

## AQA POWER AND CONFLICT POETRY

### EXTRA CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES:

#### Exposure

1. W.B Yeats, in attempting to justify his dislike for Wilfred Owen's poetry, said, 'Passive suffering is not a theme for poetry.' 'Exposure' is about passive suffering. Do you agree with Yeats' sentiment?
2. How is 'Exposure' different from poems produced by the Romantics that Owen so dearly loved?
3. Who or what is more powerful in 'Exposure'? Man or nature?
4. Although 'dawn' could be seen as symbolic of hope, does hope actually exist in the poem?
5. Owen alludes to England, his home, when he talks about 'forgotten dreams'. How does this image of England emphasise the rawness of the men's experiences in 'Exposure'?

#### My Last Duchess:

1. How does the Duchess incite fear of emasculation in the Duke?
2. 'Although the Duchess is presented as a stereotypical, immoral and dangerous seductress, Browning wants us to feel sorry for her.' To what extent do you agree?
3. 'The Duke is clearly to blame for the coquettish behaviour of the Duchess.' Discuss.
4. The speaker of the poem clearly wields political and social power, but what is Browning saying about the power of art?
5. To what extent is pride a dangerous character trait?
6. How does Browning present the 'male gaze' as something that reduces 'femininity' to superficial beauty?

#### Ozymandias:

1. What is the irony of Ozymandias' statement, 'Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair'?
2. "Ozymandias' is a warning against humanity's hubris.' Discuss.
3. From a modern perspective, how is 'Ozymandias' a clear example of how humanity has failed to wield power responsibly?
4. What type of power is stronger in the poem? The power of nature or the power of language?

#### London:

1. How could 'London' be seen as poem that promotes Romanticism?
2. Although he presents the people of London as vulnerable and needy, how could you argue that Blake is critical of them?
3. Do you think Blake subtly offers solutions to the strict and harsh societal protocols he describes? If so, what are they?
4. "London' is a poem that deals with the power of belief and its destruction of hope.' Discuss.

#### Storm on the Island:

1. 'Although they have 'prepared' for the storm, the people on the island do not recognise or appreciate the intense power of nature'. Discuss.
2. 'As powerful as man is, it will never be as powerful as nature'. To what extent do you agree?

#### Remains:

1. 'The speaker of the poem struggles more with internal conflict than the physical act of fighting'. To what extent do you agree?
2. Who or what is the real enemy in 'Remains'?
3. Physical conflict and psychological conflict are major themes in the poem but how does Simon Armitage comment on power? What sort of power does he focus on and why?
4. How is the futility of war explored in 'Remains'?
5. The soldiers are 'sent' out to their next assignment, yet it is never revealed who has sent them. Like the soldiers in Wilfred Owen's poem and 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', they are not really clear on the reasons why they have been sent out. Why do you think the uncertainty amongst soldiers is such a common theme in war poetry? Who or what is Simon Armitage attacking here?

#### Extract from 'The Prelude':

1. How does 'The Prelude' conform to the conventions of Romanticism? What links does it share with other poems of the movement?
2. Wordsworth shows nature as being in conflict with itself. Can the serene images of the 'willow tree' and 'sparkling light' ever co-exist with the sinister 'huge peak' and 'grim shape'?
3. 'The conflict between man and nature is caused by man's attempt to manipulate nature.' To what extent do you agree?
4. It could be argued that the poem is about the power of nature, but what exactly IS the power of nature? Why is it powerful?

#### Tissue:

1. How could the poem be seen as a sort of parable?
2. What is Imtiaz Dharker saying about the significance of human life in the poem?
3. How does power play a role in this poem?
4. How does Dharker portray the fragility of human life in the poem?

#### The Charge of the Light Brigade:

1. How is the futility of war presented in 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'?
2. The famous line of the poem, 'Their's but to do and die', is often misquoted as 'Their's but to do *or* die', which gives the poem a different inflection. How? Why do you think Tennyson chose the connective 'and'?
3. How are biblical allusions used in 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'?

#### War Photographer:

1. To what extent does 'War Photographer' warn readers that humanity is becoming bored with hearing about conflict?
2. To what extent is a photograph effective at portraying the atrocities of war to someone who has never experienced conflict? Use ideas from the poem to back up your ideas.
3. In a book of war photography, critic David Hickey wrote, "Everything is composed in this book and composure is a decidedly un-warlike attribute." To what extent do you agree?
4. Like 'Remains', physical conflict and psychological conflict are major themes in the poem but how does Carol Ann Duffy comment on power? What sort of power does she focus on and why?

## **Poppies**

1. Why do you think Jane Weir decides to focus on inner conflict in the poem 'Poppies'?
2. 'Poppies' concentrates on a female perspective of conflict. Is this perspective notably different from the other poems in the anthology? Why do you think Weir has made this choice?
3. Although the poem is set in present day, how and why does Weir create a sense of timelessness?
4. There is a clear debate as to whether the speaker's child has died or not. Is the fate of the child important? Discuss.

## **The Emigree**

1. How is the power of memory presented as being more powerful than oppressive governance?
2. How can 'The Emigree' be seen as a commentary on human rights?
3. Is child idealisation and naivety dangerous? Use ideas from the poem in your answer.
4. The speaker, who is only known as the 'Emigree' gives their home country a voice and distinctiveness but at the expense of their own identity. Why?
5. Is the speaker reliable?

## **Checking Out Me History:**

1. How is history powerful?
2. Why is man's ability to ignore and omit historical events too easy? What is Agard critical of?
3. 'The speaker is not conflicted about his identity. In fact, I think the speaker is quite clear as to who he wants to be.' To what extent do you agree?

## **Bayonet Charge:**

1. Who or what is more powerful in the poem? Man, war or nature?
2. Can war ever be justified? Explain your thoughts using ideas from the poem.
3. Consider 'Bayonet Charge' and 'Exposure'. Is war presented differently in these poems? If so, how has the time these poems were written affected the writers' presentation of conflict?

## **Kamikaze:**

1. How does 'Kamikaze' highlight just how destructive war can be even when there are no fatalities?
2. 'Although the man is disowned by his family for his decision to turn back, there is still hope to be found in the poem.' To what extent do you agree?
3. Which is stronger? The power of patriotism or the power of family? Explain.

## **General:**

1. 'Nature is presented as the most powerful force in the anthology.' Discuss.
2. 'The Romantic poets' attitude to authority is naïve and unrealistic.' To what extent do you agree?
3. 'Although desired, freedom is presented as unachievable in the works of the Romantic poets.' Discuss.
4. Lord Acton said, 'Power tends to corrupt. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.' Do you agree with this statement? Which poems in the anthology could we relate to his sentiment?