

Conflict Poetry Homework Booklet

Read the poems
Answer the questions
Make notes on the form/structure of
the poems

Iambic Tetrameter - Structure

For the most part, "London" is written in iambic tetrameter. This little meter is very similar to **iambic pentameter**, except that, instead of five iambs there are only four iambs (tetra means four, so tetrameter means four of the same meter). Now, an **iamb** is a beat that consists of an unstressed syllable, followed by a stressed syllable. It sounds like daDUM (if you say "allow" out loud, you'll hear an iamb). For example: *Near **where** the **charter'd** **Thames** does **flow***. However, Blake does break away from this at times demonstrating the fractured and fragmented world he sees around him. Notice how many words appear two or more times ("charter'd," "marks," "Infant," "cry," "street"). Notice also how the poem rhymes—this too is a form of repetition. In each stanza, every other line **rhymes** (which gives us a **rhyme scheme** of ABAB CDCD EFEF GDGD). The repetition of sound suggests that what the speaker sees around him is cyclical or repetitive—that the evils of London will continue to persist.

London – William Blake

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.

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-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

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

What were some of William Blake's beliefs?

What is the poem about?

Blake was concerned by industrial conditions, child labour, prostitution, poverty and restrictions placed on people by institutions such as the church. How are some of these issues shown in 'London'?

What does Blake mean by the repeated 'charter'd' at the beginning of the poem?

How is a sense of misery

"Ozymandias" is a sonnet, a fourteen-line poem metered in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is somewhat unusual for a sonnet of this era; it does not fit a conventional Petrarchan pattern, but instead interlinks the octave (a term for the first eight lines of a sonnet) with the sestet (a term for the last six lines), by gradually replacing old rhymes with new ones in the form ABABACDCEDEFEF

Ozymandias — Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away".

Write a short
summary of the
poem.

Underline words
to suggest that
Ozymandias was
once strong and
powerful.

The Prelude can definitely be viewed as an epic poem, in length at least. Epics are very long pieces of writing that usually deal with exciting, action-packed heroic events like wars or explorations. Although many of the events Wordsworth writes about are 'ordinary' they are given an epic quality, to fully describe the impact they had on his life. There are no **stanzas**: the writing is continuous though there is plenty of punctuation to help us read it. **This extract is a complete story in itself.** It starts with "One summer evening..." and finishes with the effects on his mind of the boat trip: "a trouble to my dreams".

Extract from The Prelude – William Wordsworth

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
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,
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,
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
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,
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,

What happens in the poem?

Circle all of the different examples of nature that you can.

What examples of similes and metaphors are used? Explain why.

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
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
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.

Structure and language - This is one of Browning's best known **dramatic monologues**. 'Mono' means one - there is only ever **one speaker** in a monologue. The poem is written in *iambic pentameter* (the rhythm of each line is 'de-dum', five times) and in *rhyming couplets*. This is one long speech, pretending to be a conversation. It is divided up into rhyming couplets but to mimic unrehearsed speech there are lots of twists and turns within the lines, shown by a variety of **punctuation** (colons and lots of dashes as well as the usual commas and full stops). For example "She thanked men good! but thanked/Somehow - I know not how".

My Last Duchess

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra 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
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
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps
Fra 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
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.

What is the poem
about?

What does the Duke
mean by his "nine-
hundred-year-old
name"?

How is the poem
made to seem

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
 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
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—which I have not—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 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
 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
 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,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me

The rhythm of the poem follows the following: DUM-da-da DUM-da-da. Try saying that first line out loud: "For-ward, the/
 Light Bri-gade!" Hear that rhythm? DUM-da-da DUM-da-da. When a stressed syllable is followed by two unstressed syllables
 – we call that a dactyl. The use of "falling" rhythm, in which the stress is on the first beat of each metrical unit, and then "falls
 off" for the rest of the length of the meter, is appropriate in a poem about the devastating fall of the British brigade. When there
 are two feet per line, that's called dimeter. So the full, fancy English teacher name for the rhythm of this poem is dactylic
 dimeter. Listen to that steady heartbeat rhythm running through the poem: DUM-da-da DUM-da-da DUM-da-da.

The Charge of the Light Brigade – Alfred Lord Tennyson

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
“Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!” he said.
Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

II
“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
 Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

III
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
 Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
 Rode the six hundred.

IV
Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
 All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
 Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
 Not the six hundred.

V
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,

What can you
say about the
rhythm of the
poem?
What is the effect

Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

Rhyme Owen's use of pararhyme is clearly developed in *Exposure*. The sounds create discord and challenge our expectation, yet Owen uses a regular pattern of ab ba, which creates the sense of stasis. Nothing changes in the rhyming pattern, nothing happens on the front.

Rhythm Within each stanza, four lengthy lines set the scene and tell what story there is to tell. Often they are hexameters but Owen frequently adds extra syllables or whole metrical feet, and does not use a consistent metre, perhaps representing how snow-dazed minds struggle to stay orderly. One short line punctuates the narrative with the reality: 'but nothing happens' l.5. This serves as a contrast to the huge events which are to do with 'dying': the death of men, of hope, of belief and of the love of God.

Exposure - Poem by Wilfred Owen!

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 memory of the salient ...
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,

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.
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 gray,
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,
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with lingering stealth come feeling for our faces--

What is the poem about?

What impression does the adjective 'merciless' give you of the winds?

Find examples of

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.
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--
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Now 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,
For love of God seems dying.

To-night, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands and puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,

But nothing happens.

Structure

The poem consists of nineteen lines of *blank verse* - unrhyming lines each containing five beats or feet. This *verse* form (much used by Shakespeare) follows the natural patterns of spoken English, so we feel that Heaney is talking to us.

Storm on the Island

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
The wizened earth had never troubled us
With hay, so as you can see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees
Which might prove company when it blows full
Blast: you know what I mean - leaves and branches
Can raise a chorus in a gale
So that you can listen to the thing you fear
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.
You might think that the sea is company,
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits
The very windows, spits like a tame cat
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo.
We are bombarded by the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

What is the
poem about?
What can you
say about the
structure of the

Form and structure - The poem is written in three *stanzas*. All three are filled with words and images, which could suggest the thick mud appropriate for a poem whose main theme is about a man running across a muddy field carrying a heavy gun. Hughes uses long and short lines to suggest the quick and slow progress of the soldier. **The first stanza** is all about action and running. The soldier is awake and running within six words of the opening line. The flow, however, is broken by the use of dashes "-". This breaks up the flow of the poem and shows how the soldier is waking up to what is happening and slowly starting to think. **The second stanza** therefore happens in a **kind of slow-motion**. The second half of line 15 breaks this spell and he knows he has to rush, without thinking, towards his death in **the final stanza**.

Bayonet Charge

What words
suggest a sense of
fear?
Why are lots of

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

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

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame
And crawled in a threshing circle, its mouth wide
Open silent, its eyes standing out.
He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge,
King, honour, human dignity, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm

Form and structure - The poem appears to have a strong, regular sense of form. There are four clear **stanzas**, the first and last with six lines, the second with 11 and the third 12. On closer inspection, however, we can see a great deal of movement within this outwardly regular form. 19 lines out of 35 have breaks in the middle of the lines - marked by commas or more strongly by full-stops. **These breaks are called caesuras. This careful variation in form suggests the inner emotion of a narrator who is trying to remain calm and composed but is breaking with sadness inside. The biggest movement in the poem, however, is in the narrative structure – how the story is told.** The time sequence keeps changing along with her emotions. It goes from "Three days before" (line 1) to "Before you left" (line 3) to "After you'd gone" (line 23) to "later" (line 25) and the present in "this is where it has led me" on line 26. It ends with her suspended, on the hill, between the present and the past.

Poppies - by Jane Weir

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

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

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

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

What is the
poem about?
What is the
effect of the
caesuras in the

War Photographer

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

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

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

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

What is the
poem about?
What can you
say about the

Form and Structure - The poem is laid out in four regular six-line stanzas, with each stanza ending in a rhyming couplet. This structure is interesting since its very rigid order contrasts with the chaotic, disturbing images described in the poem. This organisation mirrors the actions of the photographer, who lays out his films in "ordered rows", as though in doing so he can in some way help to restore order to this chaotic world. The poem moves through a series of observations in the first three stanzas to a conclusion of sorts in the fourth. The style is almost clinical and matter of fact, perhaps to imitate the clinical approach required by people in this line of work to allow them to do their jobs under extreme pressure. Unlike the readers of the newspaper he works for, this sense of distance is a necessary requirement for the photographer.

Checking Out Me History alternates between **two structures**, marked by two different fonts. The first uses the repeated phrase "Dem tell me" to indicate the white version of history, mostly written in *rhyming couplets*, triplets or quatrains. Interspersed are the stories of three black historical figures: Toussaint L'Overture, Nanny de Maroon and Mary Seacole, told using **abbreviated syntax** with words missed out, shorter lines and an irregular *rhyme scheme*. Agard uses **variations in spelling** to suggest Caribbean dialect, especially replacing 'th' with 'd'. This stresses the importance of carving out his "own identity". There is repetition - particularly of "Dem tell me" - throughout the poem, creating a sense of **rhythm**. *End rhyme* is heavily used, emphasised by adapted sections of nursery rhymes: the dish who ran away with the spoon, and Old King Cole, for example.

Checking out me History – John Agard

Dem tell me
Dem tell me
Wha dem want to tell me

Bandage up me eye with me own history
Blind me to me own identity

Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat
dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat
But Toussaint L'Ouverture
no dem never tell me bout dat

*Toussaint
a slave
with vision
lick back
Napoleon
battalion
and first Black
Republic born
Toussaint de thorn
to de French
Toussaint de beacon
of de Haitian Revolution*

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de balloon
and de cow who jump over de moon
Dem tell me bout de dish ran away with de spoon
but dem never tell me bout Nanny de maroon

*Nanny
see-far woman
of mountain dream
fire-woman struggle
hopeful stream
to freedom river*

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo
but dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu
Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492
but what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she lamp
and how Robin Hood used to camp
Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole soul
but dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

*From Jamaica
she travel far
to the Crimean War
she volunteer to go
and even when de British said no*

What is the poem
about?
What do you think
Agard means by
saying "Dem tell

*she still brave the Russian snow
a healing star
among the wounded
a yellow sunrise
to the dying*

Dem tell me
Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me
But now I checking out me own history
I carving out me identity