This booklet is a companion to the online curriculum available at YourFavouriteTeacher.com, and the associated Teacher Booklet. It includes the content from the Love & Relationships Poetry course.

Before You Were Mine – Carol Ann Duffy

Summary
This poem is told from the viewpoint of the poet and she is directly addressing her mother. It’s about the poet’s idealised memories of her mother. The poem starts off with a clear image of her mother with her friends. It then moves on to the poet glamorising her mother, as if she were always the centre of attention and loved by everyone. We get a sense of a fairy tale image of the mother, where everything is possible for her when it comes to love and romance. The poet reflects on her mother’s life before having a baby, and how it changed her after she was born. The poet comments about how she wished she could have seen her mother before she became a parent.

Context
Duffy was born in Scotland before moving to England as a child. The poem is an autobiographical account of Duffy’s mother and her youth, moving from the past (1950s) to the present. The poem was first published in 1993.

Structure
• The poem is written in blank verse which reflects how her mother’s life wasn’t how she had planned it to be.

• A mixture of enjambment and caesura create a sense of reminiscence and imagination.

• There is some regularity to the stanzas (five lines each) which represents the circle of life.

• Circular structure is shown through the poet’s use of pavement at the beginning and end of the poem
Before Your Were Mine

I’m ten years away from the corner you laugh on with your pals, Maggie McGeeney and Jean Duff. The three of you bend from the waist, holding each other, or your knees, and shriek at the pavement. Your polka-dot dress blows round your legs. Marilyn.

I’m not here yet. The thought of me doesn’t occur in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows the right walk home could bring. I knew you would dance like that. Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it’s worth it.

The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh? I remember my hands in those high-heeled red shoes, relics, and now your ghost clatters toward me over George Square till I see you, clear as scent, under the tree, with its lights, and whose small bites on your neck, sweetheart?

Cha cha cha! You’d teach me the steps on the way home from Mass, stamping stars from the wrong pavement. Even then I wanted the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine.
Key Quotes

In the exam, the poem you select to compare is from memory. Therefore, it’s best to know a few key quotes in detail for each poem. Below are three for ‘Before You Were Mine’, to get you started. At the bottom, you’ll find potential themes linked to the poem that may come up as your exam question, and the best poems to compare this one to.

‘shriek at the pavement. Your polka-dot dress blows round your legs. Marilyn.’
Possible Interpretation: ‘Shriek at the pavement’ references the speaker’s mother having fun with her friends. This creates a sense of youth and joy. The reference to ‘Marilyn’ suggests the mother is like Marilyn Monroe, which creates an image of a woman who is very glamorous and has sex appeal. This contrasts to the typical motherly image people would normally think of.

‘Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it’s worth it.’
Possible Interpretation: ‘Before you were mine’ references her mother’s life before having children. Again, creating a sense of youth and joy. The speaker talks of her grandmother waiting for her daughter to come home. This implies her mother could be quite wild and reckless, enjoying staying out late and having fun. ‘You reckon it’s worth it’ signifies the tenacity of adolescence as her mother didn’t want to miss anything.

‘Even I wanted the bold girl winking’
Possible Interpretation: The speaker is acknowledging the difference between her mother now compared to when she was younger and more carefree, as described in the earlier stanzas. Now, it’s almost as if she seems unhappy and regretful. It almost acts as a reminder for people not to lose sight of what once made them happy before life got serious. ‘Even I’ also creates a sense of nostalgia for the child who wants her fun, carefree mum back.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Past/Memories
- Family
- Regret

The best poems to compare ‘Before You Were Mine’ to are:

- Follower (Family/Past/Memories)
- Walking Away (Family/Past/Memories)
- Mother, Any Distance (Family)
- Eden Rock (Family/Past/Memories)

Below are three examples of an exam-based question:

- Compare how poet’s present the relationship between parent and child in ‘Before You Were Mine’ and one other poem.
- Compare how loss is presented in ‘Before You Were Mine’ and one other poem.
- Explore the concept of memories in ‘Before You Were Mine’ and one other poem.

Remember, you will only get one poem printed in front of you and the list of the poems in the cluster. You get a maximum of 30 marks for this section of the exam, which is split between AO1 (12 marks), AO2 (12 marks) and AO3 (6 marks).
Before You Were Mine Worksheet

1. What is the effect of enjambment and caesura in the poem?

2. Why does the correlation to Marilyn Monroe important in the portrayal of the mother?

3. How does the author present the theme of regret?

4. How does the author present the theme of familial love?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Before you were mine” to “Eden Rock” and “Mother, any distance”

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Climbing My Grandfather – Andrew Waterhouse

Summary
Climbing my Grandfather is an extended metaphor, with the speaker (a young boy) comparing his grandfather to a mountain that he climbs. It starts off with the speaker finding the climb easy, before describing his grandfather. We get a sense of his grandfather being a strong, working man – potentially as a farmer or a job role outside with nature. When the speaker gets to the shoulders, he rests.

The shoulders are described as firm, which suggests this man is still strong both physically and mentally. When the speaker reaches his grandfather’s head at the end of the poem, we see a strong connection between the pair as he cannot see him, but feels warmth and the ‘slow pulse’ of his ‘good heart’.

Context
Waterhouse was a teacher, but had many talents. He was also a poet, environmentalist and musician. Sadly, he committed suicide due to his depression.

Structure
- The poem is one stanza, which emphasises the image of a mountain
- Visually, the lines imitate hanging ledges and ridges with their varying length
- There is a mixture of enjambment and caesura, which mimics the climb
Climbing My Father

I decide to do it free, without a rope or net.
First, the old brogues, dusty and cracked;
an easy scramble onto his trousers,
pushing into the weave, trying to get a grip.
By the overhanging shirt I change
direction, traverse along his belt
to an earth-stained hand. The nails
are splintered and give good purchase,
the skin of his finger is smooth and thick
like warm ice. On his arm I discover
the glassy ridge of a scar, place my feet
gently in the old stitches and move on.
At his still firm shoulder, I rest for a while
in the shade, not looking down,
for climbing has its dangers, then pull
myself up the loose skin of his neck
to a smiling mouth to drink among teeth.
Refreshed, I cross the screed cheek,
to stare into his brown eyes, watch a pupil
slowly open and close. Then up over
the forehead, the wrinkles well-spaced
and easy, to his thick hair (soft and white
at this altitude), reaching for the summit,
where gasping for breath I can only lie
watching clouds and birds circle,
feeling his heat, knowing
the slow pulse of his good heart.
‘skin of his finger is smooth and thick like warm ice’

Possible Interpretation: The simile ‘like warm ice’ suggests the speaker feels comforted by the familiarity of his grandfather, especially coupled with the adjective ‘smooth’. However, there is also something about him that is perhaps unnerving. This oxymoron could link to the clear admiration the grandson has for his grandfather.

‘At his still firm shoulder, I rest for a while in the shade, not looking down,’

Possible Interpretation: The image of the speaker resting at ‘his still firm shoulder’ suggests he feels comforted by his grandfather. Shoulders are symbolic of carrying heavy loads, both physically and metaphorically, therefore it creates an image of a man who is still strong, bold and firm, despite being a grandfather. ‘Not looking down’ emphasises how big he feels his grandfather is compared to him, especially as a child looking at an adult.

‘feeling his heat, knowing the slow pulse of his good heart.’

Possible Interpretation: This final line shows how deeply connected the grandson feels he is with his grandfather. He’s climbed to the top of the mountain, and already referenced how big his grandfather is in comparison to him, but he’s not scared because he can feel the heartbeat. This quote creates a calming and soothing tone, which again signifies how safe the speaker feels in his grandfather’s presence.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Love
- Family Bonds
- Childhood

The best poems to compare ‘Climbing My Grandfather’ to are:

- Follower (Family Bonds/Love)
- Walking Away (Family Bonds/Childhood)
- Mother, Any Distance (Family Bonds)
- Before You Were Mine (Family Bonds/Childhood)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys a adults and children in ‘Climbing my Grandfather’ and one other poem.
- Compare how strong family bonds are presented in ‘Climbing my Grandfather’ and one other poem.
- Explore the use of imagery to portray a relationship in ‘Climbing my Grandfather’ and one other poem.
Climbing my Grandfather Worksheet

1. What is the significance of the one-stanza structure in the poem?

2. Why does the structure potentially mirror the climb?

3. How does the author present the theme of childhood?

4. How does the author present the theme of familial love?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Climbing my grandfather” to “Follower” and “Mother, any distance”

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Eden Rock – Charles Causley

Summary
Eden Rock is about a picnic the poet has with his parents. It can be seen as nostalgic, but also more symbolic – almost as if the poet is imagining his parents in a timeless afterlife. The poem begins in the present tense, but in a very ambiguous location, which contrasts with the detailed description of the poet’s father. The poem continues to be very clear and detailed, before turning almost dreamlike in its description. There is a very reflective and peaceful tone throughout.

Context
Causley was raised in Cornwall. The poem is said to be partly autobiographical, as he lost his father at a young age, after he returned from World War Two. He didn’t recover from the injuries he incurred. The poem was published after his mother passed away, which was when Causley was well into old age.

Structure
- The poem is organised into four regular quatrains. The fifth stanza is split
- There is half-rhyme used, creating a sense of discord
- The split fifth stanza creates a moment of reflection for the reader and perhaps the poet, too. It’s almost like a physical gap in which we need to overcome
Eden Rock

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:
My father, twenty-five, in the same suit
Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack
Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress
Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,
Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.
Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.

She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight
From an old H.P. sauce-bottle, a screw
Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out
The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.

The sky whitens as if lit by three suns.
My mother shades her eyes and looks my way
Over the drifted stream. My father spins
A stone along the water. Leisurely,

They beckon to me from the other bank.
I hear them call, ‘See where the stream-path is!
Crossing is not as hard as you might think.’

I had not thought that it would be like this.
Key Quotes

‘stiff white cloth over the grass. Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.’

Possible Interpretation: The detail described in this quote suggests a strong, clear memory. As if the speaker has revisited the memory many times. It’s almost photographic, implying perhaps looking at a family photo whilst remembering the day’s events. ‘white’, ‘wheat’ and ‘light’ all connote purity and calmness.

‘The sky whitens, as if lit by three suns.
My mother shades her eyes and looks my way
Over the drifted stream’

Possible Interpretation: The sky whitening could be symbolic of heaven, coupled with ‘three suns’ which could represent the Holy Trinity. ‘My mother shades her eyes’ creates a shift and change in mood, creating an almost ominous tone. ‘Over the drifted stream’ creates distance between them, suggesting they are in different places and the speaker is coming to terms with the loss of his parents.

‘They beckon to me from the other bank. I hear them call,
‘See where the stream-path is!
Crossing is not as hard as you might think.’

Possible Interpretation: Again, the distance created between the speaker and his parents emphasises they are no longer with him. ‘I hear them call’ suggests he can no longer see them. The second half of this quote is littered with sibilance, creating a soothing and peaceful tone, almost as if the speaker is coming to terms with the loss. It also gives an image of his parents there waiting for him, which implies he doesn’t need to fear death.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Past/Memories
- Loss/Longing
- Family

The best poems to compare ‘Eden Rock’ to are:

- Follower (Family/Past/Memories)
- Walking Away (Family/Past/Memories)
- Mother, Any Distance (Family)
- Before You Were Mine (Family/Past/Memories)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet’s family are portrayed in ‘Eden Rock’ and one other poem.
- Compare how death is presented in ‘Eden Rock’ and one other poem.
- Explore the concept of memories in ‘Eden Rock’ and one other poem.
Eden Rock Worksheet

1. What is the significance of the half-rhyme structure in the poem?

2. What does the split in the 5th stanza mean?

3. How does the author present the theme of childhood?

4. How does the author present the theme of familial love?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Eden Rock” to “Follower” and “Before You Were Mine”.

Farmer’s Bride – Charlotte Mew

Summary

The poem tells the story of a young woman and her unhappy marriage to an older farmer. The story is told from the farmer’s perspective, with the young woman remaining voiceless. The poem starts with the speaker stating they have been married three years, which is interesting considering he still refers to her as ‘bride’ rather than ‘wife’. This suggests the woman is not ready to take on the role and was perhaps forced into the marriage too early. It is clear the farmer has no intention of trying to understand the girl and makes no attempt to in the poem, instead dehumanising her by calling her a ‘frightened fay’ (fairy).

Her isolation and vulnerability is outlined in the stanzas that follow, with the final stanzas highlighting the farmer’s feelings of rejection and disappointment. Especially when it’s revealed he has no children and clearly wants them. The final stanza references the girl being up in the attic, far away from the farmer. The caesura and exclamation marks in this stanza create a sense of foreboding: the farmer is getting increasingly frustrated and is losing control.

Context

Mew is from the Victorian era and came from a poor family with a lot of mental health illness. Her poems often had a male persona and she was recognised by other great poets for having a clear talent. This poem symbolises the treatment of women in Victorian society, and also the natural world versus the industrial revolution.

Structure

- The poem has irregular stanzas, but a clear rhyme scheme (although the pattern is also irregular)
- The irregular stanzas reflect the strange relationship between the farmer and his bride
- As the structure becomes more and more irregular, it highlights the farmer’s inability to control his thoughts and feelings
Farmer’s Bride

Three summers since I chose a maid,
   Too young maybe—but more’s to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
   When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human;
Like the shut of a winter’s day
Her smile went out, and ’twadn’t a woman—
   More like a little frightened fay.

   One night, in the Fall, she runned away.
“Out ’mong the sheep, her be,” they said,
 ’Should properly have been abed;
But sure enough she wadn’t there
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.

So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down
   We chased her, flying like a hare
Before out lanterns. To Church-Town
   All in a shiver and a scare
We caught her, fetched her home at last
   And turned the key upon her, fast.
She does the work about the house
As well as most, but like a mouse:
   Happy enough to chat and play
With birds and rabbits and such as they,
   So long as men-folk keep away.
“Not near, not near!” her eyes beseech
When one of us comes within reach.
   The women say that beasts in stall
Look round like children at her call.
I've hardly heard her speak at all.
Shy as a leveret, swift as he,
Straight and slight as a young larch tree,
Sweet as the first wild violets, she,
To her wild self. But what to me?
The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,
   The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,
   A magpie's spotted feathers lie
On the black earth spread white with rime,
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.
   What's Christmas-time without there be
Some other in the house than we!
She sleeps up in the attic there
   Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,
The soft young down of her, the brown,
The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!
Key Quotes

‘Like the shut of a winter’s day/Her smile went out’
Possible Interpretation: By comparing her happiness to winter using a simile, it emphasises the cold numb and emotional state of the girl. ‘Her smile went out’ strengthens the idea that she didn’t choose to get married, her choice was taken away, therefore she shuts down emotionally which becomes very frustrating for the farmer.

‘Happy enough to chat and play/With birds and rabbits... So long as men-folk keep away.’
Possible Interpretation: The enjambment suggests the girl feels comfortable around nature and the animals, which brings her happiness back. However the end phrase implies she is frightened by males that come near her. She feels vulnerable in her interactions with others and would rather be left alone. The full stop at the end of the line emulates this.

‘The short days shorten and the oaks are brown’
Possible Interpretation: The changes in nature signify a change in season. Summer changing to autumn, then winter suggests things dying. This pathetic fallacy hints at the farmer’s patience and kindness for his bride also dying. This gives a foreboding sense for the future and the colour brown amongst other darker colours in this stanza are used to symbolise a dark time approaching.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Pain/Loss
- Desire/Longing
- Nature
- Unrequited love

The best poems to compare ‘Farmer’s Bride’ to are:

- Porphyria’s Lover (Loss/Unrequited Love)
- When We Two Parted (Pain/Loss)
- Neutral Tones (Nature/Loss)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys relationships in ‘Farmer’s Bride’ and one other poem.
- Compare how unhappiness in a relationship is presented in ‘Farmer’s Bride’ and one other poem.
- Explore how nature is conveyed in ‘Farmer’s Bride’ and one other poem.
Farmer’s Bride Worksheet

1. How does the irregular structure of the poem mirror the mental state of the speaker?

2. How does the personification and pathetic fallacy affect the characters?

3. How does the author present the theme of loss?

4. How does the author present the theme of desire?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Farmer’s Bride” to “When we two parted” and “Neutral Tones”

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Summary

Follower is about a father working on the land and is told from the perspective of his son, Heaney himself. Heaney is remembering his father as a child and as an adult. The poem starts with the speaker describing his father physically and his work on the land. It begins with an admirable tone which continues as the speaker moves on to describing his father’s skill set as he works. We get a sense of pride towards the end of the poem as the speaker wishes he could grow up to be like his father. The poem ends with the clear impact Heaney’s father has had on him, with him taking over and helping his father in his old age, suggesting the roles have been reversed.

Context

Seamus Heaney was Irish and grew up amongst nature in a very rural family. He became an English teacher and poet as an adult, and went on to become the Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995 and was offered the role of Poet Laureate, but turned it down due to his strong Irish roots and identity.

Structure

• The poem is written in six quatrains
• There is a mixture of ABAB rhyme and half rhyme
• The structure represents the ordered rhythm of working on the land
Follower

My father worked with a horse-plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horse 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.
Key Quotes

‘An expert. He would set the wing And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.’
Possible Interpretation: By describing his father as ‘an expert’, it emphasises the deep admiration he has of him. The short phrase and full stop shows his opinion hasn’t and won’t change. The use of the conjunction ‘and’ almost exaggerates all the things he feels his father could do. This creates a child-like tone, as if he wants to impress others with how much of an ‘expert’ his father is.

‘I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake, Fell sometimes on the polished sod;’
Possible Interpretation: The verb ‘stumbled’ suggests the speaker doesn’t feel he lives up to the ‘expert’ that he feels his father is. ‘His hob-nailed wake’ implies he feels inferior to his father. ‘Fell sometimes on the polished sod’ creates an image of the land perfectly kept by his father, with the verb ‘fell’ showing the speaker feels he is clumsy and almost ruining his father’s hard work. Again, this emphasises the hero-like image the speaker has of his father.

‘But today It is my father who keeps stumbling Behind me’
Possible Interpretation: ‘But today’ brings us away from the childhood memory and into the present, where his father is clearly a lot older and frailer. The words ‘keep stumbling’ connote old age and a loss of coordination. This creates a tender moment between father and son, as the speaker realises the change in roles switching.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Family
- Letting go
- Childhood
- Parental Love

The best poems to compare ‘Follower’ to are:

- Before You Were Mine (Family/Parental Love)
- Walking Away (Family/Childhood/Parental Love)
- Climbing My Grandfather (Childhood)
- Mother, Any Distance (Family/Childhood)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys a parent-child relationship in ‘Follower’ and one other poem.
- Compare how respect and admiration is presented in ‘Follower’ and one other poem.
- Explore the feeling of being restricted by another in ‘Follower’ and one other poem.
Follower Worksheet

1. What does the structure of the poem depict to the audience?

2. How does the personification and pathetic fallacy affect the characters?

3. How does the author present the theme of familial love?

4. How does the author present the theme of childhood?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Farmer’s Bride” to “When We Two Parted” and “Neutral Tones”.
Letters From Yorkshire – Maura Dooley

Summary
In this poem, the speaker receives letters from a male friend in Yorkshire, whilst she is in an office environment, presumably in a city. It becomes clear that the speaker misses life in Yorkshire, as she reads about his time in the countryside. The tone of this poem is very positive and reflective. Stanza one gives the reader a clear image of life in Yorkshire, before the poem begins to act as a reflection of the speaker’s inner thoughts and feelings.

There is a sense of refusing to romanticise about either nature or the man writing the letters, which is quite ambiguous, suggesting the speaker is trying to protect herself from certain feelings. We get a clear comparison of two different lives, with the speaker’s life seemingly less interesting than the man in Yorkshire. Although there is a clear sense of a long-distance relationship in play, we still see a connection between the pair as they keep in touch despite the miles between them.

Context
Dooley currently lives in London, but used to live in Yorkshire for quite a long period of time. She was born in Cornwall and went to University in York, suggesting she has a strong connection to the countryside. The poem was first published in 2002.

Structure
- The poem is organised into five tercets
- There is no rhyme scheme
- Enjambment and irregular rhyme create a stream of consciousness effect
- The end-stopped lines create a sense of deeper thought, where the speaker almost questions her life choices
Key Quotes

‘digging his garden, planting potatoes, he saw the first lapwings return and came indoors to write to me’

Possible Interpretation: Clear imagery has been used to show how deeply the man is connected with nature. ‘saw the first lapwings’ stirs a memory inside him, so he ‘came indoors to write’, implying he is a caring man. This shows although he enjoys being with nature, he knows there is a balance and not to forget those around him.

‘my heartful of headlines feeding words onto a blank screen. Is your life more real because you dig and sow?’

Possible Interpretation: This image is a strong contrast to the natural imagery in the previous quote. This suggests that the speaker does not understand balance as well as the man. This description suggests her life is mundane and unfulfilling. ‘feeding words onto a blank screen’ suggests work is consuming her and she will never be satisfied. The rhetorical question shows how she is comparing her life to his and wondering what is better.

‘watching the same news in different houses, our souls tap out messages across the icy miles.’

Possible Interpretation: The final lines of this poem depict how the speaker longs for his world away from the city. ‘Same news in different houses’ exemplifies the distance between them, which is strengthened in the phrase ‘across icy miles.’ The use of the noun ‘souls’ suggest a deeper connection, which implies she wants their relationship to work, despite being so far apart.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Love
- Longing
- Distance
- Nature

The best poems to compare ‘Letters From Yorkshire’ to are:

- I Think of Thee (Nature/Love/Longing)
- Winter Swans (Nature/Love/Distance)
- Love’s Philosophy (Nature/Longing)
- Farmer’s Bride (Nature/Longing)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare the speaker’s feelings are presented in ‘Letters From Yorkshire’ and one other poem.
- Compare how a long distance relationship is presented in ‘Letters From Yorkshire’ and one other poem.
- Explore how nature is presented in ‘Letters From Yorkshire’ and one other poem.
Letters from Yorkshire Worksheet

1. Analyse the structure of the poem.

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2. What does the motif of weather present to the audience?

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3. How does the author present the theme of love?

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4. How does the author present the theme of longing?

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5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Letters from Yorkshire” to “Winter Swans” and “Farmer’s Bride”

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Love’s Philosophy – Percy Bysshe Shelley

Summary
The speaker in Love’s Philosophy is trying to persuade a young woman to kiss him, giving in to her desires. It’s told from the male’s perspective and he is directly addressing the female. In the first stanza, the speaker uses natural imagery such as oceans and the wind to draw comparisons between nature and his relationship, suggesting it is also natural to want to give in to desire. The second stanza becomes more persuasive, with the use of imperatives and repetition. The poem finishes with a rhetorical question, making it seemingly impossible for the woman to reject the speaker.

Context
Shelley was a romantic poet, using natural imagery in a lot of his poetry to explore both romance and the relationship between man and nature. Although known for scandalous relationships, Shelley is best known for his marriage to Mary Shelley, the author of Frankenstein. Shelley died at the age of 29, by drowning.

Structure
- The poem is comprised of two stanzas, both regular in rhyme
- Both stanzas start with examples to persuade the woman and finish with a rhetorical question
- The poem uses simple language, common in romanticism
- Each stanza is a long sentence, punctuated with colons and semi colons, giving a childish tone which reflects the speaker’s persistence
Love’s Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?—
See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?
Key Quotes

‘The fountains mingle with the river/ And the rivers with the Ocean’
Possible Interpretation: The opening to the poem gives us natural imagery which emphasises the speaker’s love. The imagery of mixing suggests the joining of two hearts. The use of water connotes purity in the speaker’s love for the woman and suggests his love is as deep as the ocean, which is emphasised with the capitalised ‘O’.

‘The winds of Heaven mix for ever/With a sweet emotion’
Possible Interpretation: The use of religious imagery with the noun ‘heaven’ suggests that the speaker’s love isn’t just as deep as the ocean, but stretches as high as heaven. This, coupled with the hyperbolic time phrase, creates a positive, loving tone. ‘Sweet emotion’ seems as though the speaker is using flattery to win over the woman he’s trying to seduce.

‘What is all this sweet work worth/ If thou kiss not me?’
Possible Interpretation: The rhetorical question almost pressures the woman he’s trying to seduce. Giving her little room for a counter argument. The alliteration in ‘work worth’ emphasises how hard the speaker feels he has worked to win her over. The slight sibilance in play could suggest a soothing tone, but also a sense of irritation due to working hard.
We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Joy/Passion
- Desire/Longing
- Nature
- Unrequited love

The best poems to compare ‘Love’s Philosophy’ to are:

- Farmer’s Bride (Unrequited Love)
- Sonnet 29 (Joy/Passion/Desire/Longing/Nature)

**Below are three examples of an exam based question:**

- Compare how the poet conveys feelings of love and longing in ‘Love’s Philosophy’ and one other poem.
- Compare how nature is presented in ‘Love’s Philosophy’ and one other poem.
- Explore the theme of Unwanted Love in ‘Love’s Philosophy’ and one other poem.
Love’s Philosophy Worksheet

1. What effect does a two-stanza structure have on the poem?
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2. Why might the author use simple language?
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3. How does the author present the theme of desire?
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4. How does the author present the theme of longing?
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5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?


STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Love’s Philosophy” to “Farmer’s Bride” and “Sonnet 29”.


Mother Any Distance – Simon Armitage

Summary

Mother any Distance is about a son moving into his first home, with the help of his mother. The speaker talks about how, with becoming an adult, he is moving further away from his mother both physically and emotionally. His mother is addressed personally in the first stanza, which shows how he’s ready to move on without her, whilst still needing her help in some ways. We get a description of his mother standing still in the second stanza, strengthening the image of him moving on whilst she stays still. The poem ends with the image of the speaker moving up towards the sky and spacewalking, whilst his mother is gently holding on, almost as if making sure he’s still safe.

Context

Armitage is well known for his ability to write about complex emotions using every day events. Very recently, he became the Oxford professor of Poetry. Mother Any Distance is from a collection of poetry entitled ‘Book of Matches’.

Structure

• The poem is written in sonnet form, traditionally used for love songs
• The volta (turning point) is in line 9, when the speaker begins to feel less anxious and more excited about his new venture
• The poem starts off in rhyme/half rhyme, before becoming irregular in both rhyme and line length. This symbolises the evolution of the speakers relationship with his mother
Mother Any Distance

Mother, any distance greater than a single span
requires a second pair of hands.
You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors,
the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors.
You at the zero-end, me with the spool of tape, recording
length, reporting metres, centimetres back to base, then leaving
up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling
years between us. Anchor. Kite.

I space-walk through the empty bedrooms, climb
the ladder to the loft, to breaking point, where something
has to give;
two floors below your fingertips still pinch
the last one-hundredth of an inch...I reach
towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky
to fall or fly.
Key Quotes

‘Mother, any distance greater than a single span requires a second pair of hands.’

Possible Interpretation: The speaker is addressing his mother directly, which creates a sense of maturity. This indicates he is ready to move on and become more independent as he begins to work on his new house. This image is contrasted through the phrase ‘second pair of hands’, suggesting that even though he feels he is ready for adulthood, he still needs his mother’s help. The use of sibilance in this quote creates a loving, soothing tone: although he is ready to leave, he still relies on his mother.

‘to breaking point, where something has to give;’

Possible Interpretation: Here, the speaker is up in the loft, the highest part of the house without his mother. We have an image of him being tethered to his mother, who is below him downstairs. He is now at the limits of his freedom and independence, so the phrase ‘something has to give’ suggests he needs for his mother to let him go and be independent. ‘Breaking point’ implies he feels his mother is hindering him, which creates a frustrated tone.

‘I reach towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky to fall or fly.’

Possible Interpretation: These final words create an image of the speaker reaching towards his independence. The phrase ‘fall or fly’ links to the fight or flight response when you’re in a difficult situation. This imagery evokes a sense of freedom in the speaker’s decision to leave home. ‘Hatch’ has a double meaning, leaving the ending implicitly positive. Like a bird hatching from an egg, independence is natural, suggesting the speaker will be fine as he embarks on a new journey in his life.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

• Family
• Letting go
• Childhood
• Parental Love

The best poems to compare ‘Mother, Any Distance’ to are:

• Follower (Family/Parental Love)
• Walking Away (Family/Childhood/Parental Love)
• Climbing My Grandfather (Childhood)
• Before You Were Mine (Family/Childhood)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

• Compare how the poet conveys a parent-child relationship in ‘Mother Any Distance’ and one other poem.
• Compare how growing up is presented in ‘Mother Any Distance’ and one other poem.
• Explore complicated relationships in ‘Mother Any Distance’ and one other poem.
Mother, Any Distance Worksheet

1. What effect does the sonnet format have?

2. Why might the author switch from rhyme to irregular rhythm?

3. How does the author present the theme of familial love?

4. How does the author present the theme of childhood?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Mother, Any Distance” to “Follower” and “Walking Away”

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Neutral Tones – Thomas Hardy

Summary

The poem is a memory of a difficult relationship, told from the viewpoint of the poet. The poem opens with pathetic fallacy, which indicates conflict in a couple’s relationship. The imagery and use of oxymoron in the stanzas to follow reflect the pain and negatives the couple are facing. The woman hardly looks at the man directly and when she does, doesn’t hold his gaze.

Their relationship is described as forced, especially with the contrasts such as the woman’s smile being ‘the deadest thing’. The final stanza shows a change in emotion. We see a flash of anger, before the tone shifts back to melancholic and sombre, reflecting the emptiness of the relationship.

Context

Hardy was a Victorian poet and most of his work was autobiographical. A lot of his poems were about his relationships. Influenced by the romantics, a lot of Hardy’s poetry was about his first wife Emma, who he became estranged from. However this poem was written about a relationship before his marriage to Emma.

Structure

- The poem is written in four regular quatrains, suggesting highly controlled thought as if he thinks of the memory often
- It is written in a circular structure, beginning and ending by the pond
- The circular structure reflects Hardy’s inability to move on from this painful memory
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.
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
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
Your face, and the God curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.
Key Quotes

‘Few leaves lay on the starving sod’
Possible Interpretation: The natural imagery used sets a bleak and bitter scene. We associate nature with growth, so the alliteration in ‘starving sod’ suggests that their relationship isn’t growing anymore and is coming to an end, creating a negative tone.

‘The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing’
Possible Interpretation: The oxymoronic imagery acts as an insight into how hurt the speaker is. A smile usually connotes happiness, which the speaker no longer has with her, emphasised by the superlative ‘deadest’. The hint of sibilance in play creates a bitter tone.

‘Keen lessons that love deceives’
Possible Interpretation: Personification of love has been used again to suggest the speaker is hurt. This idea is strengthened through the use of sibilance. ‘Keen’ implies that there were problems in the relationship that were overlooked because of his love for the woman.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Nature
- Bitterness
- Pain/Loss
- Anger
- Memories

The best poems to compare ‘Neutral Tones’ to are:

- Winter Swans (Pain/Loss/Nature)
- Farmer’s Bride (Anger/bitterness)
- When We Two Parted (Anger/Pain/Loss/Memories)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys anger and bitterness in ‘Neutral Tones’ and one other poem.
- Compare how conflict in a relationship is presented in ‘Neutral Tones’ and one other poem.
- Explore the concept of painful memories in ‘Neutral Tones’ and one other poem.
Neutral Tones Worksheet

1. What effect does the pathetic fallacy have within the poem?

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2. Why might the author use four regular quatrains?

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3. How does the author present the theme of loss?

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4. How does the author present the theme of nature?

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5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Neutral Tones” to “Winter Swans” and “Farmer’s Bride”.

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Porphyria’s Lover – Robert Browning

Summary

Porphyria’s Lover is written as a dramatic monologue from the perspective of the male lover. The monologue is of a fatal meeting between him and his lover. The poem opens with pathetic fallacy: a stormy setting indicating something isn’t quite right. The speaker is waiting for his lover and is described as having ‘a heart fit to break’, creating a sinister tone. When his lover turns up, he acts very cold towards her, not speaking but watching her as she attempts to engage with him. He eventually looks up at her, but is still silent. There is a change of his view on her, from ‘soiled’ to ‘perfectly pure and good’ before he murders her. We learn that he strangles her, and the poem ends with his lover described as having to be propped up where she is lifeless. It becomes clear the speaker is an unreliable narrator, as he switches back to being kind and loving. The last line is ‘God has not said a word’, suggesting he feels no remorse for his actions.

Context

Browning was married to Elizabeth Barrett Browning (Sonnet 29), and was a well known Victorian poet. He was most famous for his dramatic monologues, often having a dark tone in them. This poem was part of a two poem collection called ‘Madhouse Cells’, with the second poem also having a disturbed male narrator.

Structure

- The poem is written in a single stanza as a dramatic monologue
- There is a clear rhyme and rhythm in the poem which mirrors the calmness of the speaker (this makes the murder in the poem more shocking)
- The characters are mirrored at the beginning and end of the poem. At the start, the man is still and calm, whilst the woman isn’t. This then switches at the end when the woman is dead.
Porphyria’s Lover

The rain set early in to-night,
   The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
   And did its worst to vex the lake:
   I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
   She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
   Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
   Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdraw the dripping cloak and shawl,
   And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
   And, last, she sat down by my side
   And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
   And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
   And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
   And spread, o’er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me — she
   Too weak, for all her heart’s endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
   From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
   And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
   Nor could to-night’s gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
   For love of her, and all in vain:
   So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
   Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
   Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
   Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
   In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
   I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
   I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
   About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
   I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
   The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
   That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
   Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
   And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!
Key Quotes

‘it tore the elm-tops down for spite and did its worst to vex the lake’

Possible Interpretation: The description of the storm seems to foreshadow the violent murder that will happen. The personification of the weather mimics the speaker’s feelings of being victimised by the world. It suggests the speaker himself feels he’s being victimised out of ‘spite’ and being pushed to the point of feeling ‘vexed’.

‘no pain felt she I am quite sure she felt no pain.’

Possible Interpretation: These words have an almost nonchalant tone, as if the speaker feels he has done the right thing in killing her. The incremental repetition of her feeling ‘no pain’ acts as if he is convincing himself of this fact, not anyone else.

‘And yet God has not said a word!’

Possible Interpretation: These final words again show that the speaker is trying to convince himself that he hasn’t done anything wrong. It also hints to the reader that the speaker is delusional and an unreliable narrator of the events. By referencing ‘God’, who is all seeing, it shows that he has hope in the fact that he will not get caught. This is emphasised through the final exclamation which seems to signify excitement in this case.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Pain/Loss
- Desire/Longing/Obsession
- Unrequited love
- Secrecy

The best poems to compare ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ to are:

- Farmer’s Bride (Unrequited Love)
- When We Two Parted (Pain/Loss)
- Neutral Tones (Pain/Loss)
- Sonnet 29 (Desire/Longing/Obsession)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys conflicted feelings in ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ and one other poem.
- Compare how destructive love is portrayed in ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ and one other poem.
- Explore how the poet presents attitudes towards love in ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ and one other poem.
Porphyria’s Lover Worksheet

1. What effect does the dramatic monologue have on the poem?

2. Why might the author use pathetic fallacy?

3. How does the author present the theme of desire?

4. How does the author present the theme of love?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Porphyria’s Lover” to “Sonnet 29” and “Farmer’s Bride”.

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Singh Song – Daljit Nagra

Summary
The poem is about an Indian shopkeeper who is recently married. He would rather spend all of his time with his new wife, rather than helping to run the family business. The speaker is Mr Singh, and has a joyous, romantic tone. This contrasts with the conflict that has been created since being married. The poem begins with a vivid image of the shopkeeper, due to the strong dialect used. The speaker moans about the pressures his faces from his family to keep the tradition of running the family shop, whilst all he wants to do is be with his new bride who is upstairs waiting for him. We learn of customers complaining about the tidiness of the shop and quality of goods, before there is a detailed description of the speaker’s wife. She is described as rebellious, merging British and Sikh cultures. She clearly doesn’t respect tradition, disrespecting his parents and coming across as very rebellious.

Towards the end of the poem, we learn of their relationship once the shop is closed. They’re in the honeymoon phase, with language to make it seem magical, fun and exciting, almost as if they’re young teenagers. The poem ends with lots of repetition to suggest their new routine away from work and family pressures. It’s quite clear he loves his wife very much, even risking family honour for her.

Context
Nagra’s parents moved to the UK in the 1950s, so he grew up with both traditional Indian culture whilst learning British culture too. They owned a corner shop in Sheffield where they lived. He deliberately used the dialect of Indian language as it is often made fun of. The poem highlights the merging of two cultures, alongside the love between a newly married couple.

Structure
- Nagra’s poem is irregular in stanza length and there is no fixed form
- There is a mix of nursery rhyme, rhyming couplets and song lyrics
- The repetition of the chorus continues the song-like quality, whilst also emphasising the repetitiveness of the speaker’s new life, with the conflict of his marriage, work and family life
Singh Song

i run just one ov my daddy’s shops
from 9 o’clock to 9 o’clock
and he vunt me not to hav a break
but ven nobody in, i do di lock —

cos up di stairs is my newly bride
vee share in chapatti
vee share in di chutney
after vee hav made luv
like vee rowing through Putney —

ven i return vid my pinnie untied
di shoppers always point and cry:
hey Singh, ver yoo bin?
yor lemons are limes
yor bananas are plantain
dis dirty little floor need a little bit of mop
in di worst Indian shop
on di whole Indian road —

above my head high heels tap di ground
as my vife on di net is playing wid di mouse
ven she catch di cat she couple up a pair
book dem for a date on her lover’s web page —

my bride,
she effing at my mum
in all di colours of Punjabi
my bride,
she stumble like a drunk
making fun at my daddy
my bride,
tiny eyes ov a gun
and di tummy ov a teddy
my bride,
she hav a red crew cut
and she wear a Tartan sari
a donkey jacket and some pumps
on di squeak ov di girls who are buy my penny sweeties —

Ven i return from di tickle ov my bride
di shoppers always point and cry:
hey Singh, ver yoo bin?
di milk is out ov date
and di bread is always stale
the tings yoo hav on offer yoo hav never got in stock
in di worst Indian shop
on di whole Indian road —

late in di midnight hour
ven yoo shoppers are wrap up quiet
ven di precinct is concrete-cool
vee cum down whispering stairs
and sit on my silver stool
from behind di chocolate bars
vee stare past di half-price window signs
at di beaches ov di UK in di brightey moon —

from di stool each night she say,
how much do yoo charge for dat moon baby?
from di stool each night i say,
is half di cost ov yoo baby.
from di stool each night she say,
how much does dat come to baby?
from di stool each night i say,
is priceless baby —
Key Quotes

‘After vee have made love/Like vee rowing through Putney’
Possible Interpretation: The way it’s written gives a strong Indian dialect, creating a clear image of the speaker. This quote also represents the culture clash explored in this poem, as the speaker uses ‘Putney’, which is the name of an English boat race, but also means wife in Punjabi. The poet compares their love life to a boat race using a simile, which implies its intense, like a professional race.

‘In di worst Indian shop/on di whole Indian road’
Possible Interpretation: These words have an angry tone to them, as if the speaker is frustrated with the conflict in his life. The repetition reinforces how the speaker needs to choose between honouring his father by conforming to Indian culture within the UK, or betraying this to form a new life with his new wife who is described as Westernised. ‘Worst’ and ‘whole’ references the fact that it’s common for Indian families to own a shop.

‘the shoppers always point and cry:/Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?’
Possible Interpretation: The shoppers pointing and crying suggest the speaker has been neglecting his shop to be with his new bride. This reinforces the conflict between his family duties and his duty to his new wife. ‘Always’ suggests this is an ongoing issue and something unlikely to change. It shows the love the speaker has for his new bride is more important than his duty as a shopkeeper.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Romantic love
- Family
- Conflict

The best poems to compare ‘Singh Song’ to are:

- I Think Of Thee (Romantic love)
- Winter Swans (Conflict)
- Porphyria’s Lover (Conflict)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys feelings of love in ‘Singh Song’ and one other poem.
- Compare how family is presented in ‘Singh Song’ and one other poem.
- Explore attitudes towards conflict within a relationship in ‘Singh Song’ and one other poem.
Singh Song Worksheet

1. Why might the author use an irregular format within the poem?

2. Why might the author use repetition of the chorus?

3. How does the author present the theme of desire?

4. How does the author present the theme of love?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?


STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Singh Song” to “Porphyria’s Lover” and “Winter Swans”
Sonnet 29 ‘I Think of Thee’ – Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Summary

Sonnet 29 is about the love the speaker has for her lover and how much she wants him to be by her side. The tone is quite excitable and impatient, suggesting a young or new love. The poem is an extended metaphor, comparing the speaker’s love to the vines encircling a tree. She describes the tree as her lover, whilst she is the vine that wraps around it. The repetition of ‘thee’ throughout the poem suggests infatuation, almost obsessive love.

Context

Barrett Browning grew up with a controlling father who refused to let any of his daughters marry. She became a successful poet, and eventually entered into a secret relationship with Robert Browning, who she later married. Due to this, she was disinherited by her father.

Structure

- The poem is a Petrarchan sonnet, a highly controlled form
- Although controlled, Browning manipulates it to create a tone of excitement and impatience
- The volta (turning point) appears earlier than usual, emphasising the speaker’s desire to be with her lover
Sonnet 29

I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there ‘s nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.
Key Quotes

‘my thoughts do twine and bud About thee, as wild vines, about a tree’
Possible Interpretation: The natural imagery mimics the natural growth of the speaker’s love: she is the vine, whilst her lover is the tree. The verbs ‘twine’ and ‘bud’ suggest her thoughts are non-stop and won’t stop growing which strengthens her joy and passion for her lover. The simile ‘as wild vines’ suggest that she can’t control her feelings, which implies she is borderline obsessed with the man.

‘I will not have my thoughts instead of thee Who art dearer, better!’
Possible Interpretation: These words suggest that although she enjoys thinking about her lover, the speaker would much rather be with him, which would be ‘dearer, better!’ The superlative phrase shows her enthusiasm for her relationship, which is strengthened through the use of the exclamation mark which creates an excitable tone. The phrase ‘I will not’ hints at a childish like tone, as if she will have a tantrum if she can’t have him.

‘burst, shattered, everywhere! Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee’
Possible Interpretation: The verbs ‘burst’ and ‘shattered’ suggest an inability to contain her excitement. Again, this is solidified through the use of the exclamation mark. It also suggests her feelings are becoming very intense and obsessive. She says it is a ‘deep joy to see and hear thee’ which implies she has a deep desire and passion for her lover. The adjective ‘deep’ has been used to exaggerate her love for him and make it clear it isn’t a crush, but for her, it’s real.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Nature
- Desire/Longing/Obsession
- Secrecy
- Joy/Passion

The best poems to compare ‘Sonnet 29’ to are:

- Letter’s From Yorkshire (Nature)
- Porphyria’s Lover (Desire/Longing/Obsession/Secrecy)
- Singh Song (Joy/Passion)
- Love’s Philosophy (Desire/Longing/Joy/Passion/Nature)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys joy in a relationship in ‘Sonnet 29’ and one other poem.
- Compare how nature is presented in ‘Sonnet 29’ and one other poem.
- Explore the concept of obsessive love in ‘Sonnet 29’ and one other poem.
Sonnet 29 Worksheet

1. Why might the author use the Petrarchan sonnet structure within the poem?

2. Why might the author place the volta so early on in the poem?

3. How does the author present the theme of nature?

4. How does the author present the theme of desire?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Sonnet 29” to “Singh Song” and “Love’s Philosophy”.
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Walking Away – Cecil Day Lewis

Summary

The poem is about a father reminiscing about a time watching his son play football for the first time. The poem represents the struggle parents have of letting go of their children. The speaker is the poet (Day Lewis) speaking directly to his son. The poem begins with pathetic fallacy, looking at the change in seasons to represent the change in his son as he grows older. We read a description of the son walking behind the group of boys, following rather than leading. The poet then describes his own emotions watching his son who seems shy and nervous. Towards the end of the poem, there is a metaphor of the circle of life, and the comparison of life experiences to the moulding of clay. The poem ends with the speaker reflecting on children’s need to grow and become independent.

Context

Day Lewis lost his mother very young and was bought up by his father, which could be why this poem is about a father-son bond. His poems are often linked to romanticism and he uses nature to explore personal experiences. The poem is written about Day Lewis’ first born son, Sean.

Structure

- The poem is a lyric poem written in four stanzas
- It has a fairly regular rhyme and metre
- It is deeply reflective, shown by the controlled structure
- The caesura creates the slow, reflective pace
- The enjambment represents his son slowly becoming more independent and moving on without his father
Walking Away

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –
A sunny day with leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away
Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.
That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature’s give-and-take – the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one’s irresolute clay.
I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.
Key Quotes

‘It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day – A sunny day with leaves just turning’

Possible Interpretation: The precise time scale given straight away implies there is something significant about the memory the speaker is sharing with the reader. The pathetic fallacy of ‘sunny day with leaves just turning’ is symbolic of the inevitable changes in nature, especially from summer to autumn, which gives a sense of ageing and change. This suggests that the memory being shared was also inevitable.

‘That hesitant figure, eddying away Like a winged seed’

Possible Interpretation: The speaker describes his son as ‘hesitant’ which hints at him being young and about to do something for the first time. The simile ‘like a winged seed’ creates a sense of something out of the father’s control, which gives a gloomy tone.

‘How selfhood begins with a walking away, And love is proved in the letting go.’

Possible Interpretation: ‘Selfhood’ connotes independence – the speaker knows that the only way to give his son the independence he needs in order to grow, is by letting him go. ‘love is proved in the letting go’ is relatable to any parent watching their child grow up and become less and less dependent on them. These final words act as a reminder to the reader that in letting go, this is how they prove their love. He draws our attention to it through use of caesura, which allows us a moment of reflection.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Family
- Letting go
- Childhood
- Parental Love

The best poems to compare ‘Walking Away’ to are:

- Follower (Family/Childhood)
- Mother, Any Distance (Family/Letting go/Parental Love)
- Eden Rock (Family)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys a sense of loss in ‘Walking Away’ and one other poem.
- Compare how growing up is presented in ‘Walking Away’ and one other poem.
- Explore the concept of strong bonds in ‘Walking Away’ and one other poem.
Walking Away Worksheet

1. Why might the author use the four-stanza structure within the poem?

2. Why might the author use a caesura within poem?

3. How does the author present the theme of familial love?

4. How does the author present the theme of childhood?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Walking Away” to “Eden Rock” and “Follower”.

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When We Two Parted – Lord Byron

Summary
When We Two Parted is a memory about the painful end to a relationship. The language used suggests it was a secret or forbidden relationship and is written from the viewpoint of the poet. The poet starts with the couple leaving each other in silence, again suggesting a secret relationship or an end that wasn’t mutual as there is a sense of words left unsaid. The second stanza talks of the repercussions of the relationship for the woman. She is gossiped about and her reputation is described as ‘light’, implying some sort of scandal. This is continued into stanza three with an ongoing pressure from the public. The use of rhetorical question suggests emotional trauma, although the poet remained anonymous in the affair. Stanzas four and five take on a bitter tone, with the poet feeling forgotten about by the woman. The poem ends where it began, with silence and tears. This implies the poet is unable to let go of the painful and bitter memory.

Context
Lord Byron was one of the leading romantic poets of his time. The poem is said to be based around one of the many affairs Byron had in his lifetime. He tried to protect the reputation of the woman the poem is about, by claiming it was written in 1808, when it was actually written in 1816. The poem is supposedly about Lady Webster, who also had an alleged affair with the Duke of Wellington.

Structure
- The poem is highly controlled; regular in rhythm and rhyme
- The controlled structure suggests Byron thought a lot about the affair and considered it carefully
- Although it moves between past, present and future, it is written in a circular structure, suggesting the poet constantly revisits the memory
When We Two Parted

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sank chill on my brow–
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell in mine ear;
A shudder come o’er me–
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well–
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met–
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?–
With silence and tears.
Key Quotes

‘In silence and tears’ / ‘with silence and tears’

Possible Interpretation: These words come at the beginning and end of the poem, creating a circular structure. This suggests the speaker is trapped and still hurting from the painful memory of the breakup. Sibilance is also used to emphasise the sad tone throughout the poem. ‘Silence and tears’ implies more could have been said, but for an unknown reason it wasn’t.

‘That hour foretold/Sorrow to this’

Possible Interpretation: The enjambment used emphasises the link between past and present, hinting that the speaker still holds on to a lot of the pain caused. ‘Sorrow’ means a feeling of deep distress caused by loss and disappointment, creating a bitter tone, again highlighted by the use of sibilance.

‘Thy vows all are broken/ and light is thy fame’

Possible Interpretation: Vows could be a reference to wedding vows, highlighting the consequences of the affair. Contextually, we know that Byron was famous for scandalous affairs, and the poem is supposedly about Lady Webster, who was said to have had other affairs. ‘Light is thy fame’ suggests her reputation is damaged because she strayed away from her marriage and ‘light’ connotes weak or flimsy.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

- Secrecy and forbidden love
- Regret
- Pain/Loss
- Anger
- Memories

The best poems to compare ‘When We To Parted’ to are:

- Neutral Tones (memory/anger/regret)
- Winter Swans (pain/loss/anger)
- Farmer’s Bride (pain/loss/anger)
- Porphyria’s Lover (secrecy)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

- Compare how the poet conveys feelings of love and loss in ‘When We Two Parted’ and one other poem.
- Compare how conflict in a relationship is presented in ‘When We Two Parted’ and one other poem.
- Explore the theme of Forbidden Love in ‘When We Two Parted’ and one other poem.
When We Two Parted Worksheet

1. Why might the author use such a rigid structure within the poem?
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2. Why might the author use a repetition within the poem?
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3. How does the author present the theme of love?
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4. How does the author present the theme of regret?
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5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “When we two parted” to “Porphyria’s Lover” and “Winter Swans”.

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Winter Swans – Owen Sheers

Summary
This contemporary poem is about a couple going through a difficult time in their relationship. It is clearly tense between them, then becomes quite reflective as they watch a pair of swans. The swans become a metaphor for their own conflict. The poem begins with pathetic fallacy, storm clouds to reflect the couple’s relationship. We then read a description of the couple’s movement around the lake, before the finally reach the swans. The verbs used suggest they’re avoiding conflict. Next, there is a description of the swans who seem united. We get lots of references to strength and solidity, again mirroring the couple despite going through a difficult patch. This idea is strengthened with the constant use of collective pronouns throughout the poem. The poem ends with a simile to show the couple holding hands, clearly reunited and moving forward as one.

Context
Sheers is a Welsh poet who’s work often uses natural imagery. Winter Swans is taken from his collection ‘Skirrid Hill’, which translates to shattered mountain. Skirrid is also translated in Welsh to divorce or separation.

Structure
- The poem has six irregular tercets, finishing with a couplet
- The line lengths are also irregular and there is no rhyme, reflecting the conflict in the couple’s relationship
- The final stanza being a couplet represents that, despite their problems, they are willing to work as a couple
Winter Swans

The clouds had given their all –
two days of rain and then a break
in which we walked,

the waterlogged earth
gulping for breath at our feet
as we skirted the lake, silent and apart,

until the swans came and stopped us
with a show of tipping in unison.
As if rolling weights down their bodies to their heads

they halved themselves in the dark water,
icebergs of white feather,
paused before returning again
like boats righting in rough weather.

‘They mate for life’ you said as they left,
porcelain over the stilling water. I didn’t reply
but as we moved on through the afternoon light,

slow-stepping in the lake’s shingle and sand,
I noticed our hands, that had, somehow,
swum the distance between us

and folded, one over the other,
like a pair of wings settling after flight.
Key Quotes

‘The clouds had given their all-/Two days of rain and then a break’
Possible Interpretation: The poet uses pathetic fallacy to create a stormy and turbulent scene from the beginning of the poem, creating a negative tone. The idea of a storm implies the couple have had an argument. The ‘break’ implies the couple have stopped arguing after two days, probably exhausted, due to the phrase ‘given their all’.

‘Gulping for breath at our feet/as we skirted the lake’
Possible Interpretation: The personification of the earth ‘gulping for breath’ connotes something struggling to survive, perhaps their relationship as it is being described as unstable. The verb ‘skirted’, can be used when people are trying to avoid a problem. This implies that the couple are ‘skirting’ the issue, trying to regain the energy spent arguing and having a chance to breathe before continuing to talk about their problems.

‘and folded, one over the other,/like a pair of wings settling after flight’
Possible Interpretation: The couple’s hands are being compared to the wings of the swans using a simile. This suggests that the couple are reunited again and have settled their differences. ‘one over the other’ creates a sense of unity and togetherness, which creates a happier tone at the end of the poem compared to the start. There is a hint of sibilance at the end with ‘wings settling’, which creates a softer tone.
Key Themes and Comparisons

We can link this poem to the following themes:

• Nature
• Distance
• Anger

The best poems to compare ‘Winter Swans’ to are:

• Neutral Tones (Anger)
• Letters From Yorkshire (Nature/Distance)
• Sonnet 29 (Nature)

Below are three examples of an exam based question:

• Compare the presentation of a complicated relationship in ‘Winter Swans’ and one other poem.
• Compare how conflict in a relationship is presented in ‘Winter Swans’ and one other poem.
• Explore how nature is presented in ‘Winter Swans’ and one other poem.
Winter Swans Worksheet

1. Why might the author use an irregular structure within the poem?

2. Why might the author use similes within the poem?

3. How does the author present the theme of love?

4. How does the author present the theme of nature?
5. List three examples of imagery in the poem, and explain their effect?

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STRETCH YOURSELF: Compare “Winter Swans” to “Neutral Tones” and “Sonnet 29”
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Exemplar Essay Responses

Compare how poets present romantic love in ‘Love’s Philosophy’ and in one other poem from ‘Love and Relationships’.

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?—

See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?

Old fashion language similar in sonnet 29 ‘thee’ - romantic as is links to Shakespearian sonnets

Natural imagery similar to sonnet 29. Biblical reference as well. Ironic as Shelley was an atheist

Questioning comes across as quite desperate and needy. Contrasts to Sonnet 29 which is more romantic and happy in tone

Grade 5 Example Paragraphs

‘Love’s Philosophy’ and ‘Sonnet 29’ both explore the idea of romantic love, but also as something which is not easily kept. Both speakers seem consumed with romantic love, which is highlighted through their use of romantic imagery. At times, the reader is left to wonder whether the relationship is more one-sided in both poems.

‘Sonnet 29’ is written in sonnet form and has a calm tone. This suggests that the speaker is enjoying the beginning and is looking forward to what may be a great romance, as the format is the same as Shakespeare’s love sonnets. However, Love’s Philosophy has two stanzas, with the final line ending in a question. This creates a sense of longing and desire apparent in ‘Sonnet 29’, but not enjoying the same kind of romantic success. The final lines ‘What is all this sweet work worth/If thou kiss not me?’ come across as needy and as though the relationship is not fully established yet, leaving the reader to question whether it is a true depiction of romantic love.

The language used in both poems is quite similar; both use slightly old-fashioned language with words such as “thine” and “thee.” This could make the reader think of Shakespearean love sonnets which immediately connotes romance. Furthermore, natural imagery is used consistently throughout both poems, such as “mountains” “boughs” and “sunlight”. Figurative language in ‘Sonnet 29’ such as “set thy trunk all bare” is also reflected in ‘Love’s Philosophy’: “mountains kiss high heaven.”

In conclusion, romantic love is apparent in both poems, although shown in different ways. ‘Sonnet 29’ expresses the need for emotional attachment, whereas ‘Love’s Philosophy’ could also be viewed as a more physical romantic attraction, rather than emotional as well.
Grade 9 Example Paragraphs

In the poems ‘Love’s philosophy’ by Percy Shelley and ‘I think of thee’ by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, love is presented as romantic, but also as something which is not easily obtainable. The speaker in Love’s philosophy seems so consumed with romantic love as evidenced by the use of romantic imagery but it seems apparent to the reader with the use of questioning that the relationship has not been consummated and seems more like a dramatic romantic plea rather than a celebration of a successful romantic relationship. Likewise, in ‘Sonnet 29’, there is a lot of romantic imagery, but it again seems apparent to the reader that the speaker is not physically with the subject of their affections.

Arguably, one of the biggest differences in the poems is highlighted in the meaning. ‘Love’s Philosophy’ seems to be centred around a man trying to seduce a woman by using figurative language. The reader is given no real indication that the speaker’s intentions are pure. However in ‘Sonnet 29’, a much deeper love is hinted at: in the volta the phrase “rustle thy boughs” could be read as the speaker wanting the man to commit and propose rather than simply romance her. The first octave lends itself to the idea of the female speaker reassuring the man of her affections. This contrasts with ‘Love’s Philosophy’ as it is ambiguous as to whether the speaker successfully won the woman. The question “if thou not kiss me” shows uncertainty and desperation which the reader can identify as an unsuccessful pursuit of mutual affection.

On the other hand, it could be argued that there is a clear indication in both poems that the speakers in both poems are expressing a genuine heart-felt declaration of love which is romantic and unstoppable. This can be implied through the use of enjambment, that can be seen in both. Likewise, the language used in both poems is quite similar; both use old-fashioned articles such as “thine” and “thee”. This lends itself to Shakesperian love sonnets, thus suggesting romance. Semantic fields of nature are shared in both poems, with an extended metaphor centred around love and romance strong in both.

Figurative language in ‘Sonnet 29’ such as “set thy trunk all bare” is also reflected in Love’s Philosophy: “mountains kiss high heaven.” The noun “boughs” could imply religious connotations as it appears in the bible, suggesting the speaker wants the man to declare his affections, but it could also be seen as a sexual innuendo as the speaker also desires physical romantic togetherness. Likewise, biblical language is referenced in Shelley’s poem, “mountains kiss high heaven” despite the fact that Shelley himself was an atheist, to perhaps suggest that the romantic relationship the speaker is suggesting would be a natural and pure one.

In conclusion, romantic love is portrayed in different ways in both poems. Although both use sexually suggestive language, ‘Sonnet 29’ also expresses a want for an emotional attachment whereas, despite the romantic natural imagery, the same sentiment is not quite displayed in ‘Love’s Philosophy’ which could be viewed as a more physical romantic attraction rather than a deeper love.
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