

Virtual Visions

Teacher Guidance Notes



An enrichment resource to accompany the DVD which supports the OCR GCSE English specifications

By teachers, for teachers

Disclaimer

The DVD and notes are intended to be an additional, more creative complement to OCR's *Reflections* anthology and the other resources at www.ocr.org.uk/english/2010support.

It is not anticipated that every poem will be taught using the ideas on the DVD, but that the content can be used to develop a debate around the poems and the techniques used for enrichment sessions where these might occur.

Please note that whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the content of these materials, they are provided as a resource for general information purposes only, to be used at the direction of teachers and centres.

OCR does not endorse the content of the DVD nor the teacher guidance notes, and accepts no liability whatsoever for any losses, including losses for any misinterpretation or subsequent impact, howsoever caused.

This DVD project has been led by Debbie Daniels, seconded English teacher at OCR, from John Willmott School, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands. The Teacher Guidance Notes have been produced in collaboration with Jane Davies, Deputy Principal at Manor Community College, Cambridge. Jane has been teaching English for thirteen years and in her third year became accredited as an Advanced Skills Teacher. She is passionate about English and finds teaching English to young people both a privilege and an absolute delight. She has worked as a consultant and delivered national conferences on how to motivate students so that they engage with the literature they are taught.

Contents

Introduction		4
Why study poetry?		6
How to succeed in exams		7
Poems		
<u>Literary Heritage Poetry</u>		
Robert Browning	My Last Duchess	11
Geoffrey Chaucer	General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales	12
Thomas Hardy	Drummer Hodge	13
	The Man He Killed	14
	The Voice	15
Wilfred Owen	Anthem for Doomed Youth	16
	Futility	17
	Spring Offensive	17
	The Send-Off	18
Christina Rossetti	An Apple-Gathering	20
	Cousin Kate	20
	“No, Thank You, John”	21
	Remember	23
William Shakespeare	Sonnet 18	25
<u>Contemporary Poetry</u>		
Simon Armitage	Hitcher	26
	Kid	27
	Mother, any distance greater than a single span	28
Gillian Clarke	Cold Knap Lake	29
	Miracle on St David’s Day	29
Wendy Cope	Tich Miller	31
Carol-Ann Duffy	Before You Were Mine	32
	Who Loves You	32
Seamus Heaney	Digging	34
Benjamin Zephaniah	What Stephen Lawrence has Taught Us	35
Further Support		37
Acknowledgements		38
Supporting worksheets		41
Introduction to Poetry Study Day		46

Introduction

From September 2010, there will be three OCR GCSE English specifications:

- GCSE English
- GCSE English Language
- GCSE English Literature

All three OCR GCSE English specifications have been designed to be enjoyable and inspiring and to allow you to make the most of your passion for English. They all provide good links to further study for your learners.

The Virtual Visions DVD and these accompanying teacher guidance notes have been produced to support OCR's poetry anthology *Reflections*. *Reflections* contains prescribed poems which can be studied for all three specifications. The poems may also be used to support teaching in preparation for the unseen poetry option for Literature.

OCR has worked with a range of schools and other educational institutions across England to produce the Virtual Visions DVD, which contains creative and stimulating examples of how different learners have worked with and interpreted some of the poems in the anthology. These audio-visual resources are designed to demonstrate a variety of creative techniques teachers can use to support the teaching of poetry, as well as being a classroom resource to stimulate discussion about the poems, their themes and potential for different interpretations. The DVD contains interpretations of 24 of the poems from the anthology. It also contains an introductory section on Why study poetry? In addition, there are tips on how to succeed in exams from one of the Principal Examiners for our GCSE specifications.

These teacher guidance notes are intended for use with the DVD, to indicate ways in which the DVD can be used to explore the poems in the anthology, exploring some of the techniques used and their effects. The notes also contain discussion prompts and further interchangeable lesson ideas.

Some of the work on the DVD was produced over one to three lessons, some over a longer scheme of work, focusing on many skills. Some schools used off-timetable enrichment days to introduce poetry, using a variety of teaching approaches and culminating in the production of a creative text (see sample Introduction to Poetry Study Day plan on pages 46-7) based on one poem.

Please note that these creative approaches are intended to encourage a more autonomous, exploratory and enjoyable response to the poems, but we anticipate that teachers and learners will combine this with more formal methods of preparation for both controlled assessment and examination, including analysis of language and form, as indicated in the section 'How to succeed in exams'.

In its report *Poetry in Schools, A survey of practice, 2006/07* Ofsted said, 'The most effective teaching during the survey made good use of strategies such as; drama and role play; cloze, sequencing and other activities that encourage pupils to play with and deconstruct poems; preparing readings of poems; setting poems to music; and

choosing images, including moving images, to match poems. One secondary school ran a summer school project for gifted and talented pupils which involved creating a short film, using a poem as a stimulus. This had been so successful that the department was seeking to develop the project within its normal taught programme for all pupils.'

We hope that the ideas in the DVD and these teacher guidance materials support the spirit of these observations to stimulate learners and teachers and help towards making the study of poetry engaging, rewarding and successful.

Why study poetry?

This section consists of a 26 minute filmed panel discussion of the above topic, including contributions from year 11 learners from Bournville School in Birmingham.

The panel consists of two professional writers and a senior member of OCR's English qualifications team. Panel members engage in a lively and informal debate which brings in multiple viewpoints and tackles questions which students might ask about studying poetry.

It could be used at the beginning of the poetry element of the course to help learners appreciate the importance and purpose of poetry study.

Possible Introductory Lesson Plan – based on one hour lesson

Lesson Objectives To understand some of the reasons why poetry is studied To consider some of the elements of effective poetry To develop a personal response and engage with some of the debates around poetry
Starter Questions for discussion in small groups, followed by sharing ideas as a class – Why study poetry? Is poetry important? What makes a good poem? Do you have a favourite poem? What kind of person do you imagine a poet to be? Can you think of ways in which poetry is all around us? (10 mins)
Introduction Show the opening and section with the year 11 learners from Bournville School. What responses to the questions did Bournville students give? Which ideas do you agree/disagree with? (6 mins viewing plus 9 mins discussion)
Development Continue to show the rest of the discussion, asking students to note down any responses they or Bournville hadn't thought of. The DVD can be paused at any time to invite responses from the class. (20 mins viewing plus 10 mins discussion)
Plenary So why study poetry? Place cards in different corners of the room, saying ' to entertain ', ' to expose injustice ', ' to show the power of language ', ' to share and make sense of what it is to be human '. Learners to go and stand under the card with the words they agree with most. Ask some to justify their choice. Ask for other reasons students may have thought of or picked up on during the lesson. (5 mins)

How to succeed in exams

Paul O'Connor, one of the Principal Examiners for our English specifications, offers tips to learners on how to prepare for the poetry elements of the examinations. This could be used as a revision tool close to mock and formal examinations. The steps described on the DVD are also transcribed on the next page for teacher reference.

It is suggested teachers could pause the DVD between the different sections to discuss with their learners the points made. The worksheet on page 10 contains the headlines for each point, and students may wish to make more detailed notes whilst watching or during discussion of each point.

How to succeed in exams - Transcript

How should you approach an assessment in an exam? Let's follow these next 12 steps to show how you can develop your response to the exam.

1. Enjoy the poem

The first thing we want you to do is to enjoy the poem. Read it out loud, not just once, not just twice but at least three times. Read it out loud so you can enjoy the sounds and the words. Even if you are in an exam you can read it out loud inside your head by thinking through, emphasising each word. Remember that your enjoyment of the poem and your personal engagement with the poem will get you more marks.

2. Understand the straightforward meaning

Make sure you understand the straightforward meaning of the poem. So often students lose marks in an exam because they don't understand the literal, straightforward, surface meaning of the poem. Make sure you're clear about the situation, the subject or someone the poem is describing. The question will give you a clue because it will ask you to concentrate on a particular aspect of the poem.

3. Look for clues for the poem's implied meaning

Learners need to look for clues for the poem's implied meaning; its hidden meaning; its message. This is a more challenging task because you have to look for clues to work out what ideas, thoughts or feelings the poet has about the subject but taking this approach you'll be able to get higher marks in the exam. To get the highest marks you should consider different ways the writer might want people to understand his poem and different ways that readers might respond.

4. Work out the poet's attitude to the subject

Now work out the poet's attitude towards the subject. Who is speaking? Is it the poet or is it a persona adopted by the poet? What tone of voice is the poet using? Is the poet happy or sad? Are they angry or humorous? And remember – watch out for irony, where the poet may be saying one thing but mean something else.

5. Highlighting relevant details

Now start to prepare the poem by highlighting significant details. Work your way through, highlighting words and phrases that strike you. Maybe you just like the sound of them; maybe they stand out in some way; maybe you're just not sure what they mean. Once you've highlighted these details, make notes in the margin to help you remember your ideas later.

6. Writing an overview of the poem

Start to organise your response to the question by writing an overview of the poem. So often students will go straight into analysing the poem in detail without taking a step back to look at the big picture and to get a real sense of what the whole poem is about. In your introduction you should consider what the subject, situation or someone is that the poet is describing and what their thoughts and feelings are about it.

7. Explore the words and phrases

Now you begin to explore the poem, the meanings of the poem and the words and phrases and features that the poet has used to convey their thoughts and feelings. Begin by looking at the structure of the poem. Then look at the patterns of sounds, the repetitions, the rhyme and the rhythm and then the images the poet has used and the particular words or phrases they have chosen. Always ask yourself why they have chosen this particular phrase or this particular word rather than that one.

8. Use short, relevant quotations

Use short relevant quotations only. It's best not to copy out long sections of the poem. You can show that you really understand exactly what the poet is doing by concentrating on individual words or phrases. You don't have much time in the examination so make sure you choose the best quotations only. Quotations where you need to do some interpretation or quotations that will allow you to show what you really know about the poem.

9. Start with the meanings that the poet wants to convey

When you're writing about the poem in detail, start with the meanings that the poet wants to convey and then show how the words and phrases, how the language and structure helps the poet to convey their ideas. Don't just list the techniques without explaining why the poet has used them or what effect they have created. And don't explain what the techniques are. Usually the examiner will know exactly what they are.

10. Make comparisons with another poem

Making comparisons between poems can help you bring out the meaning of a poem. You may not be asked to do that directly but it can help you bring out what the poet is trying to convey. If you can, put the poems side by side and highlight similarities in one colour and differences in a different colour. Draw lines between the poems to show the connections you want to make. Always start your response by considering the different thoughts and feelings the poet has towards the situation, subject or someone that the poet describes.

11. Making comparisons

There are two ways to make a comparison between poems. The first way is to write about one poem first of all. Work your way through it in detail and then start to write about the second poem referring back to the first poem as you explore each detail in the second poem. The other way to compare two poems is by comparing throughout your response. As you refer to one detail in the first poem, straight away refer to a similar or different detail in the second poem. This is a much more challenging task but it will help you get the highest grades.

12. Finally

Remember what we are asking you to do in your response to these poems. We are asking you to express your ideas clearly, to organise your ideas coherently but most of all to show you have enjoyed and engaged with the poems. This will help you get the highest marks. Good luck.

How to succeed in exams

1. Enjoy the poem
2. Understand the straightforward meaning
3. Look for clues for the poem's implied meaning
4. Work out the poet's attitude to the subject
5. Highlight relevant details
6. Write an overview of the poem
7. Explore the words and phrases
8. Use short, relevant quotations
9. Start with the meanings that the poet wants to convey
10. Make comparisons with another poem

Literary Heritage Poems

Robert Browning

My Last Duchess

In this famous dramatic monologue the speaker is giving a tour of his artworks and shows the emissary of his betrothed a portrait of his late wife.

This short movie shows how students have followed the process of writing and performing a response to the poem in role as characters from the poem, and then reflected on what they have done.

- Students could adopt this process and write their own scenes to be performed to their peers, followed by a summary and evaluation of the activities.
- This could be further extended to discuss what they have learned from the experience and how effective they think this way of exploring the poem is.

Questions

- How does the Duke epitomise the cultural/social/historical context of the poem?
- Did he kill his last wife?
- Did the Duchess behave improperly - especially towards the painter and other men she came into contact with?
- What is the point of view of the speaker in the poem and his feelings towards the Duke?
- Which character do you have most empathy for?
- Why does the Duke want another wife?
- What do you think the feelings of his next wife might be?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could create word maps of key uses of language in the poem by highlighting a word from each line that engages them. They could then find an image to go alongside their language choice, and present the two as a word wall or collage.
- Role play activity, interviewing characters in role
- Write the Duchess's letter to a friend, written before her disappearance, describing what life is like with the Duke
- Improvise the conversation between the emissary and the Duke's prospective wife after the conversation in the poem.

Geoffrey Chaucer

General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

The General Prologue, written around 1378, introduces the characters who are travelling on a pilgrimage to Canterbury and sets the scene for the Canterbury Tales.

Students have worked in groups on different characters from General Prologue over a period of five lessons. Each group has produced images to represent their character, and then written their own rhyming couplet poems, giving a contemporary interpretation of their character. The images have been put together using Movie Maker and students have prepared a voiceover reading of their own rhyming couplet poems to accompany their images.

- The use of voice is strong in each of the representations. In the Knight's introduction, two voices join to represent the Knight and the Squire travelling together. The Prioress addresses the audience directly which reflects her worldly aspirations. These are questioned by the echoing 'absent presence' voice in the poem. This voice is disapproving and helps to convey the irony evident in the original. The use of rap as a medium for the Miller's voiceover is effective as it could be said to portray him as anti-establishment and belligerent.
- Images are used effectively here too. The line drawings used for the Cook suggest how he may have gained his 'mormal' and the importance of cooking to him. The eyes of the nun are seen first whilst she is addressing the audience and this may reflect her vain nature. Appearances are important to the nun, and the use of the image of the eye reflects this. Other effective images include the Knight's shield, with the English red cross and a heart to represent courtly love in the centre. The purse full of money indicates the Summoner's corruption and desire for money.
- The way the students incorporate hand written quotes from the text is effective because we are reminded of the cultural and historical context of the poem and of the original richness of Chaucer's language. The quotation at the end of the Prioress's portrait alerts the audience to the irony in the presentation of her character. At the end of the Summoner's portrait, the word 'Aferd' lingers in a menacing manner, to emphasise the sinister nature of his character.

Questions

- How would you describe each character, using one adjective?
- Which character's images tell us most about him/her?
- Referring back to the original text, which interpretation most closely matches what is conveyed in Chaucer's poem, in your opinion? Why?

Lesson ideas

- Students could use the space in the classroom and organise 'character most likely to...' areas. Students could research the historical context and come up with their own categories. Students can then be given a character's name and must go to the space in the room with the statement that best fits them. They should explain the reasons for their position.
- Choose a character and describe to others in the class what they have been doing a week before the start of the pilgrimage.
- Provide a music soundtrack for each character to suit the film.
- Prepare a script and storyboard for your own 'movie' of one of the other characters.

Thomas Hardy

Drummer Hodge

Drummer Hodge describes the burial of an English soldier in the Boer war which took place in South Africa between 1899 -1902. Drummers were usually the youngest of soldiers and were considered to be too young to fight.

Students completed this work over one day, working with an English teacher initially, then with an art specialist who demonstrated a variety of interesting art techniques. Groups produced their own still/moving images based on one stanza. A recording of the poem was made with two students reading a line at a time. The work was put together using iMovie.

- The figures are child-like and simplistic, reflecting the age of the soldier and reinforcing the idea that this is an even more tragic consequence of war due to his age.
- In the interpretation of the poem, the drummer is smiling and without a weapon - emphasising the optimism of youth perhaps and the innocence that is lost as a result of war. The use of animation also emphasises the way that soldiers were often de-personalised in death and left to rest often 'uncoffined', where they fell. It also emphasises the alienation that the soldiers would have felt fighting on foreign ground and many ultimately dying in distant locations.
- The interpretation uses sand to reflect the burial place for the young drummer. This could show the juxtaposition between the green Wessex countryside which was the soldier's home and the South African 'Karoo' or dry dusty bush where he is buried.
- The use of non-diegetic sound which accompanies the animation represents the sound of the drum played by the soldier and conveys a sense of ritual and pathos.
- There are images of stars in the interpretation. The stars are 'strange-eyed constellations' and these foreign stars highlight Hodge's alien grave. Hodge would have seen the constellations before his death but too rarely for him to know them. The use of star imagery in the interpretation emphasises again how this soldier would have just been one of thousands who died under a vast and alien sky.
- There are a few images of a house during the animation - this can be linked to the references to 'home' and 'homely northern breast' in the poem and again shows the contrast between the home loving farm labourer turned drummer boy ('hodge' was a term used to describe a farm labourer) and the hostile landscape in the Southern hemisphere that becomes his final resting place.

Questions

- What is the purpose of the animated opening to the poem?
- What effect does the drumming have during the animation of the poem?
- Which images did you find most arresting? Can you work out how they were produced?

Lesson ideas

- Students could research the Boer War and present the poem as part of a report on life for the soldiers fighting far away from home as well as the war itself. Students may wish to film their reports and present to another audience, for example a History class.
- Students are given character cards with the names of people who would have a view on war, and the Boer war in particular. Students then have to write and perform a two minute dialogue about their attitude to war from their character's point of view, using if they can some of the phrases/vocabulary from the poem.

Drummer Hodge	Drummer Hodge's commanding officer	Drummer Hodge's mother	A soldier from the Dutch 'Boer' side.
A nurse on the frontline	Thomas Hardy	(students' own choice of character)	(students' own choice of character)

The Man He Killed

The Man He Killed is a monologue written at the time of the Boer War, although it could refer to any war. It is written in the first person from the point of view of a soldier who contemplated how war made him kill this man; a man that in other circumstances could have been a friend.

This interpretation focuses both on the lead up to and the finished presentations by the students. There are two very different approaches. The first is a debate and the setting of challenges to the class. The second is a dance interpretation of the poem.

- The teacher begins with a key question and relates the poem to a statistic about the Iraq war. The poem is written from the point of view of a soldier who fought in action, although Hardy never fought himself. It encourages students to think about the idea of killing in this way, and shows that although this poem was written about a war which took place over a hundred years ago, the themes are as relevant now because we are a country still engaged in combat abroad.
- The discussions focus on the arguments for and against killing. The students have to listen to the views of others, whilst offering their own. What makes this more challenging is that the students may have to argue a point of view that they do not necessarily agree with, so they must use all the techniques of preparing an argument that they have learnt in this part of the process.
- The Campaign interpretation is effective with its focus on the need for more 'people' poems. The use of the direct address, the rhetorical techniques used, and the campaign rosettes worn by the students fit with the genre. It also mirrors the use of propaganda in wars to convince the public that killing for one's country was the right thing to do.
- The News Report is typical of its genre, using a combination of in-studio comment, plus a journalist reporting from the war scene.
- The Weather Report is highly innovative, and reflects the development of emotion through the poem by using weather symbols.
- The contemporary dance interpretation shows the juxtaposition of comradeship and friendship, with the fighting and conflict. The dancers are dressed in black, representing death and the way perhaps that war dehumanises and anonymises soldiers. Much of the dance is choreographed using pair work, which reflects the idea that the men in battle are similar in terms of background, age and experience. They both attract and repel in movements which shows the tension felt because of nothing more than a shared and futile circumstance. The ending is dramatic and final.

Questions

- Is it ever right to kill?

- Which words from the poem appear to have informed the dance interpretation most?
- Which interpretation gives you the best insight into the poem and why?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could think about the themes shown in each stanza of the poem then prepare two headlines for a tabloid newspaper for each stanza. One headline could be in favour and one against the war.
- Students could prepare a still image for a line of the poem. The class could guess which line from the poem they think it is and the student could explain their choice to the class.
- Students could prepare the Museum Tour and Display and the Crimewatch Reconstruction as indicated in the film.

The Voice

This is a poem about Hardy's first wife, which begins optimistically when he thinks he hears her calling to him, but ends with a sense of renewed loss.

After studying the poem, students created their own dance interpretation of the poem.

- The dance interpretation reflects the relationship between the speaker and the absent presence in the poem: his beloved.
- The dancers work together to represent the idea of coming together but only fleetingly. The movements, which are synchronised, could reflect Hardy's loss of his wife and his need for her to appear to him once more.
- We get the sense through the use of fluid movements of the dancers of the anapaestic metre of the first three stanzas and then in the final stanza, a less fluent rhythm representing the more desolate mood of Hardy.
- The dancers are dressed in black, representing death, shadow and the spirit.
- There are many repeated sequences of movements in the interpretation. This may represent the idea that life is a cycle, echoed in the last line of the poem perhaps: "And the woman calling". Hardy knows he has to move on alone, but is resisting.

Questions

- Which line in the poem reflects the dance interpretation best, in your opinion?
- Design the staging for this dance interpretation. What set/props would you include, appropriate to the text of the poem?
- Think again about the interpretation you watched. Did it make you think about the relationship in the poem in positive or negative way?

Lesson Ideas

- Using a phrase, or line from the poem, prepare 'before' and 'after' images which could represent the past and present situation for the poet.
- In groups prepare a reading of the poem which conveys the wistfulness and reflects the rich use of sound in the poem, including assonance, repetition and rhyme. What sound effects could you use to help your interpretation?
- The use of pathetic fallacy is very powerful in this poem. Create images for the last two stanzas focusing on the way in which the weather and setting contribute to the mood and the feelings of the poet.

Wilfred Owen

Anthem for Doomed Youth

Anthem for Doomed Youth is a sonnet written by Owen while he was in hospital recovering from shellshock. It describes the lack of recognition and burial ceremony for soldiers who die in war, comparing their deaths with the slaughter of cattle.

The interpretation focuses on students working together to provide an appropriate soundtrack to accompany the poem. An anthem is a song of praise and is used ironically as a title, and here we see students creating their own anthem for the poem.

- The students are seen at the start of the film working in small groups and pairs exploring the instruments. They discuss and draft music to represent the marching of the soldiers, and the sounds of the horror of war.
- The plaintive electric guitar could represent the idea of a loss of innocence. Many of the soldiers who signed up for service were under age.
- The sounds created reflect some of the key onomatopoeic and alliterative language in the poem:- 'shrill', 'patter', 'bells', 'rifle's rapid rattle', 'wailing'.
- The last session when all the students play together exemplifies the idea of comradeship, or the clash of ideas that causes wars in the first place. It could also represent the idea that in war, we lose our identities and become faceless and nameless, existing not as an individual, but as part of a machine.

Questions

- What noises of war can you hear in the musical interpretation and how do they relate to the use of onomatopoeia and alliteration in the poem?
- Explain the treatment of soldiers who fought in the First World War, as depicted in the poem and the sounds of the musical interpretation.
- Which instrument most effectively recreates the emotion in the poem, in your view?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could prepare for a podcast called 'Remembrance' – what techniques does Owen use in this poem to make sure the reader doesn't forget what has happened? Students could focus on one aspect of poetic devices, e.g. imagery, structure, alliteration etc and what this adds to the meaning of the poem and the theme of remembrance. Students could also research the social and historical background of world war one and include this also in the podcast. Students could listen to and comment on each other's podcasts.
- Plan a Remembrance Service, including the address to the attendees, using words from the poem, music and speeches by local dignitaries and families. Students could include a mood wall for 'war' and 'peace', or a freedom wall, containing images, words, colours, news stories etc to reflect the theme.
- Search the internet for images to accompany a reading of the poem and write a commentary on your choices.

Students took part in a workshop with the poet Julie Boden, focusing on breathing and sound exercises as preparation for poetry performances.

Futility

One of only five poems published in Owen's lifetime, Futility explores grief on the death of a comrade, using the image of the sun, so powerful in giving life yet powerless against the destruction of war.

This is a reading of the poem by the poet Julie Boden who explains to the students the influential effect the poem had on her. A teacher's sensitive reading of a poem can be engaging to students, as well as modelling techniques of delivery.

- The introduction gives a context and stimulates interest in the poem.
- The reading of the poem shows varied use of tone of voice and uses pauses effectively.

Questions

- Is war futile?
- When you heard the poem read, what images came into your head?
- Why do you think the poet was moved so much by the poem?
- If you had to keep only three words from this poem to remember, which words would you choose and why?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could work in pairs and present the poem combining lines from the poem and research they have undertaken on WWI. Students could develop this idea further by inviting a third student to direct the presentation and therefore to discuss how voice, non-verbal gestures and physical placing on stage can add to the meaning.
- Students could read selected lines of the poem to a much wider audience and ask for their responses to the poem. Students could share these with the rest of the class and create a response wall which could be updated by others in the school and local community.
- Students could write a speech about the futility of war, using speech-writing techniques and words from the poem, as well as students' own emotive language. The audience could be other students, a group of politicians etc.

Spring Offensive

This sombre poem explores the waiting period before battle and the subsequent frantic activity of battle, and its aftermath which leaves the survivors shocked and subsequently unable to speak of their comrades who died in it.

Students studied the poem along with techniques of delivery then gave a prepared group performance of the poem. The second whole group reading is much more experimental, where students are encouraged to join in the reading whenever they wish, varying volume with different words and phrases as they feel appropriate. It creates an interesting choral effect.

- The approach focuses on representing the language and themes of the poem by using a variety of reading techniques. The first is prepared in advance and to camera, and decisions have been made within the group as to who speaks and how many voices speak words and phrases, ending with one speaker for the last, poignant line.

- The second more exploratory approach begins with a small number of voices, sometimes reading in unison and sometimes independently. The method works well with this poem, reflecting the tension before the offensive begins and the nervousness amongst the troops. It could also show the theme of the camaraderie that runs through Owen's work. As the reading continues, we see all the students taking part in reading the poem out loud. There are some interesting uses of loud and quiet, as well as a change in speed at the most dramatic points. The use of voices in this way could represent fighting in the war. Voices together and apart, the tension and fear shown by lowering voices and using one voice.

Questions

- Which line did you feel was performed most effectively in the first performance and why?
- What questions would you want to ask the performers?
- In the second performance, which lines read aloud appeared to be most passionately expressed? Why do you think this is?

Lesson Ideas

- You are the director of the students in the film. You have to provide detailed stage directions for every line of the poem, thinking about how you would position the students, how they would use non-verbal gestures and sound to represent the language and themes seen.
- Prepare a performance, allocating one line or phrase up to punctuation to one student. The student should learn the line. With students standing in a circle, each student in order should walk into the centre of the circle and say their line with feeling.
- Select one line or section up to punctuation and 'interview' five people independently, asking them what they think the line 'means', to explore different possible interpretations. Incorporate at least two of the ideas into a sentence which analyses the line. The poem could be displayed in the classroom with the sentence alongside.

The Send-Off

This poem explores the tragedy of soldiers being sent to war with the tragic knowledge that few will return.

This performance involves effective use of different voices and pitches to symbolise the tensions in the poem.

- We see the students choosing to read specific words and phrases together. An example of this from the first stanza is 'grimly gay' and 'dead'. We are reminded of the unity of soldiers concentrating on being cheerful and, with the use of the word 'dead', the shock and finality of its reality.
- This is again effective when the voices are used interchangeably with the words "a few, a few, too few". We are reminded again of the loss of life here.
- The change in pitch in the word 'silent' works well also.

Questions

- What is the effect of having only one person speaking the last line?
- Which other words should be spoken by only one voice and why?
- What one piece of advice would you offer this group to improve their performance further?

Lesson ideas

- Students could improvise an interview of one of the soldiers waiting to go to war.
- Students could use key lines and phrases from the poem and provide a series of vox pops around the subject of the poem, or a documentary approach with a commentary giving some of the historical context.
- Students could present the poem through images only and then write a commentary on each others' images to accompany.

Christina Rossetti

Students were invited to produce their own video interpretations of any of the poems from the anthology and did so in thoughtful and diverse ways.

An Apple Gathering

This poem conveys disillusionment and disappointment, a common theme in Rossetti's poetry.

- The first image is of the speaker with a piece of apple blossom in her hair. This could refer to the apple blossoms she plucked from the tree. She plucked the blossoms from the tree too soon and although was able to enjoy the beauty of the flowers, she was not able to take full pleasure in the fruits of the tree and once picked, they decomposed.
- This feeling of regret is demonstrated by the other images of the speaker. In the next scene the blossoms have gone, she looks older, her hair is tied back and she is wearing a scarf which she later uses to hide behind.
- We also hear in the background whispering voices. This is an effective technique and could reflect the lines in the poem 'my neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass so empty handed back'. Those around her see she attempted to reap the fruit before it was sown. This is a metaphor for her actions of giving herself to the man too quickly and this is another reason why she is being mocked by a society and time that condemned such behaviour.
- The image of the couple in the house is juxtaposed with the hostile weather outside and the obvious isolation felt by the speaker. This could also reflect the idea that the girl who waited rather than experienced the pleasure of intimacy is the girl that 'Willie', the male presence in the poem, desires. We see the character of Willie fade in and out of shot, just as their love was transient and did not last. The persona in the poem did not conform to society's rules as did the other girls picking flowers, and because of this lapse, is lonely and shunned. The reflected face in the mirror suggests she now has time to reflect on her actions in this poem.

Questions

- What is the effect of the winter setting?
- How are windows and mirrors used to support the ideas and themes of the poem?
- Does society still make judgments on women's sexual behaviour?
- Give some alternative titles for the film version of the poem.

Lesson Ideas

- The poem focuses on using the apple gathering as a metaphor for lost love and sexuality. Students could find all the language associated with loss and love and produce two contrasting collages using images that they think best suit the poem.
- Students could use one line of the poem to use as the basis for a poem which conveys a more contemporary sense of loss.
- Students could write and perform the conversations of her neighbours/community in the poem.

Cousin Kate

This poem reflects the feelings of a woman who has not conformed to society's expectations.

- The imaginative interpretation focuses on the third stanza of the poem. It explores the jealousy that the speaker (the cottage maiden) feels towards her cousin

because she is married to the Lord who once had an affair with the speaker but was cast aside in favour of her more beautiful cousin.

- The use of the mop cleaning up blood and the sarcastic tone of the term 'Lady Kate' reveals the sinister nature of the interpretation. This is a woman scorned and we see the revenge she has taken on her cousin and the Lord as flashes of their dead bodies smeared with blood are interspersed with the language of this part of the poem.
- The use of the direct address to the audience shows that the speaker has no remorse for her actions, and there is a confidence in her manner which demonstrates that she feels her actions were justified.
- The last image, of the dead lovers side by side, is effective as it serves to underline the betrayal that the speaker feels by both her cousin and her lover. It expresses the implied emotion and destructive effect of jealousy in a powerful visual way.

Questions

- How far was the cottage maiden justified in her actions?
- What other 'revenge' could the speaker of the poem be said to have?
- What music would you suggest to accompany this interpretation?

Lesson Ideas

- There are other characters in the poem. The character of the Lord and cousin Kate could be explored by students creating a montage of images to show the narrative of their relationship by way of a reply to this interpretation. Students might want to use animation to represent this.
- Write a script or letter in which the speaker of the poem tells her grown-up child what happened.
- Create storyboards for films based on the other stanzas in the poem.

"No, Thank You, John"

Rossetti was a devout Christian who twice declined marriage because of her high Anglican scruples and in later life spent most of her time in seclusion engaged in charitable work and religious contemplation. In this poem the poet rejects the romantic attentions of John but appears to show some willingness for a platonic relationship at the end.

There are two very different interpretations.

- The first dramatic interpretation is set in a church. This may reflect the confessional nature of the poem. The lighting and simple focus on the speaker's face suggests a sombre mood and someone who finds it difficult to reject her suitor.
- She cannot accept John's romantic advances because she does not love him. In this sense she is being compliant with her faith. Perhaps then it is not just John who is being kept at arm's length but also sexual gratification.
- The use of the candle in the interpretation is interesting. Candles are traditionally used in the Christian faith during prayer to symbolise that God is with us when we are speaking to him. So in this sense, Rossetti is showing us that God is with her, and her rejection of John is the right thing to do in the eyes of God. It is also significant that both John and God are 'absent presences' in the poem, but Rossetti chooses to be alone with God when she is rejecting John.
- The candle could also symbolise the relationship between John and Rossetti - with the finality of the candle being extinguished at the end of the poem showing the end of that relationship in its sexual sense, but perhaps as Rossetti suggests, the start of a new platonic relationship.

- It could also represent the emerging consciousness of women in society at that time when women were beginning to transcend the cultural expectations and become more independent in terms of their thinking.
- The dramatic interpretation shows Rossetti alone and wearing modest outdoor clothing which could reflect the slightly impatient tone to the poem. We listen to the internal monologue whilst she is writing the letter and the speaker's voice shows awareness that her words will be crushing and appears to take this very seriously. However, she is not afraid to tackle the subject, and this confidence is seen throughout the poem, as Rossetti holds the power in the relationship. We can see this in one way by the use of imperative verbs throughout the poem which are used to give orders to John.
- The second version is a much more contemporary interpretation, using a very modern way of communication. The female speaker is sharing her thoughts with 'John' using a social networking website.
- We see the repetition of 'I love you' written by the male persona. This could suggest the idea of a rather persistent 'stalker', who won't take 'no' for an answer. Alternatively, the male does not appear to be sinister in any way and could be interpreted as being the 'victim' in the scenario. The female 'voice' seems determined in her rejection of John and is pursuing the communication until eventually she slams the laptop shut. This is symbolic of the end of the relationship, just as the blowing out of the candle is in the first interpretation.
- The speaker's tone of voice is more assertive and impatient, contrasting with the more thoughtful, reflective tone used in the first version.
- The piano music ironically echoes the tapping of the keys on the computer, both lighthearted in telling the story of a failed romance.

Questions

- In version one what is the effect of the setting being in a church?
- In the second version, what is the effect on the viewer of being able to see John?
- Compare the two versions – can you identify how the second version makes the poem much more relevant to a contemporary audience?

Lesson Ideas

- The relationship between Rossetti and John - this activity can be done independently or in groups. Students are given a series of cards with statements about the relationship between Rossetti and John. They have to rank them in the order that they agree with them. The statements are not as simple as they first appear to be, and this may lead to some interesting discussion. There is one card blank for students to write their own views on the relationship to use for this task. Students now share their ranking and justify the positions of the statements. For each statement, they need to find a quote which fits from the poem and write that on a card and place it next to the statement. Students now use another card to explain the quote. This could be modelled with the whole class. Students now work independently to produce a response.

Rossetti rejects John because she does not want to marry him.	Rossetti thinks that John only wants her for sex.	Rossetti pities John.
Rossetti is dominant in her relationship with John.	Rossetti makes fun of John's feelings for her.	Rossetti wants John and her to be friends.

Rossetti is angry at John's accusations of her.	Rossetti is tired of having to tell John that she does not want him.	
---	--	--

- Imagine that the female speaker has posted up the poem on her social networking site page. Write the 'comments' from 'friends' who may or may not be in agreement with what she says.
- John has written to an agony aunt/uncle about this situation. Write the response, addressing points from the poem.
- These two versions could be shown in preparation for the study of other poems and students asked to consider what different kinds of interpretations could be made of them using different settings – past, present or future, setting the action in a different place such as a playground, different country or universe. Students could consider props and characterisation as a result and ensure that the words of the poem are still relevant in the new context.

Remember

Again, this poem explores remembrance and uncertainty after loss, finally contemplating whether it is best to remember after all.

There are two versions of this poem.

- The first adaptation focuses on images concerned with nature and the opening images are of an empty, desolate landscape, suggesting alienation and isolation. The opening title of 'Remember' is on aged paper and suggests something that happened a while ago.
- Images of religion are also introduced and we see the female persona walking alone through a churchyard, suggesting the loss of a loved one, with close-ups to the grave of someone only 20 years old.
- There is a long shot at the end, suggesting that the subject will remain alone and cannot 'forget' and 'smile' as the poem urges.
- The second adaptation, showing a couple in love, reflects the sonnet nature of the poem, as sonnets were the chosen form used by many Victorian poets to celebrate love.
- At the start of the adaptation, the couple are seen holding hands. This could signify their closeness, and also the fact that this poem is prayer-like, littered with religious language.
- The second part of the adaptation has a different tone and this is shown through the use of non-diegetic sound. The piano music is reflective and the male persona is alone. The use of the setting, with snow, could reflect the idea of finality, or loneliness, or death.
- The scene in the graveyard reinforces the idea that this poem focuses on loss. Loss of a loved one, and loss of their future, symbolised perhaps by the ring the persona has brought with him to the gravestone.
- We hear the last lines of the poem spoken by the female persona, and these again remind us of the loss of their future. The lines are also comforting, as the speaker wants her love to move on with his life, in a selfless gesture. We get the sense that she wants what is best for him and is not afraid to assert that.
- The poem begins with a male voice and ends with a female voice speaking selected lines from the poem, and there is some ambiguity in the narrative which should provide good opportunity for discussion.

Questions

- What narrative do the images used in version one convey?
- What is the significance of the lines chosen in the second adaptation?
- Do the two interpretations show the same 'story'? How are they different?

Lesson Ideas

- Before studying the poem show the films to students without sound and get them to write a voiceover for each, narrating the events and feelings. The results may show a variety of interpretations possible from the viewing. Some could read their voiceover over the film as it is shown, followed by class discussion of their interpretation. After studying the poem students could look back at the poem and see how far their voiceovers reflect what they feel happens in the poem.
- Students could show the difference between Victorian and contemporary attitudes to love and loss by presenting a modern day version of the poem or writing a song lyric to a contemporary melody.
- Is it possible to remember with fondness without feeling sad, or should we forget and move on? In pairs debate the advantages and disadvantages for each. Prepare a piece of text entitled 'Dealing with loss' to be used as a piece of advice in a radio programme discussing the issue.

William Shakespeare

Sonnet 18

This is one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets depicting a loved one immortalised through poetry.

The student took her own photographs to accompany her reading of the poem, and these were put together in Movie Maker.

- The first images are those of blossom and spring flowers and a long path bordered by tall trees. This could reflect the idea of eternity early on, as well as the hope and promise that a loved one can bring. It also represents the idea that although blooming flowers are temporary in their beauty, the loved one in the poem will remain beautiful and temperate in nature, like the photographs.
- Some of the other images show the sun described as 'the eye of heaven' and the images are of a sun setting behind some trees, reflecting perhaps the idea of transient nature of the seasons and time, as opposed to the beloved's beauty and love.
- The beloved's 'eternal summer' shall not fade precisely because it is embodied in the sonnet and this is reflected in seeing the words 'eternal lines' that the girl in the film writes.
- When the audience first sees the image of the girl they may assume that she is the subject of the poem, but as the film progresses, it is clear that she is the persona contemplating her loved one, and this may be an interesting way into discussing the gender stereotyping of poems and the uncertainty about who is being addressed in Shakespeare's sonnets in particular.

Questions

- Which of the images did you find most effective from the interpretation and why?
- What is the effect of the speeding up of the images of the water and how does this link to the words spoken from the poem at this point?
- In this interpretation, who is the speaker of the poem and how is this surprising?

Lesson Ideas

- Prepare your own storyboard for the poem, using more metaphoric imagery where you can, and also including sound effects.
- Using the negative vocabulary from the poem, write a response from the loved one showing perhaps that his/her feelings are different to the poet's. This could be in the form of a short monologue and presented to the class.
- Students could write their own humorous sonnet after studying the form. They could make their own comparison, for example, 'Shall I compare thee to a ...chocolate sundae?'

Contemporary Poetry

Simon Armitage

Hitcher

This poem is a monologue by someone who has committed the murder of a man who is similar to him except that he appears to have the freedom the poet does not.

This is an innovative interpretation of the poem using contemporary dance.

- The dancers are dressed the same and are dancing in unison for much of the performance. This could reflect the fact that the persona and his victim in the poem are alike - they are both around the same age, and both hitch lifts. They may even be the same person.
- The dancers are dressed in black, which could represent the serious undertones of violence displayed in the poem. It also has the effect of blurring the identity of the dancers.
- The dancers reflect the action in the poem - we see the dancers engaged in movements representing conflict, and we see pieces where dancers are retreating from violence or being the perpetrators of violence.
- The movements are fluid, very much like the structure of the poem where Armitage uses enjambment to reflect the sense of an internal monologue of the persona.
- The non-diegetic sound reflects the tension of the poem and is at times menacing.
- We get the sense from the interpretation that the persona is at times cowardly - there is little eye contact with the audience, and the dancers often use subservient gestures. This could reflect the idea in the poem that the persona's source of conflict is his boss but he takes out this frustration on the hitchhiker whose carefree attitude and values seem to mock him.

Questions

- Look again at the movements of the dancers especially in the first 30 seconds of the dance. What adjectives could you use to describe the movements and how do they relate to the emotion at the start of the poem?
- How is the idea of violence reflected in the dance?
- Does the dance make you feel any empathy for the speaker in the poem?

Lesson Ideas

- Using the dance as a stimulus, students work in small groups and each focus on a separate stanza of the poem. They have to present three freeze frame or tableaux of the key ideas or key phrases in each of the stanzas. Other students could guess which idea or phrase the tableaux is representing.
- Students could work in groups of three or four and each take a role from one of the people in the poem (the hitchhiker, the persona, the boss). Each character has to present their perspective on the events in the poem, using words and phrases from the poem in their monologue. This could be extended to include other characters not in the poem, for example the family of the victim.
- Write a day in the life of the speaker of the poem. What is it about his daily life that may have led up to the events in the poem?
- In pairs, write down questions a psychiatrist might ask the persona in the poem to get to the bottom of why he acted in the way he did. How far will the psychiatrist believe that the hitcher could be another side to the psyche of the speaker?

Kid

The poem is a dramatic monologue from the point of view of Batman's sidekick, Robin. The interpretation shows how he evolves to become more independent and to question the hero who is 'Batman'.

This is a dramatic interpretation where students have used the imagery of Batman from the poem to explore the tension between father and son.

- We can see from the opening image of the filmed representation that the poem focuses on the comic book character of Batman. The symbol is iconic and is recognisable all over the world.
- The character of Robin is introduced and the relationship established between Batman and Robin is unequal. 'Robin' is the dominant voice in the poem, and we can tell he is unhappy with the distribution of power by the anger in his voice and the body language displayed when the two are sitting next to each other on the park bench.
- The film adaptation shows how Robin 'turns a corner' and becomes empowered because of the way he perceives he has been treated. We are shown Robin's retaliation at the way he has been treated when he attacks Batman. This goes against the stereotypical view of Batman as the dominant force in the relationship. We also see how Batman is depicted as weak here.
- The status of Batman is questioned as we progress through the film. An important point in the film is when Robin symbolically removes the mask and then the costume that links both characters.
- We see Batman holding out his hand in a conciliatory gesture but this is rejected by Robin who in the last section of the film unleashes his anger both in the tone of his voice and his violence towards Batman.
- At the end of the film, Robin symbolically hands his costume to the cowering Batman. This act could signify the end of our stereotypical views of that relationship, and of Batman's ability to save the universe, using Robin as nothing more than a sidekick. This poem is Robin's opportunity to have a voice and for once, Batman is silenced and Robin is not subservient.

Questions

- What does the Batman symbol make you think of? What words and phrases do you associate with this image?
- Why is Robin so angry in this interpretation?
- By the end of the film 'Robin' has gradually taken off his costume – how does this link to the words in the poem?

Lesson ideas

- Back-to-back hotseating. Students are sat back-to-back - one is Robin and one is Batman. 'Robin' reads the poem, one line at a time in a tone of voice that the students think best suits Robin's feelings towards Batman. Batman is then given the opportunity to respond by saying one line back to Robin. By providing Batman with a voice in this way, students will learn more about Armitage's theme of hero worship.
- Produce a two-page comic depicting the events of the poem, using language from the poem and appropriate comic book layout.
- Explore the unusual use of half-rhyme at the end of each line of the poem – how does this affect the tone and pace during reading? Students could mimic this use of half-rhyme in their own poem about a time they felt empowered.

Mother, any distance greater than a single span

This is a poem that explores the relationship between mother and child and the child's quest for independence over time.

A range of teaching approaches resulted in a number of creative responses to this poem.

- The first interpretation makes use of the agony aunt/chat show genre to explore the theme of mother/child relationships which dominates the poem. The performance is interspersed with a reading of the poem. This format works because Armitage is focusing in this poem on a universal theme. The characters of mother and son are shown to have a positive relationship, and keen to overcome the source of conflict which is the son's desire to break free from his mother's 'anchor' and leave home permanently. The key words 'anchor' and 'kite' are repeated as these are metaphors for the emotional connection and indeed tension between the two.
- The paired performance effectively reflects the different perspectives of mother and child, encouraging a dual interpretation of the poem.
- The visual interpretation of the poem uses images associated with key words from the poem. It is interesting that the tape measure is a key image here. This could represent the two characters working together and a source of conflict. It could also be viewed as a metaphor for time. Time is running out for the mother to have any control over her child, and she understands his need to want to be independent.
- There are images too of freedom here, of the son at the front of the picture and the mother in the distance. The sub-text is again of the child wanting his independence, and the mother reluctant to give up her son in that way.
- It is interesting that the last image is of the two 'holding on' and we get the sense that they both still need each other, that their relationship is solid and important. In this sense, the poem is a tribute to mothers who love their children and feel a sense of regret when their children take their freedom.

Questions

- What do you learn about the mother and child relationship during the 'Zac Attack Show'?
- Think about the images which are used in the visual representation of the poem. What interpretations of the phrases and therefore the images could be offered?
- Gather all the phrases and visual interpretations of freedom and restriction seen in the films. Which theme is seen as dominant and why is this? Do you agree?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could work in pairs, one taking the role of the mother and one taking the role of the child in the poem. The two characters each read the lines from the poem and in role provide another line which demonstrates the internal monologue of the characters so we get a sense of the two viewpoints explored.
- Prepare a performance of a conversation between the mother in the poem and a friend or close relative about the subject. Alternatively, prepare a performance of a conversation between the child and a friend or sibling of similar age.

Gillian Clarke

Philip Monks, writer, and Malcolm McGivan, English specialist, worked with year 9 students to produce comics and original poetry based around Gillian Clarke's poems.

Cold Knap Lake

The poem focuses on an incident from the poet's childhood. Cold Knap Lake is an artificial lake in a large park in Glamorgan, South Wales.

Students were asked to produce a comic focusing on possible events before or after the events in the poem, using the program Comic Life.

- The use of this genre is effective as we are shown the dramatic background to the poem and the comics reflect on the possible relationships between the characters. All the interpretations suggest tension between the child and carer, picking up on the words 'thrashed her' and 'poor man's daughter'.
- The conflict in the relationship is shown through facial gestures and use of stylised violence in the comic book; even down to the dramatic typeface of words such as 'splash'. We, the reader, focus on the treatment of the child and her isolation from the people who should be taking care of her.
- This is also a poem which focuses on the ways that we recall the past, as this poem is in part autobiographical. It is interesting therefore how each of the graphic interpretations differ slightly, just as our ability to remember is clouded by our perspective on events and the ageing process. The same images however keep appearing; the water, the child, the conflict in her relationships with her parents and death.

Questions

- Water is seen in all the representations of the poem. What could the water stand for?
- How is the child portrayed in the comic book representations?
- How do the comics interpret the 'poor house' the child lives in?

Lesson Ideas

- In order to understand the tensions between the characters in the poem, students could write and perform a news report about the girl's accident in the lake. Students take on the roles of parent (or step-parent), child and any other 'witnesses'. Using appropriate phrases from the poem, they give their account of the event. There could also be a commentary from a journalist to go alongside this.
- Prepare readings of the poem in the following ways:
Matter of fact – as if reporting an everyday event
Wistful, nostalgic, remembering the past and what has gone
In a storytelling tone, as if retelling an old fairy story
Which reflects the content of the poem best in your view? Identify words and phrases which suit the different ways of reading the poem aloud best.
- With a partner, share a memory from when you were young. The partner should ask detailed questions about it. How difficult is it to remember an event from when you were young? Can you write your own poem using snatches of your memory?

Miracle on St. David's Day

*The poem focuses on a life changing event. The persona is at a mental health hospital, reading poetry when a man who has not spoken for years, gets up and recites Wordsworth's *The Daffodils*.*

- The interpretation of this poem focuses on the choices a poet makes when composing a syllabic poem like Clarke's.
- Students share their syllabic poems which focus on one of the viewpoints of one of the characters in the poem.
- Later in the interpretation, students act out their poems to their peers.

Questions

- What do you learn from the drafting process modelled by writer Philip Monks?
- The title of the poem is Miracle on St David's Day. Think about the other people who witnessed this event and provide alternative titles for the poem.
- What is the effect of the echoing voice in the reading of the students' syllabic poem?

Lesson Ideas

- Before reading the poem, give students the first lines of each stanza. They have to think about the structure and order of the poem and place the lines in the order that they think makes sense. They then 'tell the story' in the poem.
- Students take each stanza and visually represent the themes in that stanza. They may want to focus on 're-awakening, epiphany, the treatment of mental illness' etc.
- A poetry-slam, in which two or more groups present/read the two poems, The Daffodils and Miracle on St David's Day, and make up a case for their poem being the best use of language/structure/rhyme etc in a competitive manner.

Wendy Cope

Tich Miller

This poem focuses on the way children at school are treated by others if they do not 'fit in'.

The student took photographs and was filmed, reading the poem as part voiceover, part direct-to-camera.

- The dramatic interpretation combines some arresting images and words from the poem, as well as the poem read in a melancholy tone to suit the theme.
- The first image is of the school sports field - this coincides with the humiliating experience of picking teams that the speaker of the poem and 'Tich' had to endure. It is interesting how this is closely followed by the image of the 'wire-mesh fence' which could represent a cage/prison - a situation that these two girls could not escape from.
- Other images are of the bird, to represent the freedom that they want, both from the experience, but also from the reasons why they are never picked earlier.
- The ending of the poem, with the speaker talking directly to the audience, highlights the separation of the line from the other regular 3 line stanzas so that we the reader, focus on this line even more, making the content more shocking.

Questions

- Why did the student choose to use the text of the word 'unselected' in the film?
- Do you think the mix of images, text and voiceover works in this interpretation? Why? Why not?
- What is the effect of speaking the final line directly to the camera?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could identify all the language associated with exclusion in the poem. They could make a collage using the language and some appropriate images to go with the words and phrases they have chosen. Students can go on to present these to the class.
- The poem provides opportunities for students to explore the character of Tich, the speaker in the poem and the other 'absent presence' characters such as the teacher and other students. Hot-seating could be used as a technique to explore how the characters felt about this exclusion, using phrases from the poem to support the points of view.
- Prepare an interview with the speaker of the poem, ten years later. Ask her to discuss her school life and what she is doing now.

Carol-Ann Duffy

Before You Were Mine

This is a poem about a mother's sacrifice and the carefree life she led before the birth of her child.

After studying the poem students produced a 'polka-dot' dress referred to in the poem as the basis for considering the imagery and themes of the poem.

- This poem is a tribute to the persona's mother. The interpretation uses a dress to represent some of the salient themes in the poem.
- The dress represents youthful promise and the life that her mother had before any domestic duties took away her freedom.
- Perhaps the use of clouds as a backdrop to the images could symbolise the dreams that the persona's mother had before she had children.
- We see images of sun, shoes, high heels and dancing, which represent optimism and a time before the teenager in the poem became the mother of the poet.
- It is interesting that the image of eyes is featured repeatedly on the dress. This refers to the glitter ball in the poem, and how the persona is looking afresh at her mother. It could also refer to the way the past is 'looking' at her in the poem and the future is looking at her as a mother, re-viewing and re-framing. Again we see in this way how the poem links the past with the present and the future.

Questions

- What is the significance of the many images of eyes on the dress?
- What images of you at the age of your parents would you like to see?
- Describe the relationship between the mother and persona as seen in the interpretation of the poem.

Lesson ideas

- Students could create/design their own set of clothing focusing on their own mothers or a person they are close to, embellishing them with images which reflect this person at the students' age or the age they are now.
- Students could think about the mother's perspective on her daughter and interpret the poem from this point of view. They could use the phrases from the poem to create two dramatic monologues. One written from the mother's past (perhaps entitled 'Before I was yours') and one from the present describing her life and how her daughter shaped her values, ideas etc. Students could present these to the class.
- Students could explore the past of an older family member or friend by speaking with them or about them with other family members. They could gather photographs and other articles to build a picture of what their past life was like and present it to the class (as the Individual contribution for S&L) or write their own poem in the style of Duffy.

Who Loves You

This poem is a contemplation of a loved one when absent from the speaker of the poem, voicing anxiety over his/her safety.

These two interpretations are effective explorations of some of the key themes in the poem using a combination of dramatic techniques.

- The use of black cloth throughout the film represents the idea of death and being separated from those we love. The cloth is used frequently to reveal a barrier; between life and death, between us and nature and us and our loved ones.
- The use of mime is also effective. The students became physical barriers to reinforce the idea of alienation and loss.
- Voice is used to repeat key lines, notably “Safety, safely, safe home”. This acts as a chorus almost and to also give a rhythm to the drama, a refrain to represent the gravity of some of the messages.
- The lack of any other props reflects the serious tone of the poem. We are invited to think of the messages from a personal perspective.

Questions

- What ‘mystical machines’ are presented, and can you think of other examples?
- Which scene did you find most powerful in the films and why?
- What messages did the actors in the film want us to take from the poem?

Lesson ideas

- Students could write a group poem, punctuated by the words ‘Safety, safely, safe home’. Hand out slips of paper with the words ‘Safely, safe home’ and pairs could write two lines which reflect a concern for what might happen to a loved one. These could be read out to the class to form one poem.
- For each line of the poem, write the response from the imagined ‘loved one’.
- Write an email to the speaker of the poem from a location of your choice, reassuring the persona in the poem and persuading him/her that you are safe and taking appropriate precautions.

Seamus Heaney

Digging

Heaney admires his father and grandfather who dig for peat; he cannot match them but reflects that perhaps his pen might be just as powerful as it can dig into the past and can express his admiration for them, as well as having a potential to do something useful in a different way.

This is an effective interpretation focusing on the political climate of Ireland. Heaney was from Belfast and had to move from the North because his family were involved in the troubles, but he never wrote directly about them and in this sense is never seen as a political writer.

- The speaker at the start of the interpretation repeats the seminal line from the poem 'the squat pen rests...like a gun'. The performance could represent Heaney showing the importance of the written word to overcome conflict. The use of the spotlight reinforces the seriousness of the message, the idea of being 'in the spotlight', in court, or under interrogation
- The interpretation explores the two sides of this conflict with students as Catholic and Protestant protestors. It is interesting how the first speaker takes an active role in this, as Heaney described the troubles as a spiral of tribal revenge in his autobiography, and this is reflected during the protest scene.
- The change of formality for the House of Lords' scene works well and again shows another perspective on the poem. We notice the formal language used which links to the idea in the poem of tradition, and the need to break from the expectations others have of us.
- The scene in which the speaker is arrested, and indeed the final scene, reinforces Heaney's idea in the poem of the importance of the written word. The line from the opening scene is repeated by the speaker and the written word is offered as an alternative to conflict and to the political process which at the time was looking futile.
- We also return to Heaney at the end of the interpretation because like most of Heaney's work, this is an autobiographical poem. He is 'digging' for words, in the same way that his father, and indeed generations of his family 'dug' and worked the land in the traditional sense, for a living. It is this tradition that we see threatened by the political climate perhaps, juxtaposed with changes in society and different working opportunities.

Questions

- Look again at the presentation – how is light used to reflect the tone of the poem?
- What is the effect of the persona addressing the audience directly?
- Which words in the poem have provoked this politically charged response to the poem?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could role play the dialogue between Heaney and his father after his father has read the poem, focusing on any tension between Heaney wanting to please his father but having to turn his back on the farming life to write.
- In groups prepare a mime in which father and son show their work, with other characters around them, demonstrating the differences between past and present.
- Research Heaney's career and background and present as a website for an audience of 11-16 year olds.

Benjamin Zephaniah

What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us

This poem is about the racist murder of Elton teenager Stephen Lawrence, who was stabbed to death whilst waiting for a bus in 1993. Five suspects were arrested but never convicted which led to the Metropolitan Police being described as 'institutionally racist' by Sir William Macpherson who led an inquiry into the case in 1999. Sir Paul Condon was the Police Commissioner at the time.

Students produced this resource over three lessons, focusing on the emotions of the poem in the first and recording it, producing images based around the poem in the second and final editing with Movie Maker in the third lesson.

- The interpretation begins with the phrase 'We know who the killers are' written in the style of a ransom note and spoken by a number of speakers - perhaps to represent a united voice, the voice of the public maybe. This stark image and phrase is repeated throughout the poem, and left with us at the end of the poem. We are thus prompted to ask ourselves if the killers are known - why are they not convicted?
- The narrative of the poem is presented using cut-out paper figures in black. The first scene representing the murder at the bus stop sees the arrested men looming larger over the victim. The use of the paper figures showing no features could reflect the idea that the evidence presented in the case was indisputable according to the poet. It could also be the reminder of the culpability we as a society should take for his death - the paper figures could represent all of us.
- The broken heart is a striking and universal image to reflect the feelings of the friends and family of Stephen Lawrence, but also the idea of a fractured society that allows this to happen.
- There are two roads presented in the poem and they have been placed next to each other - 'slavery' and 'liberty' reflecting the idea that society has the choice of which road to take, or perhaps both are interconnected and that elements of both exist in society and there is still progress to be made.
- One of the most arresting images used in the poem is that of the Union Jack covering the body of a teenager. The screwing up of the paper reflects perhaps the way that Stephen Lawrence was let down by the British justice system and the opportunities to convict his killers thrown away. It also suggests the tragedy of a young life taken and 'thrown away' unnecessarily.
- The juxtaposition of the 'Tellytubby' world and 'reality' is represented by the light and dark collages towards the end of the interpretation, suggesting the police are removed from reality and do not know what is obvious to ordinary people.

Questions

- What has Stephen Lawrence taught us?
- Which image do you find most effective and why?
- What does the tone of voice of the readers indicate to us about the attitude of the poet in this poem?

Lesson Ideas

- Students could present their 'docu-movie' of research into the Stephen Lawrence case, with commentary. Students could include interviews of their parents, teachers etc, what they remember about the case and how the case affected them.

- Students could make their own placards for a demonstration against racism and for justice, using words from the poem and their research into the actual events. They could develop this into their own 'chant' which could be repeated during the demonstration.
- Organise the press conference, with the press asking questions of Stephen Lawrence's family, Sir Paul Condon etc.

Further Support

For further information on OCR's English qualifications please visit:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/english/2010support>

For more information on using poets and writers in schools please visit:



www.writingwestmidlands.org

www.poetrysociety.org.uk

Julie Boden

Poet in residence, Town Hall Symphony Hall, Birmingham

<http://www.julieboden.co.uk/>

Audio-visual interpretations of poems are also available on a number of websites, including:

<http://www.youtube.com/>

<http://www.thepoetrychannel.org.uk/>

Acknowledgements

OCR would like to acknowledge and thank the following contributors:

Julie Boden
Poet in residence, Town Hall Symphony Hall, Birmingham
<http://www.julieboden.co.uk/>



Jonathan Davidson
Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands
<http://www.writingwestmidlands.org/>

Philip Monks
Writer

Malcolm McGivan
English Specialist

OCR would also like to acknowledge and thank the following centres, their students and staff:

Lindsay Mason
Bournville School & Sixth Form College, Birmingham

Steff Hutchinson
Andy Chaplin
Caludon Castle School, Coventry

Greg Hodgson
Chalfonts Community College, Gerrards Cross, Bucks

Stephen Dawkins
Coventry School of Art & Design, Coventry University

Richard Larkin
Catherine McAvan
Amer Hussain
Alex Marrion
Ashley Roberts
John Willmott School, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands

Kenilworth School & Sports College, Warwickshire

Liz Plumpton
Kingsbury School & Sports College, Birmingham

Paul Clark
Helena Osborne
Matravers School, Bath

Claire Inns
Saint Martin's School, Solihull, West Midlands

Rachel Scofield
St Alban's Academy, Birmingham

Copyright Acknowledgements

Simon Armitage:
'Kid' from *Kid* (Faber, 1992)
'The Hitcher' and 'Mother any Distance Greater than a Single Span' from *Book of Matches* (Faber, 1993)

Reproduced by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd

Gillian Clarke:
'Cold Knap Lake' and 'Miracle on St David's Day' from *Collected Poems* (Carcenet, 1997)

Reproduced by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd

Wendy Cope:
'Tich Miller' from *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (Faber, 1986)

Reproduced by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd

Carol-Ann Duffy:
'Who Loves You' from *The Other Country* (Anvil, 1990)
'Before You Were Mine' from *Mean Time* (Anvil, 1993)

Reproduced by permission of Anvil Press Poetry and
Copyright © Carol Ann Duffy by kind permission of the author c/o Rogers Coleridge &
White Ltd, 20 Powis Mews, London W11 1JN

Seamus Heaney:
'Digging' from *Death of a Naturalist* (Faber, 1966)

Reproduced by permission of Faber & Faber Ltd

Benjamin Zephaniah:
'What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us' from *Too Black Too Strong* (Bloodaxe, 2003)

Reproduced by permission of Bloodaxe Books

Poetry in Schools, A survey of practice, 2006/07 Ofsted, Alexandra House, 33
Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE www.ofsted.gov.uk

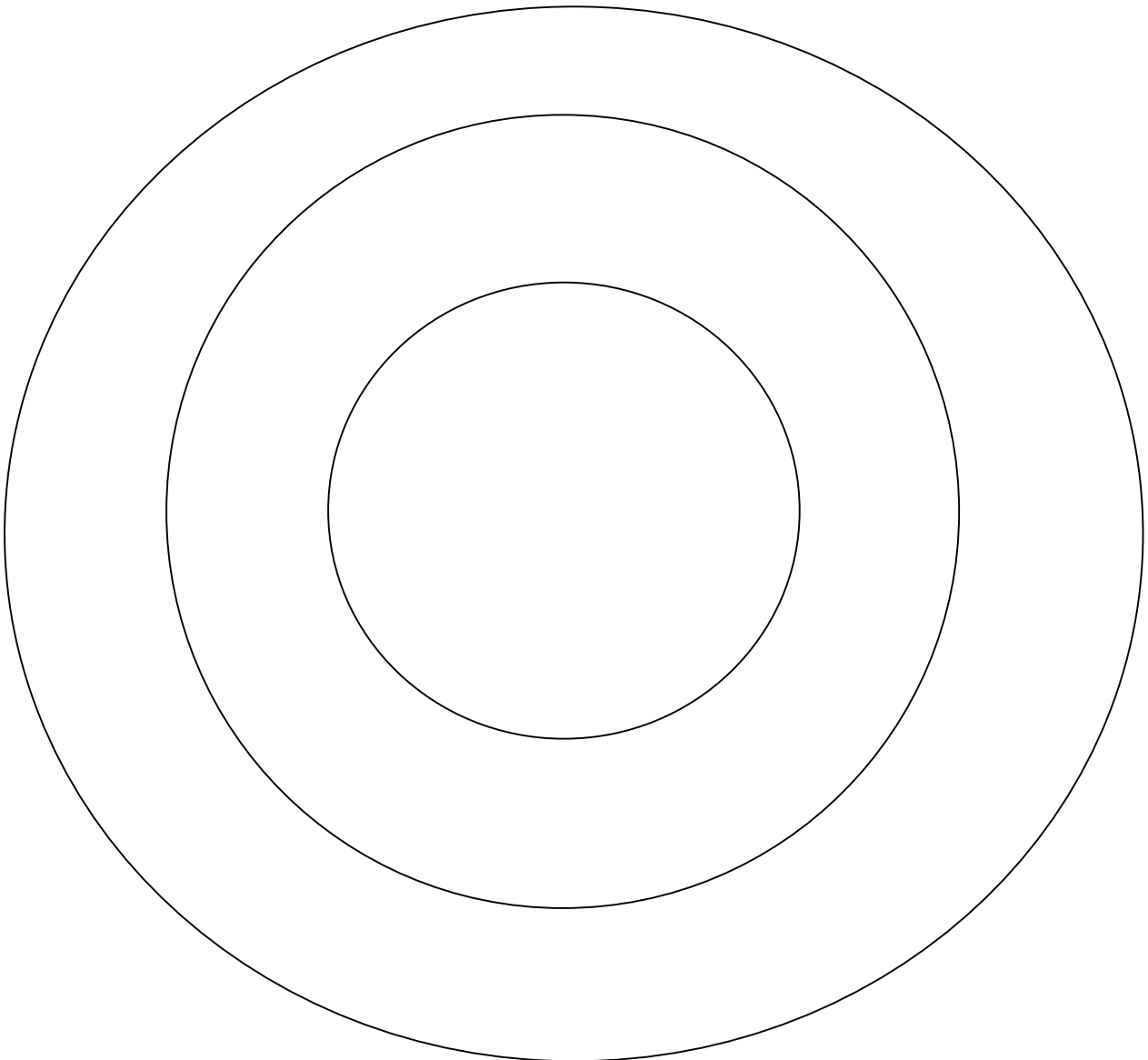


www.scottdalemedia.co.uk
07811-435186

Key Phrases

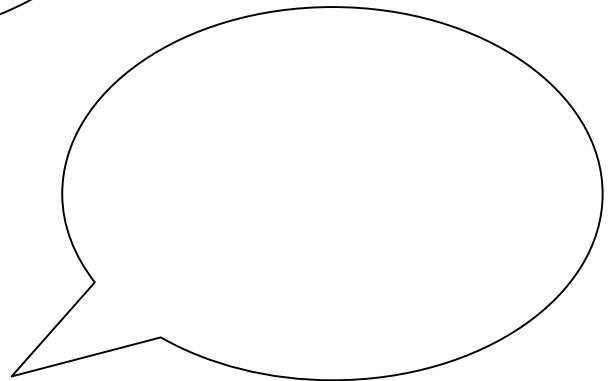
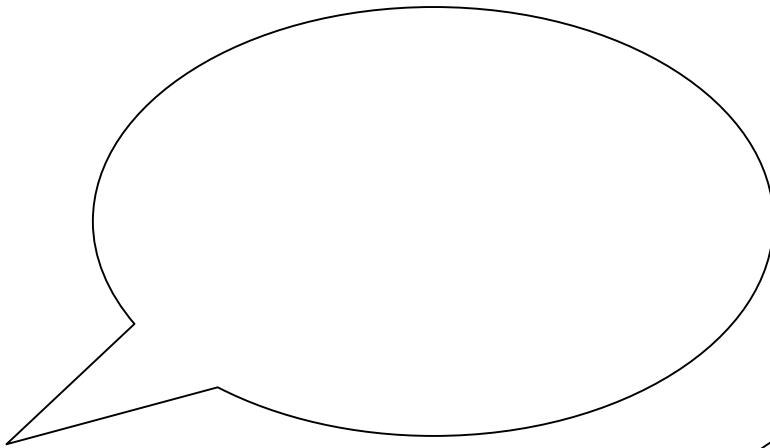
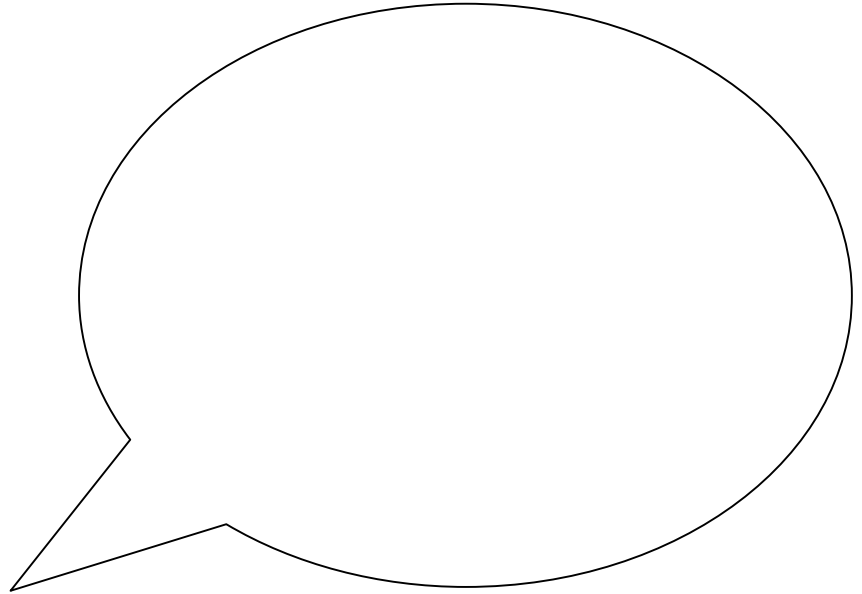
Choose three lines or phrases from the poem you have studied, and place them on the diagram, choosing the one that engages you the most in the middle, and the others in order of preference.

For each line or phrase you have chosen, write your reasons for that choice next to the line. You may like to present your diagram to other students in your group.



Exploring viewpoints in the poems

Choose a poem which involves two or more characters.
Using the images below, choose lines from the poem which reflect the different voices.
The phrase or line which reflects the dominant voice should be written in the biggest
speech bubble, and the other voices in the others depending on their significance.
Present your speech bubbles to the class.



Thinking about Performance

Performing a poem will help you to explore the poem and its effect.

The cards below have one stage direction on them. Working in pairs, decide which ones would be relevant and for which lines in a presentation of your chosen poem. Some have been left blank for you to add your own. Explain the reasons for your choice.

Stand at the front of the stage	Talking directly to the audience	Focusing on one member of the audience	Kneeling
Using a quiet voice	Shouting	Angry	Sad
Smiling to the audience	Hands in a praying motion	Pacing the space	Spoken slowly

Exploring the Cultural/Historical Context of the Poem.

From your reading of the poem, think about what it shows of the culture in which it was written.

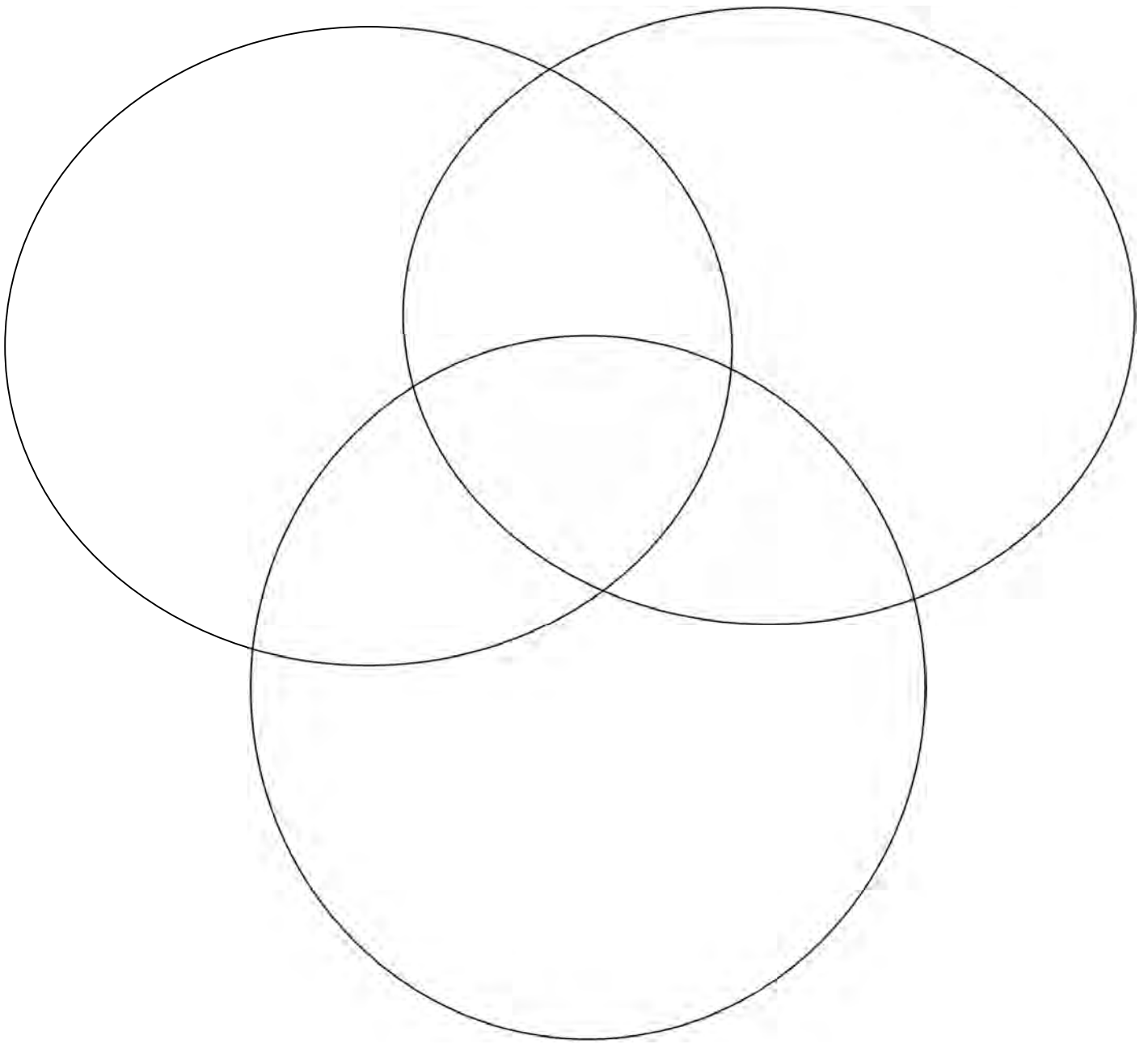
Complete the grid below thinking about the research you need to complete to help you understand the poem more.

What do I know already?	What questions do I have about the historical context?	Which lines/phrases from the poem will I explore during my research?

Exploring Themes

Using a Venn diagram, select three poems you have studied and think about the connections.

What connections can you make between themes/content/use of language/structure/rhyme? Which lines from the poems reveal similar themes?



Introduction to Poetry Study Day

More and more schools have off-timetable days which can be used to introduce or focus on particular aspects of the curriculum. Some of the teaching strategies demonstrated in the DVD would lend themselves particularly to these enrichment and cross-curricular opportunities.

The following is a suggested Study Day plan for introducing poetry combined with ICT to produce a short movie on a poem using Movie Maker or iMovie. It could be adapted to incorporate drama or dance outcomes, the use of other software such as Comic Life and so on.

Learning Objectives

To understand some of the reasons why poetry is studied
To develop a personal response to a poem and consider different interpretations
To explore how meaning is made through words and images by producing a short film based around a poem

Resources

Poetry books, OCR poetry anthology *Reflections*
(Invite learners to bring in their own poetry books in advance of the day)

Projector and screen with sound

Small whiteboards and pens, paper, card and any other art materials available

Digital cameras (1 per group ideally)

PCs with Movie Maker, iMovie or Powerpoint, microphone

Additional teacher support/technical support with knowledge of the software

An additional quiet room for recording the poems if possible

Preparation

Seat learners in groups of 5/6.

Sample Study Day Programme

Time	Activity	Resource
0900	Ask students to bring in their own favourite poems/book of poems. In groups they can share their favourites or browse through the books available as they arrive/register.	Poetry books, <i>Reflections</i> anthologies
0910	Follow the lesson plan on Why Study Poetry? (Page 6)	<i>Virtual Visions</i> DVD
1010	Show any of the relevant video poems on the <i>Virtual Visions</i> DVD, eg Hardy's 'Drummer Hodge', Zephaniah's 'What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us' or Chaucer's 'Prologue to the Canterbury Tales' to demonstrate the purpose of the day. Introduce a poet and poem of your choice, using cloze, sequencing, highlighting etc to enable learners to explore the poem.	<i>Virtual Visions</i> DVD, <i>Reflections</i> anthologies Selected poetry activities
1110	Suggested break	
1130	Discuss the tone and mood of the poem and aspects of reading a poem to consider pace, intonation, volume, emotion etc. Groups can then prepare and perform a reading of the poem, to be recorded using Movie Maker, iMovie or other audio software such as Audacity.	Microphone for recording onto software on PC
1230	Suggested lunch	
1315	In groups learners create images which reflect/interpret lines of the poem, using any art materials available, from simple drawings/paintings to collages and other art forms that may be accessible to them. Each image should be photographed with the image closely contained within the frame. If viable, learners could take photographs around school, or photograph their own freeze frames etc., or work with film if available.	Art materials, cameras
1415	Groups work together to import their material onto Movie Maker or iMovie, and edit their poetry readings and images together, selecting a musical backing track and including titles and credits etc.	PCs with software
1515	The final movies can be shown and the different interpretations discussed.	

Alternative approaches: The poem could be divided up into sections and each group allocated a section to focus on, or each group could do a different poem.

www.ocr.org.uk
OCR customer contact centre

General qualifications

Telephone 01223 553998

Facsimile 01223 552627

Email general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored.

© OCR 2010 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England.
Registered office 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.



FS 27093

K1662