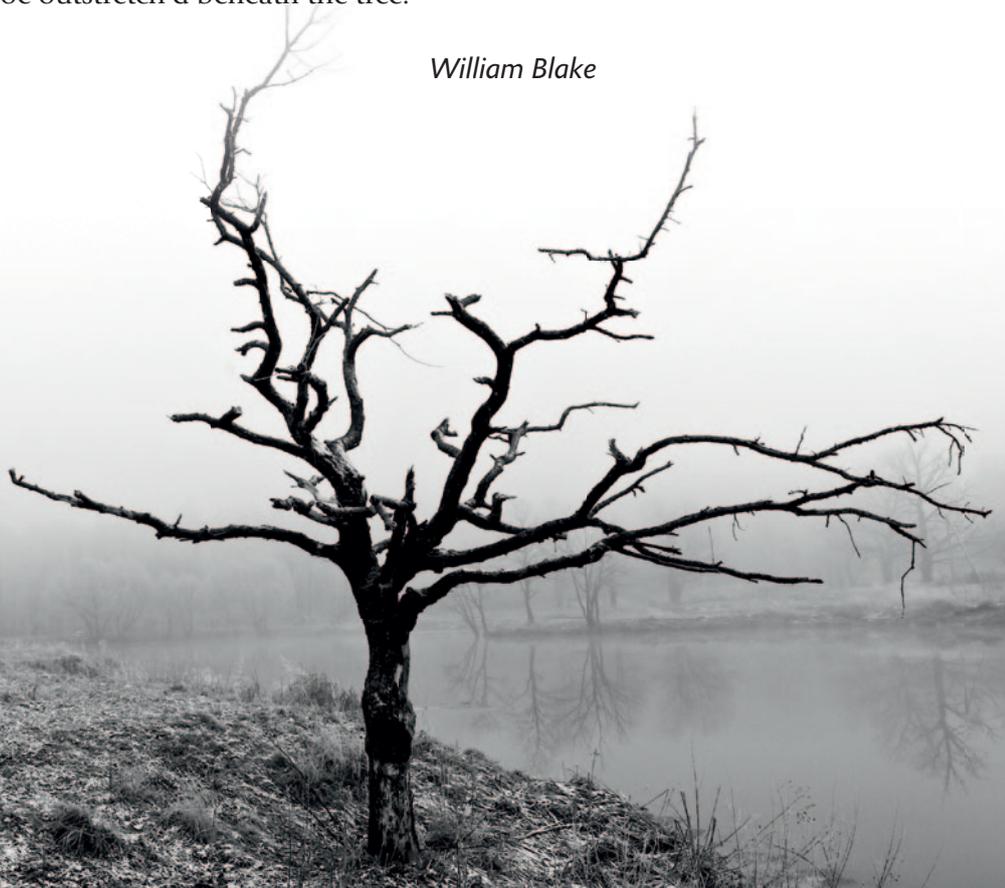
I was angry with my friend:  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe:  
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

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

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

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

*William Blake*





## The Destruction of Sennacherib

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Lord Byron*

# Conflict



## *Extract from The Prelude*

One summer evening (led by her) I found  
A little boat tied to a willow tree  
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.  
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in  
5 Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;  
Leaving behind her still, on either side,  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
10 Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,  
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point  
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view  
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,  
15 The horizon's utmost boundary; far above  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily  
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat  
20 Went heaving through the water like a swan;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,  
25 And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
30 And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the covert of the willow tree;  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –  
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
And serious mood; but after I had seen  
35 That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
40 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

*William Wordsworth*



## The Man He Killed

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

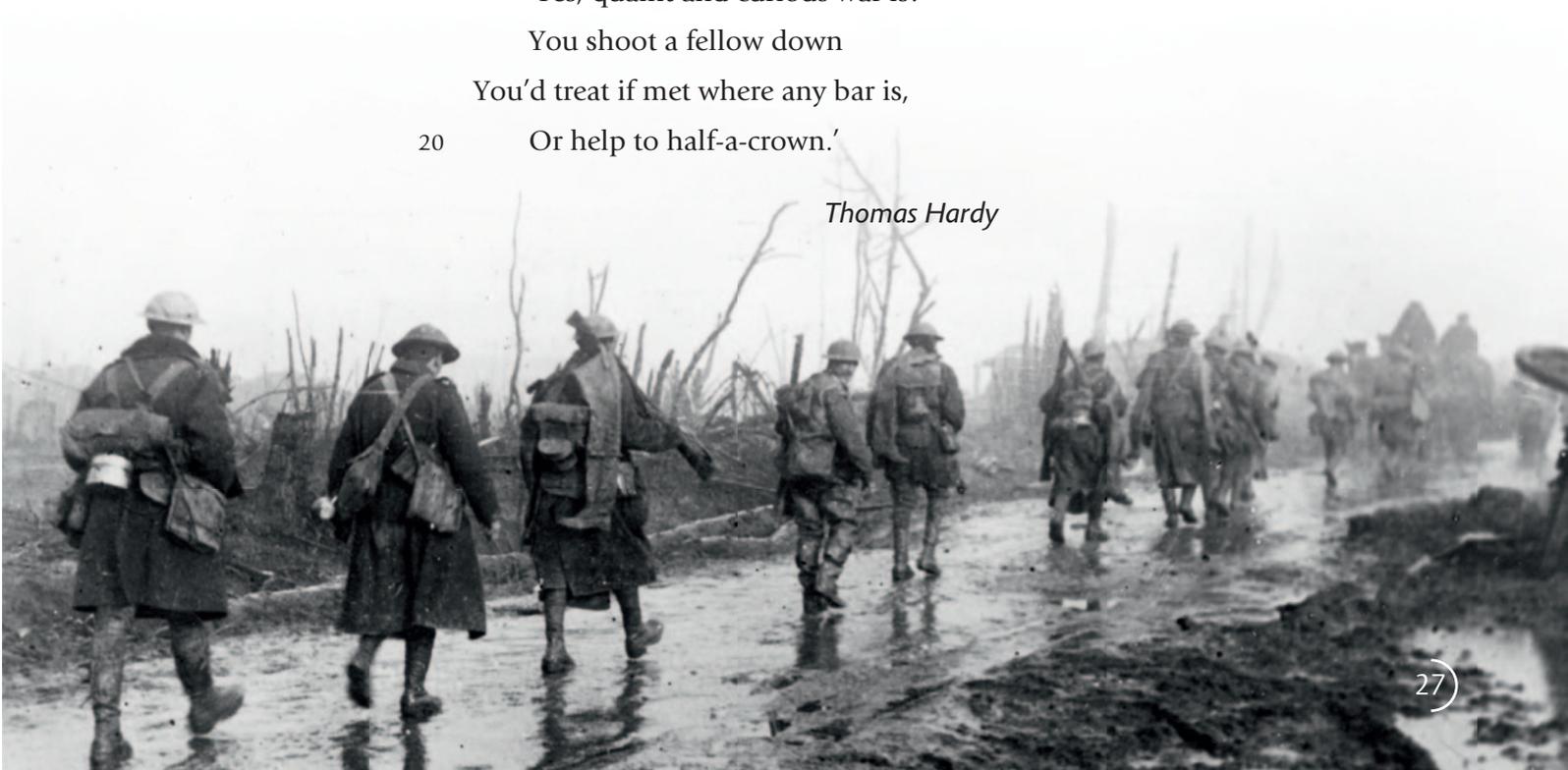
5 'But ranged as infantry,  
And staring face to face,  
I shot at him as he at me,  
And killed him in his place.

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

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

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

*Thomas Hardy*



# Conflict



## Cousin Kate

I was a cottage-maiden  
    Hardened by sun and air,  
Contented with my cottage-mates,  
    Not mindful I was fair.  
5 Why did a great lord find me out  
    And praise my flaxen hair?  
Why did a great lord find me out  
    To fill my heart with care?

He lured me to his palace-home –  
10 Woe's me for joy thereof –  
To lead a shameless shameful life,  
    His plaything and his love.  
He wore me like a golden knot,  
    He changed me like a glove:  
15 So now I moan an unclean thing  
    Who might have been a dove.

O Lady Kate, my Cousin Kate,  
    You grow more fair than I:  
He saw you at your father's gate,  
20 Chose you and cast me by.  
He watched your steps along the lane,  
    Your sport among the rye:  
He lifted you from mean estate  
    To sit with him on high.

25 Because you were so good and pure  
    He bound you with his ring:  
The neighbours call you good and pure,  
    Call me an outcast thing.  
Even so I sit and howl in dust  
30 You sit in gold and sing:  
Now which of us has tenderer heart?  
    You had the stronger wing.

O Cousin Kate, my love was true,  
    Your love was writ in sand:  
35 If he had fooled not me but you,  
    If you stood where I stand,  
He had not won me with his love  
    Nor bought me with his land:  
I would have spit into his face  
40 And not have taken his hand.

Yet I've a gift you have not got  
    And seem not like to get:  
For all your clothes and wedding-ring  
    I've little doubt you fret.  
45 My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,  
    Cling closer, closer yet:  
Your sire would give broad lands for one  
    To wear his coronet.

*Christina Rossetti*



## Half-caste

Excuse me  
standing on one leg  
I'm half-caste

5 Explain yusef  
wha yu mean  
when you say half-caste  
yu mean when picasso  
mix red an green  
is a half-caste canvas/  
10 explain yusef  
wha yu mean  
when yu say half-caste  
yu mean when light an shadow  
mix in de sky  
15 is a half-caste weather/  
well in dat case  
england weather  
nearly always half-caste  
in fact some o dem cloud  
20 half-caste till dem overcast  
so spiteful dem dont want de sun pass  
ah rass/  
explain yusef  
wha yu mean  
25 when you say half-caste  
yu mean tchaikovsky  
sit down at dah piano  
an mix a black key  
wid a white key  
30 is a half-caste symphony/

Explain yusef  
wha yu mean  
Ah listening to yu wid de keen  
half of mih ear  
35 Ah lookin at yu wid de keen  
half of mih eye  
and when I'm introduced to yu  
I'm sure you'll understand  
why I offer yu half-a-hand  
40 an when I sleep at night  
I close half-a-eye  
consequently when I dream  
I dream half-a-dream  
an when moon begin to glow  
45 I half-caste human being  
cast half-a-shadow  
but yu must come back tomorrow  
wid de whole of yu eye  
an de whole of yu ear  
50 an de whole of yu mind

an I will tell yu  
de other half  
of my story

*John Agard*

# Conflict



## Exposure

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us...

Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...

Low, drooping flares confuse our memories of the salient...

Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,

5        But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,

Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.

Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,

Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.

10        What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...

We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.

Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army

Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,

15        But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.

Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,

With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,

We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,

20        But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces –

We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-  
dazed,

Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,

Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.

25        Is it that we are dying?



Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed  
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;  
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: The house is theirs;  
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed, –  
30        We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;  
Nor ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.  
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;  
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,  
35        For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,  
Shrivelling many hands, puckering foreheads crisp.  
The burying party, picks and shovels in the shaking grasp,  
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,  
40        But nothing happens.

*Wilfred Owen*





## The Charge of the Light Brigade

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

5 'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'  
10 Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
Some one had blunder'd:  
Their's not to make reply,  
Their's not to reason why,  
15 Their's but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
20 Cannon in front of them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
25 Into the mouth of Hell  
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turn'd in air  
Sabring the gunners there,



30 Charging an army, while  
    All the world wonder'd:  
Plunged in the battery smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
35 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
    Shatter'd and sunder'd  
Then they rode back, but not  
    Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
40 Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
    Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
45 They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
    Left of six hundred.

50 When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
    All the world wonder'd.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
55 Noble six hundred!

*Alfred, Lord Tennyson*



## Catrin

I can remember you, child,  
As I stood in a hot, white  
Room at the window watching  
The people and cars taking  
5 Turn at the traffic lights.  
I can remember you, our first  
Fierce confrontation, the tight  
Red rope of love which we both  
Fought over. It was a square  
10 Environmental blank, disinfected  
Of paintings or toys. I wrote  
All over the walls with my  
Words, coloured the clean squares  
With the wild, tender circles  
15 Of our struggle to become  
Separate. We want, we shouted,  
To be two, to be ourselves.

Neither won nor lost the struggle  
In the glass tank clouded with feelings  
20 Which changed us both. Still I am fighting  
You off, as you stand there  
With your straight, strong, long  
Brown hair and your rosy,  
Defiant glare, bringing up  
25 From the heart's pool that old rope,  
Tightening about my life,  
Trailing love and conflict,  
As you ask may you skate  
In the dark, for one more hour.

*Gillian Clarke*



## War Photographer

The reassurance of the frame is flexible  
– you can think that just outside it  
people eat, sleep, love normally  
while I seek out the tragic, the absurd,  
5 to make a subject.  
Or if the picture's such as lifts the heart  
the firmness of the edges can convince you  
this is how things are

– as when at Ascot once  
10 I took a pair of peach, sun-gilded girls  
rolling, silk-crumpled, on the grass  
in champagne giggles

– as last week, when I followed a small girl  
staggering down some devastated street,  
15 hip thrust out under a baby's weight.  
She saw me seeing her; my finger pressed.

At the corner, the first bomb of the morning  
shattered the stones.  
Instinct prevailing, she dropped her burden  
20 and, mouth too small for her dark scream,  
began to run...

The picture showed the little mother  
the almost-smile. Their caption read  
'Even in hell the human spirit  
25 triumphs over all.'

But hell, like heaven, is untidy,  
its boundaries  
arbitrary as a blood stain on a wall.

*Carole Satyamurti*



## Belfast Confetti

Suddenly as the riot squad moved in, it was raining  
exclamation marks,

Nuts, bolts, nails, car-keys. A fount of broken type. And the  
explosion.

Itself - an asterisk on the map. This hyphenated line, a burst  
of rapid fire...

I was trying to complete a sentence in my head but it kept  
stuttering,

5 All the alleyways and side streets blocked with stops and  
colons.

I know this labyrinth so well - Balaclava, Raglan, Inkerman,  
Odessa Street -

Why can't I escape? Every move is punctuated. Crimea  
Street. Dead end again.

A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon face-shields. Walkie-  
talkies. What is

My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I going? A  
fusillade of question-marks.

*Ciaran Carson*





## The Class Game

- How can you tell what class I'm from?  
I can talk posh like some  
With an 'Olly in me mouth  
Down me nose, wear an 'at not a scarf
- 5 With me second-hand clothes.  
So why do you always wince when you hear  
Me say 'Tara' to me 'Ma' instead of 'Bye Mummy  
    dear'?
- How can you tell what class I'm from?  
'Cos we live in a corpy, not like some
- 10 In a pretty little semi, out Wirral way  
And commute into Liverpool by train each day?  
Or did I drop my unemployment card  
Sitting on your patio (We have a yard)?  
How can you tell what class I'm from?
- 15 Have I a label on me head, and another on me bum?  
Or is it because my hands are stained with toil?  
Instead of soft lily-white with perfume and oil?  
Don't I crook me little finger when I drink me tea  
Say toilet instead of bog when I want to pee?
- 20 Why do you care what class I'm from?  
Does it stick in your gullet like a sour plum?  
Well, mate! A cleaner is me mother  
A docker is me brother  
Bread pudding is wet nelly
- 25 And me stomach is me belly  
And I'm proud of the class that I come from.

*Mary Casey*

# Conflict



## Poppies

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

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

slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked  
with you, to the front door, threw  
20 it open, the world overflowing  
like a treasure chest. A split second  
and you were away, intoxicated.  
After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,  
released a song bird from its cage.  
25 Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,  
and this is where it has led me,  
skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy  
making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without  
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.  
30 On reaching the top of the hill I traced  
the inscriptions on the war memorial,  
leaned against it like a wishbone.  
The dove pulled freely against the sky,  
an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear  
35 your playground voice catching on the wind.

*Jane Weir*





## No Problem

I am not de problem  
But I bear de brunt  
Of silly playground taunts  
An racist stunts,  
5 I am not de problem  
I am born academic  
But dey got me on de run  
Now I am branded athletic  
I am not de problem  
10 If yu give I a chance  
I can teach yu of Timbuktu  
I can do more dan dance,  
I am not de problem  
I greet yu wid a smile  
15 Yu put me in a pigeon hole  
But I am versatile

These conditions may affect me  
As I get older,  
An I am positively sure  
20 I have no chips on me shoulders,  
Black is not de problem  
Mother country get it right  
An juss fe de record,  
Sum of me best friends are white.

*Benjamin Zephaniah*



## What Were They Like?

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

*Denise Levertov*

# time and place

To Autumn (1820) <i>John Keats</i>	42	Stewart Island (1971) <i>Fleur Adcock</i>	50
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## To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;  
5 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
10 Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
15 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twin'd flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
20 Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Aye, where are they?  
Think not of them, — thou hast thy music too,  
25 While barr'd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
30 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-cricket sing, and now with treble soft  
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

*John Keats*



Composed upon Westminster Bridge,  
September 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty;  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
5 The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
10 In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

*William Wordsworth*



## London

I wander thro' each charter'd street  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

5 In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants' cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear:

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry  
10 Every black'ning Church appalls,  
And the hapless Soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls;

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlot's curse  
15 Blasts the new-born Infants' tear,  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

*William Blake*



## I started Early – Took my Dog

I started Early – Took my Dog –  
And visited the Sea –  
The Mermaids in the Basement  
Came out to look at me –

5 And Frigates – in the Upper Floor  
Extended Hempen Hands –  
Presuming Me to be a Mouse –  
Aground – upon the Sands –

But no Man moved Me – till the Tide  
10 Went past my simple Shoe –  
And past my Apron – and my Belt  
And past my Bodice – too –

And made as He would eat me up –  
As wholly as a Dew  
15 Upon a Dandelion's Sleeve –  
And then – I started – too –

And He – He followed – close behind –  
I felt his Silver Heel  
Upon my Ankle – Then my Shoes  
20 Would overflow with Pearl –

Until We met the Solid Town –  
No One He seemed to know –  
And bowing – with a Mighty look –  
At me – The Sea withdrew –

*Emily Dickinson*

## Where the Picnic was

Where we made the fire  
In the summer time  
Of branch and briar  
On the hill to the sea,  
5 I slowly climb  
Through winter mire,  
And scan and trace  
The forsaken place  
Quite readily.

10 Now a cold wind blows,  
And the grass is grey,  
But the spot still shows  
As a burnt circle – aye,  
And stick-ends, charred,  
15 Still strew the sward  
Whereon I stand,  
Last relic of the band  
Who came that day!

Yes, I am here  
20 Just as last year,  
And the sea breathes brine  
From its strange straight line  
Up hither, the same  
As when we four came.

25 – But two have wandered far  
From this grassy rise  
Into urban roar  
Where no picnics are,  
And one – has shut her eyes  
30 For evermore.

*Thomas Hardy*



## Adlestrop

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—  
The name, because one afternoon  
Of heat the express-train drew up there  
Unwontedly. It was late June.

5 The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.  
No one left and no one came  
On the bare platform. What I saw  
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,  
10 And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,  
No whit less still and lonely fair  
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang  
Close by, and round him, mistier,  
15 Farther and farther, all the birds  
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

*Edward Thomas*

## Home Thoughts from Abroad

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
5 That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,  
10 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
15 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
20 —Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

*Robert Browning*



## First Flight

Plane moves. I don't like the feel of it.  
In a car I'd suspect low tyre pressure.

A sudden swiftness, earth slithers  
Off at an angle. The experienced solidly

5        *This is rather a short hop for me*

Read *Guardians*, discuss secretaries,  
Business lunches. I crane for the last of dear

*I'm doing it just to say I've done it*

10      Familiar England, motorways, reservoir,  
Building sites. Nimble tiny-disc, a sun

*Tell us when we get to water*

Runs up the porthole and vanishes.  
Under us the broad meringue kingdom

*The next lot of water'll be the Med*

15      Of cumulus, bearing the crinkled tangerine stain  
That light spreads on an evening sea at home.

*You don't need an overcoat, but  
It's the sort of place where you need  
A pullover. Know what I mean?*

20      We have come too high for history.  
Where we are now deals only with tomorrow,  
Confounds the forecasters, dismisses clocks.

*My last trip was Beijing. Know where that is?  
Beijing. Peking, you'd say. Three weeks there, I was.*  
25      *Peking is wrong. If you've been there  
You call it Beijing, like me. Go on, say it.*

Mackerel wigs dispense the justice of air.  
At this height nothing lives. Too cold. Too near the sun.

## Stewart Island

'But look at all this beauty'  
said the hotel manager's wife  
when asked how she could bear to  
live there. True: there was a fine bay,  
5 all hills and atmosphere; white  
sand, and bush down to the sea's edge;  
oyster-boats, too, and Maori  
fishermen with Scottish names (she  
ran off with one that autumn).  
10 As for me, I walked on the beach;  
it was too cold to swim. My  
seven-year-old collected shells  
and was bitten by sandflies;  
my four-year-old paddled, until  
15 a mad seagull jetted down  
to jab its claws and beak into  
his head. I had already  
decided to leave the country.

*Fleur Adcock*



## Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan

They sent me a salwar kameez  
peacock-blue,  
and another  
glistening like an orange split open,  
5 embossed slippers, gold and black  
points curling.  
Candy-striped glass bangles  
snapped, drew blood.  
Like at school, fashions changed  
10 in Pakistan –  
the salwar bottoms were broad and stiff,  
then narrow.  
My aunts chose an apple-green sari,  
silver-bordered  
15 for my teens.

I tried each satin-silken top –  
was alien in the sitting-room.  
I could never be as lovely  
as those clothes –  
20 I longed  
for denim and corduroy.  
My costume clung to me  
and I was aflame,  
I couldn't rise up out of its fire,  
25 half-English,  
unlike Aunt Jamila.

I wanted my parents' camel-skin lamp –  
switching it on in my bedroom,  
to consider the cruelty  
30 and the transformation  
from camel to shade,  
marvel at the colours  
like stained glass.

My mother cherished her jewellery –

35 Indian gold, dangling, filigree.  
But it was stolen from our car.  
The presents were radiant in my wardrobe.  
My aunts requested cardigans  
from Marks and Spencers.

40 My salwar kameez  
didn't impress the schoolfriend  
who sat on my bed, asked to see  
my weekend clothes.  
But often I admired the mirror-work,  
45 tried to glimpse myself  
in the miniature  
glass circles, recall the story  
how the three of us  
sailed to England.

50 Prickly heat had me screaming on the way.  
I ended up in a cot  
in my English grandmother's dining-room,  
found myself alone,  
playing with a tin boat.

55 I pictured my birthplace  
from fifties' photographs.  
When I was older  
there was conflict, a fractured land  
throbbing through newsprint.

60 Sometimes I saw Lahore –  
my aunts in shaded rooms,  
screened from male visitors,  
sorting presents,  
wrapping them in tissue.

65 Or there were beggars, sweeper-girls  
and I was there –  
of no fixed nationality,  
staring through fretwork  
at the Shalimar Gardens.

**Hurricane Hits England, by Grace Nichols**

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## Nothing's Changed

Small round hard stones click  
under my heels,  
seeding grasses thrust  
bearded seeds  
5 into trouser cuffs, cans,  
trodden on, crunch  
in tall, purple-flowering,  
amiable weeds.

District Six.  
10 No board says it is:  
but my feet know,  
and my hands,  
and the skin about my bones,  
and the soft labouring of my lungs,  
15 and the hot, white, inwards turning  
anger of my eyes.

Brash with glass,  
name flaring like a flag,  
it squats  
20 in the grass and weeds,  
incipient Port Jackson trees:  
new, up-market, haute cuisine,  
guard at the gatepost,  
whites only inn.

25 No sign says it is:  
but we know where we belong.

I press my nose  
to the clear panes, know,  
before I see them, there will be  
30 crushed ice white glass,  
linen falls,  
the single rose.

Down the road,  
working man's cafe sells  
35 bunny chows.  
Take it with you, eat  
it at a plastic table's top,  
wipe your fingers on your jeans,  
spit a little on the floor:  
40 it's in the bone.

I back from the glass,  
boy again,  
leaving small mean O  
of small mean mouth.  
45 Hands burn  
for a stone, a bomb,  
to shiver down the glass.  
Nothing's changed.

*Tatamkhulu Afrika*

## Postcard from a Travel Snob

I do not wish that anyone were here.  
This place is not a holiday resort  
with karaoke nights and pints of beer  
for drunken tourist types – perish the thought.

5 This is a peaceful place, untouched by man –  
not like your seaside-town-consumer-hell.  
I'm sleeping in a local farmer's van –  
it's great. There's not a guest house or hotel

within a hundred miles. Nobody speaks  
10 English (apart from me, and rest assured,  
I'm not your sun-and-sangria-two-weeks-  
small-minded-package-philistine-abroad).

When you're as multi-cultural as me,  
your friends become wine connoisseurs, not drunks.

15 I'm not a British tourist in the sea;  
I am an anthropologist in trunks.

*Sophie Hannah*





## In Romney Marsh

As I went down to Dymchurch Wall,  
I heard the South sing o'er the land  
I saw the yellow sunlight fall  
On knolls where Norman churches stand.

5 And ringing shrilly, taut and lithe,  
Within the wind a core of sound,  
The wire from Romney town to Hythe  
Along its airy journey wound.

A veil of purple vapour flowed  
10 And trailed its fringe along the Straits;  
The upper air like sapphire glowed:  
And roses filled Heaven's central gates.

Masts in the offing wagged their tops;  
The swinging waves pealed on the shore;  
15 The saffron beach, all diamond drops  
And beads of surge, prolonged the roar.

As I came up from Dymchurch Wall,  
I saw above the Downs' low crest  
The crimson brands of sunset fall,  
20 Flicker and fade from out the West.

Night sank: like flakes of silver fire  
The stars in one great shower came down;  
Shrill blew the wind; and shrill the wire  
Rang out from Hythe to Romney town.

25 The darkly shining salt sea drops  
Streamed as the waves clashed on the shore;  
The beach, with all its organ stops  
Pealing again, prolonged the roar.

*John Davidson*



## Absence

I visited the place where we last met.  
Nothing was changed, the gardens were well-tended,  
The fountains sprayed their usual steady jet;  
There was no sign that anything had ended  
5 And nothing to instruct me to forget.

The thoughtless birds that shook out of the trees,  
Singing an ecstasy I could not share,  
Played cunning in my thoughts. Surely in these  
Pleasures there could not be a pain to bear  
10 Or any discord shake the level breeze.

It was because the place was just the same  
That made your absence seem a savage force,  
For under all the gentleness there came  
An earthquake tremor: fountain, birds and grass  
15 Were shaken by my thinking of your name.

*Elizabeth Jennings*

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