

Cluster 2

Place

See page 268 for more about the concept of the sublime

In Place, one of the main themes is the interaction between humans and their environment, whether this is natural or man-made. The extract from *The Prelude* is an excellent example of the Romantic view of the sublime in nature: that there is something spiritual in nature which humans can never comprehend and thus nature should be treated with awe. This idea recurs in different forms in several of the other poems, especially 'Storm in the Black Forest', 'Wind', 'Crossing the Loch' and 'Below the Green Corrie'.

However, not all the places evoked are natural. Humanity's attempts to shape and control nature are also explored. Sometimes the attempts are positive, as in 'A Vision', and sometimes there are disastrous consequences which lead to social commentary, as in 'Neighbours' and 'London'.

Some poets explore places in relation to personal memory and/or identity, as in 'Hard Water', 'The Blackbird of Glanmore' and 'Cold Knap Lake'.

When studying this cluster, it might be useful for students to focus on some of the following considerations:

- What **kind of place** does this poem focus on? Is it a particular geographical location or is the 'place' more general or metaphorical? Is the place the most important aspect of the poem or is it what the place **represents or means** to the speaker / persona / poet that is significant?
- Is there a **relationship** between the poet and the place being described? Are there memories attached to it – does the place hold a resonance for the poet or help to explain aspects of their character / beliefs?
- From what **perspective** is the poem written? Is the perspective **first person**, **second person** or **third person** address? Is there a **persona** and, if so, how are they connected to the place? Is the poem set in the present, the past, or a future time?
- Why has the poet written this poem? What **feelings**, **attitudes** and/or **ideas** are they considering through their presentation of place? What is the **mood** or **tone** of the poem – is it angry / reflective / saddened / quizzical?
- How has the poet communicated their ideas? What aspects of **language**, **structure** and/or **form** are particularly significant in this poem? What **literary techniques** is the poet using to achieve their effects?

The Blackbird of Glanmore

Seamus Heaney

Background and Context

Seamus Heaney was born in 1939 and grew up at Mossbawn, the family farmhouse in County Derry, Northern Ireland. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. Heaney moved with his family to Glanmore in County Wicklow in 1972. Many of the poems in his first collection of poetry, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), explore growing up and family relationships. 'Mid-term Break' deals with the death of his four-year-old brother Christopher in a road accident. In 'The Blackbird of Glanmore' (*District and Circle*, 2006), Heaney returns to the tragedy and examines his feelings 40 years after writing 'Mid-term Break'.

The Blackbird of Glanmore

<i>Idea of fragility – like Heaney's memory</i>	On the grass when I arrive, Filling the stillness with life, But ready to scare off At the very first wrong move. In the ivy when I leave.	And think of a neighbour's words Long after the accident: 'Yon bird on the shed roof, Up on the ridge for weeks – I said nothing at the time	<i>Onomatopoeia, assonance and consonance evoke sound of door locking. It almost breaks the spell. Perhaps everyday life, as represented by locking the car, prevents reflection and understanding</i>
<i>An important emotion through the poem. Half-rhyme with 'leave' links this line to the first stanza</i>	It's you, blackbird, I love.	But I never liked yon bird.'	
<i>Repeated later as one word to describe blackbird. Links blackbird to Heaney's memory</i>	I park, pause, take heed. Breathe. Just breathe and sit And lines I once translated Come back: 'I want away To the house of death, to my father Under the low clay roof.'	The automatic lock Clunks shut, the blackbird's panic Is shortlived, for a second I've a bird's eye view of myself, A shadow on raked gravel	<i>Heaney is looking down on his shadow, suggesting a moment of clear self-awareness</i>
<i>Tenderness of Heaney's emotions. Emphasises tragedy of Christopher's death</i>	And I think of one gone to him, A little stillness dancer – Haunter-son, lost brother – Cavorting through the yard, So glad to see me home,	Hedge-hop, I am absolute For you, your ready talkback, Your each stand-offish comeback, Your picky, nervy goldbeak – On the grass when I arrive,	<i>Heaney sees himself in the form of a 'shadow' perhaps suggesting a ghost. Are the living any more substantial than the dead?</i>
<i>Echoes of 'Mid-term Break'</i>	My homesick first term over.	In the ivy when I leave.	<i>Reversal of the 'house of death' image earlier</i>
	<i>Strongly suggests blackbird's movement.</i>		<i>Repeated from first stanza but this time as a concluding couplet. Quadrameter and half rhyme create sense of a refrain. Also, we have come back to where we started: life goes on and, unlike individuals who 'arrive' and 'leave', has no beginning and ending</i>

Themes and Ideas (A01)

'The Blackbird of Glanmore' is an elegy for Heaney's brother. Seeing the blackbird begins a series of associated images in his mind and evokes memories – for example, the blackbird's liveliness of movement reminds him of Christopher.

When Heaney arrives, the blackbird fills 'the stillness with life', suggesting an ability to resurrect the dead. Heaney reflects on his own death, his father's death and that of his brother. As he describes his brother, death is suggested through 'stillness', 'haunter' and 'lost' but life starts to emerge through 'dancer', 'cavorting' and 'glad'. Perhaps Heaney is suggesting that the dead live on, not only through our memories of them, but also through nature itself (represented by the blackbird) which outlives any individual. Heaney now sees himself in front of his 'house of life' – a contrast to the earlier 'house of death'.

Love features strongly in the descriptions both of Christopher and the blackbird; love for the bird is shown through his second person address as well as what he says – 'It's you, blackbird, I love.'; 'I am absolute for you'. This love is closely linked to his love for Christopher and suggests that, if anything can conquer death, it is love.

Arriving and leaving have connotations of birth and death, suggesting that Heaney's own life has finite bounds just like Christopher's. The blackbird is there both at his arrival and departure, suggesting that there is something beautiful in life which transcends individual existence and that death is not the end of everything. Perhaps the blackbird represents the perpetuity of life.

Overall, the bitter anger of 'Mid-term Break' – 'a four-foot box: a foot for every year' – is replaced with acceptance and hope; this acceptance is achieved through love.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Varied pace creates different effects.* Heaney slows the pace down in 'I park, pause, take heed. / Breathe.' to suggest deep breaths and quiet reflection. This is followed by a more fluent, reflective section as the thoughts form clearly in his mind. This contrasts with the last long stanza describing the movement of the blackbird. As well as using commas to create breaks, Heaney uses hard consonants, especially 'k' to create a rhythm that parallels the bird's jerky movement. There is a succession of hyphenated or joined words that are spondee: 'Hedge-hop', 'talkback', 'comeback', 'goldbeak', which also make a staccato rhythm.
- *Oxymorons* describe love for Christopher and the pain of loss. In 'stillness dancer', as well as the contrast between stillness and movement, there are the opposites of life and death. In 'haunter-son', there is the living child as well as the ghost, poignantly evoking his father's grief. His own feelings are suggested in 'lost brother' – even in death, Christopher remains his brother.

Targeting C

How does Heaney portray his love both for Christopher and the blackbird? Why might it be important that he loves both of them? How might they be linked?

Targeting A/A*

How does Heaney use the symbol of the blackbird to explore wider issues about life and death?

Stillness and movement are contrasted regularly. What is the effect of this?

Compares with...

'The Wild Swans at Coole', 'Neighbours' and 'Cold Knap Lake' – birds as symbols

'The Wild Swans at Coole', 'Cold Knap Lake' and 'Crossing the Loch' – memory

A Vision

Simon Armitage

Background and Context

Simon Armitage was born in Marsden, West Yorkshire in 1963. 'A Vision' is taken from his 2006 collection *Tyrannosaurus Rex Versus the Corduroy Kid*, and explores how the ideal futures proposed by town planners never quite come into being. Armitage contrasts those ideal futures with the reality of the 'landfill site'.

A Vision

<i>Direct address and question involve the reader</i>	<p>The future was a beautiful place, once.</p> <p>Remember the full-blown balsa-wood town on public display in the Civic Hall?</p> <p>The ring-bound sketches, artists' impressions,</p>	<p><i>Contrast of tenses suggests impossibility of predicting the future and the paradox that the future is now the past</i></p> <p><i>Suggests insubstantiality of the vision</i></p>
<i>Futuristic materials</i>	<p>blueprints of smoked glass and tubular steel,</p> <p>board-game suburbs, modes of transportation like fairground rides or executive toys.</p> <p>Cities like <i>dreams</i>, cantilevered by light.</p>	<p><i>Italicised for effect; adds to sense of unreality</i></p>
<i>Pun on 'model' meaning both miniature and ideal – the driver is well behaved like all the other citizens imagined here</i>	<p>And people like us at the bottle bank next to the cycle path, or dog-walking over tended strips of fuzzy-felt grass, or <i>model</i> drivers, motoring home in</p>	
<i>The plans weren't underwritten by anything else – perhaps this is why they weren't realised</i>	<p>electric cars. Or after the late show – strolling the boulevard. They were the plans, all <i>underwritten</i> in the neat left-hand of architects – a true, legible script.</p>	<p><i>Suggests plans can be neat and tidy, implying real life cannot</i></p>
<i>First person introduces personal comment of final stanza</i>	<p>I pulled that future out of the north wind at the landfill site, stamped with today's date, riding the air with other such futures, all un-lived in and now fully extinct.</p>	<p><i>The plans are only 'true' as part of a 'script' – something that needs to be animated or brought to life. 'Script' also means handwriting literally here.</i></p> <p><i>An unsavoury but necessary aspect of modern life, notably absent from the earlier plans</i></p> <p><i>'All' and 'fully' both suggest totality of planners' failure</i></p>

GLOSSARY

cantilevered – supported by (usually a bracket, beam or girder)

Themes and Ideas (A01)

In the first four stanzas, Armitage consistently portrays the town planners' vision as insubstantial and blindly optimistic. The phrase 'people like us', in Stanza 3, highlights the contrast between the planners and ordinary people. Armitage suggests that the planners, though perhaps well-meaning, do not see people as individuals but rather as 'archetypes' of well behaved citizens – motorists, cyclists, recyclers, dog-walkers and cinema-goers. Perhaps he is exploring the idea that planning on a large scale leads to a loss of individualism, breaks up existing community life and causes people to feel alienated from their surroundings – a consequence not considered during the planning process.

Visions and ideals are harshly contrasted with reality in the Stanza 5, which takes place 'at the landfill site'. This setting would not have added to the beauty or perfection of the planners' vision and so has been omitted from their sanitised view of the future. It also suggests that their vision is no more valuable than anything else which has been discarded. Perhaps there is also a kind of regret or pathos that the planned transformations never happened.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Visual imagery* – The first four stanzas contain a series of visual images drawn from plans. All relate to a distant, perhaps godlike, perspective held by the planners, with individuals existing as miniatures. 'Board-game', 'fairground rides', 'executive toys' and 'fuzzy-felt' all suggest that the planners are divorced from reality. 'Executive toys' implies a difference in social status between the planners and the 'people like us', whom, it is hinted, they benevolently patronise. 'Board-game' and 'fuzzy-felt' create an image of the planners as children playing without responsibility for the consequences of their actions.
- *Familiar images of a cleaner, greener, safer future are evoked through references to the 'cycle path', 'bottle-bank' and 'electric cars'.* While laudable aims, these initiatives have had limited success; most people have more immediate and pressing concerns. The idea of 'strolling the boulevard' is alien to most people, an impression reinforced by the word 'boulevard', evoking as it does an image of a relaxed and sophisticated European town – rather different from the common perception of late night in most town centres today.
- *Sensory imagery* – Armitage uses this to change the mood in the last stanza. Previously, everything has been purely visual and 'neat'. However, we experience life through more than one sense. We almost feel a slap in the face from the 'north wind' bringing us back to reality; the powerful smell of the landfill is also suggested. Armitage may be suggesting that the sterile and unrealistic world of the planners' models is divorced from the multi-sensory nature of reality.

Targeting C

How does Armitage use images relating to childhood? Ask students to identify the images and suggest what they say about plans and planners.

What differences do you notice between the first four stanzas and the final stanza? Discuss how the final part of a poem is often a reflection on the image or event in the main part. Can they identify this in any other poems, for example 'Cold Knap Lake'?

Targeting A/A*

How does Armitage create a contrast between the planners and 'people like us'?

How does Armitage use language to create quite a cynical, critical tone in his attitude towards the planners and their idealised plans?

Compares with...

'The Moment' – unrealistic perceptions of reality

'Hard Water' – conflict between the intellect and real life

'Price We Pay for the Sun' – how people can be shaped by their environment

The Moment

Margaret Atwood

Background and Context

Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa, Canada in 1939 and is the country's most respected poet and novelist. She is most famous for her novels, especially the *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*, both dystopian novels (describing imaginary places where everything is as bad as it can be). Her father was a forest entomologist and Atwood spent part of her early childhood in the wilderness of North Quebec.

The Moment

Another ironic comment on time	The moment when, after many years of hard work and a long voyage	Time from a human perspective, somewhat ironic
Second person pronoun involves reader directly	you stand in the centre of your room,	Suggests self-centredness of humans, seeing themselves as the centre of the world
Divisions of land or terms for property all created by humans	house, half-acre, square mile, island, country,	
	knowing at last how you got there,	
	and say, I own this,	Speaking out loud adds to feeling of over-confidence.
Suggests human arrogance – people think they know things they cannot know	is the same moment when the trees unloose their soft arms from around you,	
	the birds take back their language,	
	the cliffs fissure and collapse,	
	the air moves back from you like a wave	
Last line of stanza is shorter emphasising the result of nature's dominance. It is followed by the first full stop of the poem, causing the reader to pause for breath.	and you can't breathe.	
	No, they whisper. You own nothing.	'Whisper' contrasts with 'say' in the first stanza – suggests certainty and quiet insistence rather than arrogance
	You were a visitor, time after time climbing the hill, planting the flag, proclaiming.	
	We never belonged to you.	
	You never found us.	
Suggests eternity as opposed to the brevity of human life and achievement	It was always the other way round.	

Themes and Ideas (A01)

'The Moment' examines humanity's relationship with nature. There are three voices: an omniscient narrator, the voice of a single person representing all humanity, and nature's plural voice. There is a consistently ironic tone which undercuts the value of human achievements when viewed against the bigger picture.

The poem begins with a human voice listing possessions then proclaiming, 'I own this,' referring to whatever they may have accumulated in their life 'after many years / of hard work and a long voyage'. The human voice is first person and speaks out loud, highlighting a sense of misplaced certainty emphasised by 'knowing'. At this 'moment', the world begins to fall apart as 'birds take back their language', 'cliffs fissure and collapse' and even the 'air moves back', leaving the human speaker completely alone and unable to 'breathe'. This emphasises the idea that humanity and its accomplishments are very short-lived when viewed in a cosmic time frame.

At this point, nature is personified. It 'whispers' but speaks more wisely and humbly than the human speaker, and is given the final words of the poem to reinforce the key message. Atwood may be asking us to think about what we are without nature. Humans are merely brief, totally dependent visitors. What seems 'many years' or a 'long voyage' to us is the blink of an eye in terms of the time taken for nature to evolve. Perhaps the poem also refers to the moment of death and suggests the idea that all our accomplishments are relatively very small and that we cannot take them with us.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Semantic fields* create a contrast between human views of property ownership and how nature might view ownership differently. Humans divide the world into privately 'owned' sections, using words like 'room', 'house' and 'half-acre'. 'Country' suggests the ridiculousness of nationalism; what is the difference between a Canadian tree and an American tree? These divisions are then contrasted with natural phenomena that cannot be divided and controlled ('trees', 'birds', 'cliffs', 'air') as we tend to divide and control in our attempt to 'own' nature. There is a sense of the beauty we would lose through the trees' 'soft arms' and the birds' 'language'.
- *Atwood portrays humans as adventurers, explorers and colonialists in the third stanza.* Yet she ironically suggests that 'climbing the hill, planting the flag, proclaiming' does not give humans ownership over the things they feel they have 'conquered'.
- *Singular and plural pronouns* are used to contrast the perceived individuality of humans with the collective power of nature as a whole. Humans are 'I' and 'you'; nature is 'they' and 'we'. This can be viewed as a criticism of humans' tendency to overreach and overvalue their own achievements.

Targeting C

How does Atwood portray humans as arrogant and selfish? Ask students to find quotations about humans / human activity and explain what they suggest.

How does Atwood portray nature as timeless, wise and beautiful? Establishing the contrast between humans and nature will enable students to explore the key theme.

Targeting A/A*

How does Atwood use time to contrast humans and nature? Ask students to contrast 'many years' and 'a long voyage' with 'time after time', 'never' (repeated) and 'always'.

How does Atwood create different voices for humans and nature and what is the role of the omniscient narrator in the structure of the poem?

Compares with...

'Below the Green Corrie' – relationship between humans and natural world

'A Vision' – human arrogance, time, mortality, subdividing nature

'Storm in the Black Forest' – human inability to conquer nature

Cold Knap Lake

Gillian Clarke

Background and Context

Gillian Clarke was born in Cardiff in 1937. Both her parents spoke Welsh but she herself was brought up to be bilingual. Cold Knap Lake is a real lake in a town park in Barry Island, Glamorgan. Clarke tells the story, as reliably as her memory will allow, of an incident from her childhood where her mother saved a child by using artificial resuscitation. Clarke explores the idea of how nature can be beautiful, fragile and dangerous at the same time: this is a regular theme in her work.

Exploring the Poem

Stanza 1

- 2 'drowned child' – dramatic opening. Clarke suggests the child is already dead. This perhaps reflects what the crowd were probably thinking and adds to the miraculous nature of her mother's powers
- 3 'Blue-lipped' – use of colour. Note the contrast with 'rosy' and 'red'
- 3 'water's long green silk' – metaphor for the water weed. This image is reminiscent of Millais' painting of Ophelia. Also sounds almost ceremonial suggesting a religious ceremony

Stanza 2

- 5 'kneeling' – suggests prayer, perhaps foreshadowing a miracle
- 6 'heroine' – strong feelings of admiration for her mother; 'red head bowed' – again suggests prayer. Red is a vibrant colour, full of life, and contrasts with the dead 'blue' lips of the child
- 10 'drawn' – long vowel in 'drawn' suggests tension and apprehension

Stanza 3

- 11 'breathed, bleating' – alliteration of plosive 'b' sound suggests the spluttering of the child. The word 'bleating' identifies the child with a lamb – a Christian symbol of innocence and new life

Stanza 4

- 15 'Was I there?' – short line and question creates change of time and mood
- 17 'dipped fingers' – personification of willows adds a slightly menacing tone
- 19–20 'after the treading, heavy webs of swans / as their wings beat and whistle on the air?' – fairytale imagery, suggesting both beauty and danger

Themes and Ideas (A01)

In 'Cold Knap Lake', Clarke recounts a real memory of when she was just a young child, aged about six. Admiration for her parents, particularly her mother, is strongly evoked. Her mother is almost Christ-like, kneeling and bowing her head before giving the child the miracle of life through artificial resuscitation. Along with admiration, there is a hint of jealousy suggested by the possessive pronoun in 'my mother'.

Nature is portrayed as something both beautiful and dangerous. The 'swans' are majestic but dangerous. 'Water's green silk', although beautiful, contributed to the near death of the child. Strong colours like 'blue', 'green' and 'red' create a powerful visual picture of the memory, evoking a painting or photograph. Perhaps the colours are too clear and suggest an oversimplification or reconstruction of the event.

In Stanzas 4 and 5, the focus shifts to an exploration of memory. The short question 'Was I there?' stands out, adding a note of uncertainty and questioning the reliability of the memory that has gone before. The imagery here creates a fairy-tale atmosphere. Perhaps Clarke is suggesting that, with time, our memories become more like stories as, with hindsight, we invest them with extra detail and meaning. And our earliest memories are particularly uncertain as they were shaped by the childish imagination and perception that received them.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Different types of rhyme* create a variety of effects. The half-rhymes of the first four stanzas suggest the uncertainty of Clarke's recollection of the incident. The only full-rhyme comes in the final couplet, suggesting that the only thing we can be certain of is that, paradoxically, our memories are unreliable and uncertain.
- *Alliteration* is also used to add descriptive, sensory power. 'Stood silent' suggests the hush and awe of the crowd; the dull sounds of 'drawn' and 'dread' suggest fear; 'wings beat and whistle' suggests the whooshing noise of the swans' wings cutting through the air.
- *Language is used to describe memory as uncertain.* In Stanzas 4 and 5, 'troubled surface' suggests a mirror which does not reflect things accurately; 'satiny mud blooms' beautifully evokes the mud gradually clouding the water; 'cloudiness' and 'shadowy' again suggest a lack of clarity. The final couplet adds to the sense of fairy tale and 'closing water' suggests that memories become ever more unclear as the lake becomes a metaphor for the submerged depths of memory; what we can retrieve or dredge up from its 'closing water' is only ever incomplete and partial.

Targeting C

How does Clarke portray her parents? Ask students to identify and comment on references to her mother and father.

How does Clarke suggest that memory is unreliable? Identify quotations from the final two stanzas.

Targeting A/A*

How does Clarke use sound to add sensory power to her descriptions? Ask students to explore Clarke's use of alliteration, rhyme and vowel sounds.

How does Clarke create a contrast between the first three stanzas and the final two?

Compares with...

'The Wild Swans at Coole' – swans as images of beauty, power and mystery; also, time, memory and recollection

'The Prelude' – memory and childhood

'Crossing the Loch' – water and memory

Price We Pay for the Sun

Grace Nichols

Background and Context

Grace Nichols was born in Guyana and grew up in a small coastal village before moving to the capital Georgetown at the age of eight. She moved to England in 1977 and an important theme in her poetry is a sense of being torn between two cultures – British and Guyanese. Nichols often writes in a mixture of Creole and standard English. 'Price We Pay for the Sun' deals with, amongst other things, the effects of tourism on permanent residents of the Caribbean.

Price We Pay for the Sun

	These islands	
Strong and clear negation	not picture postcards	
	for unravelling tourist	Double-meaning – suggests relaxation but also tourism's unravelling of the islands
Direct address involves reader	you know	
	these islands real	
	more real	
	than flesh and blood	The islands have a reality independent of people
Destructive power but perhaps also a reference to the island being 'split' between two cultures	past stone	
	past foam	
	these islands split	
	bone	
	my mother's breasts	
	like sleeping volcanoes	
	who know	
	what kinda sulph-furious	
	cancer tricking her	
	below	
	while the wind	
Alliteration of 'w' to evoke the sound of the wind	constantly whipping	
	my father's tears	
	to salty hurricanes	Suggests a stinging pain – emotional as well as physical
Is this croon to comfort the mother, or is it perhaps a lament?	and my grandmother's croon	
	sifting sand	Sibilance to suggest the soft sound of the sand and the grandmother's voice
Suggests an unreal or reflected view. Compare with 'tricking' above. Perhaps also suggests calmness?	water mirroring palm	
	Poverty is the price	
	we pay for the sun girl	
	run come	

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Nichols is exploring different perspectives on the Caribbean. Tourists see the islands as 'picture postcards' and places for 'unravelling'. Nichols does not see this view as 'real' as there is a harsher reality for the islands' permanent inhabitants. She evokes a range of experiences through descriptions of family members. Pain is suggested through the speaker's mother's 'cancer' – perhaps linked to the 'father's tears'. The poem seems to attach some blame to the island for the mother's cancer – or it could be that the mother's outward appearance belies the 'sulph-furious' depths within, just as the islands look beautiful but can be harmful and destructive.

Alongside these descriptions, there is a portrayal of the grandmother's voice singing, or perhaps calling. An important message is delivered through the statement 'Poverty is the price / we pay for the sun' suggesting the idyllic image of tropical islands masks a reality of bitter struggle for most residents. The poem ends with 'girl / run come', perhaps the speaker's mother or grandmother calling her, or perhaps the island is still calling her metaphorically, despite the pain with which it is associated. This suggests a powerful physical link between place and identity.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Nichols uses a range of different voices* to create different effects. The combination of Creole and standard English suggests the two languages are within her, as well as highlighting the different speech modes of tourists and residents. The language of holiday brochures is evoked through 'picture postcards' and 'unravelling'. This is contrasted with the Creole syntax of the speaker seen in the omission of the verb 'to be' in phrases like 'these islands real' and 'while the wind constantly whipping'.
- *Images of powerful natural phenomena* – the mother's breasts are 'sleeping volcanoes', suggesting the imminence of potential destruction and Nichols coins the word 'sulph-furious' to suggest the vileness of the cancer, with the reference to sulphur perhaps linking the cancer to hell as well as literally to the volcanoes on the islands. '[F]urious' also suggests the human response to the mother's illness, linking to the image of the 'father's tears' as 'salty hurricanes', evoking ideas of anger and destruction. The 'grandmother's croon' is portrayed more peacefully through 'sifting sand' and 'water mirroring palm' but the purpose of the croon is unclear. Is it a comforting childhood memory – or does the grandmother represent the island?
- *Rhythm and structure* – free verse and short lines help to present a rapid series of images which, when put together, create a stream of consciousness effect. This is intensified by the voices or perspectives of the speaker, the father and the grandmother interlinking. Repetition of 'real' and 'past' and rhyme of 'stone', 'foam' and 'bone' create an insistent rhythm and suggest a natural voice, perhaps the voice of the island. This is reinforced by the constant use of monosyllables, reminiscent of a heartbeat.

Targeting C

How does Nichols contrast positive and negative views of the islands? Ask students to identify images and think about what different views are held by different people.

Targeting A/A*

How does Nichols use structure and form to create a range of meanings?

How does Nichols suggest that the speaker's identity is rooted in these islands?

Compares with...

'Hard Water' and 'Below the Green Corrie' – close association of identity with place

'Wind' and 'Storm in the Black Forest' – destructive forces within nature

'London' – suffering caused by living in a particular place / environment

Neighbours

Gillian Clarke

Background and Context

'Neighbours' reflects on the effects of the Chernobyl disaster. On 26 April 1986, reactor number 4 at the Chernobyl plant went into meltdown. There was a huge release of radioactive material (400 times as much as from the Hiroshima bomb). The radioactivity spread over a huge geographical area – as far as Ireland in the west – where rain was contaminated with radioactive material. Many wild and domestic animals died.

See page 68 for information about Gillian Clarke

Exploring the Poem

GLOSSARY

Glasnost – transparency, openness to the public, a reform policy initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in the second half of the 1980s

golau glas – Welsh for blue light

Stanza 1

- 1 'That spring' – contrasts with 'This spring' at the start of Stanza 5
3 late to pair – 'late' also has a connotation of death (see repetition later) and 'to pair' is a reference to mating and the creation of new life, juxtaposed with 'late'

Stanza 3

- 7 'gall' – suggests poison but also the anger felt by the speaker

Stanza 4

- 11 'bitter' – as with 'gall', suggests simmering resentment as well as cold
12 'box of sorrows' – reference to Pandora's box and the shape of the reactor core

Stanza 5

- 13 'sips caesium' – delicate action of 'sips' juxtaposed with 'caesium', a radioactive and poisonous heavy metal, to add pathos to the lamb's plight; it does not know that what it is drinking might kill it. This idea is reinforced in the next image of the 'child, lifting her head to drink the rain'. The 'caesium' now becomes a 'poisoned arrow.' The lamb perhaps represents innocence

Stanza 6

- 16–17 'all neighbourly, each little town / in Europe twinned to Chernobyl, each heart' – repetition of 'each' and use of 'all' suggest universality of suffering

Stanza 7

- 19 'democracy of the virus and the toxin' – democracy normally represents freedom, but here it is subverted to suggest we are all equally vulnerable to man-made disasters

Stanza 8

- 22 'Glasnost. Golau glas. A first break of blue' – three languages, Russian, Welsh and English are used, suggesting community and fellowship in disaster across borders. Also suggests the hope from Pandora's box

Themes and Ideas (A01)

'Neighbours' explores humanity's terrible ability to upset the balance of nature. The main victims of the fallout from Chernobyl are innocent – lambs, children and 'small birds'. Birds ('song-thrushes', 'warblers' and 'nightingales') are used as examples of creatures who give us beauty and song being destroyed through human carelessness. The repetition of 'children' suggests that future generations will bear the brunt of the disaster.

The poem is set in spring, the same time of year as the disaster happened and a time associated with regeneration and new life. This serves to highlight the destruction caused by the disaster as spring becomes a time of unnatural death rather than hope.

Clarke emphasises the widespread effects of the tragedy through references to many countries – Finland, Poland, Ukraine, as well as Russia, and of course, the poem's setting of Wales. The dangers of nuclear power have made us all 'neighbours', as the devastation of the Chernobyl accident was so widespread. What happens in one place can affect many others.

There is a sense of irony in that this new political neighbourliness, created by the thawing of relations as the cold war drew to a close, coincided with this disaster, seen in the phrase 'democracy of the virus and the toxin'.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *First-person plural pronouns suggest a shared suffering and empathy.* 'We' suggests not only the speaker and her immediate neighbours but everyone across Europe who has suffered. The 'child, lifting her head to drink the rain' in Wales is no different from 'the child on the Moscow train.'
- *Unnatural images and contrasting colours* are used to suggest a world turned upside down by the disaster. Birds which should thrill us with their flight and song now represent a 'dangerous beauty'. Lambs, traditionally symbols of innocence and a Christian symbol for Christ, lie dead or sip 'caesium on a Welsh hill.' 'Milk', representing the gift of life from mother to child, is now 'spilt in Poland'. Colours are also contrasted. The dark coloured 'crow', perhaps representing evil, drinks from the light-coloured 'lamb's eye', perhaps representing purity and innocence. Hope returns at the end through more natural colours like 'green' and 'blue'.
- *References to mythology and religion* create a modern morality poem. The disaster at Chernobyl, 'box of sorrows', can be read as a parallel to Pandora's Box. The last thing to come out was hope, touched on in the last words of the poem – 'a first break of blue.' There is also a suggestion of Noah's Ark. The people who 'watch for spring migrations' are perhaps like the Ark's passengers and the 'one bird' which returns with 'green in its voice' is reminiscent of the dove returning from dry land with the olive leaf in its mouth.

Targeting C

How does Clarke show the widespread effects of the fallout? List examples and comment on three in detail.

How does Clarke suggest that we are now 'neighbours' to people in countries thousands of miles away? Point students towards references to other countries and the use of first person plural pronouns.

Targeting A/A*

How does Clarke use animals to make specific points about the effects of the disaster?

How does Clarke create an unnatural, nightmarish vision in which nothing is as it should be?

Compares with...

'London' – vision of sorrow and destruction of innocence

'Hard Water' – views on pollution

'A Vision' – planning without proper care and attention

'Storm in the Black Forest' – humans versus nature

Crossing the Loch

Kathleen Jamie

Background and Context

Kathleen Jamie was born in Renfrewshire in 1962. She is currently Lecturer in Creative Writing at St Andrews University and lives in Fife. She is reluctant to define her own poetry but says, 'two things have been constant over the years: a rigour, and a concern for musicality. I like to think that both come from two different Scottish traditions.'* 'Crossing the Loch' is taken from *Jizzen* (1999) which is the Scottish word for childbed; the collection deals with births of all kinds.

Exploring the Poem

GLOSSARY

blaeberries – another name for whortleberries (blae is dialect for blue)

phosphorescence – a natural phenomena whereby a substance (in this case water) appears to emit its own light or shine by itself

race – a rapid current of water

reach – a stretch of water

Stanza 1

- 2 'sickle-shaped' – suggests the moon and helps set the scene; 'sickle' suggests the grim reaper and time's ability to change and distort (cf Sonnet 116)
- 6–7 'lipped the sides / as though the loch mouthed' – 'lipped' and 'mouthed' suggest a conversation between the speaker and the loch

Stanza 2

- 8 'Our jokes hushed' – noise replaced by silence, suggesting something bigger than they are has silenced them
- 10 'loch reached long into the night' – close link suggested between the 'loch' and the 'night'; 'reached' suggests a stretch of water and the water and the sky merging at the horizon
- 11 'race' – the current is moving them and they are at the mercy of nature.
- 14 'deadheads, ticking nuclear hulls' – deadheads possibly refers to submerged logs. The 'nuclear hulls' could refer to submarines from the nearby naval base at Faslane

Stanza 3

- 15 'Who rowed, and who kept their peace?' – one of several questions, suggesting the unreliability of memory
- 20–21 'an astonished / small boat of saints' – suggests a spiritual connection with the loch and perhaps suggests that the phosphorescence of the loch is shining on them with a heavenly light, like haloes
- 23 'the magic dart of our bow wave' – reinforces the idea of spirituality

Stanza 4

- 25–26 'but we live – and even have children / to women and men we had yet to meet / that night we set out' – life goes on regardless
- 27 'calling' – suggests an arrogance at the time that has been replaced by a deeper understanding on reflection
- 31 'shipped oars and jumped' – play on words suggesting they jumped ship and got out as quickly as possible.
- 32 'safe, high' – relief at completing the journey.

* <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth02c5p102112626707>

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Jamie evokes a sense of danger and menace through the images of 'cold shawl of breeze', 'hunched hills' and the lurking threat of 'what the water held of deadheads, ticking nuclear hulls.' There is a miraculous beauty too, from the loch's phosphorescence. Once across, they are more relieved to be 'safe' than enchanted by the beauty of nature. The journey is perhaps a metaphor for what is learned.

Jamie explores a memory of a time when over-confidence led to danger – 'It was surely foolhardy' – but there is no real sense of regret. For the time spent in the boat, her sense of security is lost and the rules of normal experience do not apply. She suffers from a fear of something primeval – not just from nature but from what lies beneath the water, 'the ticking nuclear hulls' representing humanity's ability to destroy.

However, the speaker and her companion go on to 'have children', a suggestion that humanity survives and perseveres through the most difficult situations. Perhaps there is no way to avoid dangers in life and maybe Jamie is suggesting that we do not live in isolation from the forces of nature – in fact, the unknown is magical, threatening and, in retrospect, exciting. As in 'Below the Green Corrie', nature has the power to transform our perceptions.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Use of the senses* to create a powerful and vivid description. We can see 'the hunched hills', hear 'the oars' splash', feel 'the cold shawl of breeze', smell and taste 'the salt-air'.
- *Onomatopoeia and sibilance* are used in 'pushed across the shingle' and 'The oars' splash, creak, and the spill' to evoke the sound of the rowing boat being hauled across the stones on the beach and the sound of the boat in the water. Long vowels in 'cold shawl of breeze' suggest the blowing of the wind, with the 'z' sound also suggesting shivering.
- *Imagery* is used to create a variety of effects: sometimes frightening, sometimes beautiful. In 'cold shawl of breeze' in Stanza 2, fear is suggested through a normally comforting object like a shawl supplying coldness rather than warmth; this creates a sense that things are not as they should be. In Stanza 4, beauty and value are evoked through 'the glimmering anklets' they 'wore in the shallows' suggesting also nature's power to transform and inspire.

Targeting C

How does Jamie use sensory descriptions to evoke a powerful sense of being on the loch? Find an example of each sense and explain what it suggests.

Targeting A/A*

How does Jamie contrast the beauty and wonder of experience with its more negative and dangerous side? What is she saying to us about life in general?

How does Jamie use the idea of a journey to represent a learning experience?

Compares with...

'The Prelude' – a boat journey that leads to revelation

'Below the Green Corrie' – power of nature to transform

Hard Water

Jean Sprackland

Background and Context

Jean Sprackland was born and brought up in Burton-on-Trent, an industrial town in the Potteries famous for brewing. 'Hard Water' comes from the collection of the same name published in 2003. Carol Ann Duffy states, 'The poems in *Hard Water* have the exhilarating quality of freshness and truth: poems of memory and place, religion and childhood, captured with relish in a textured and physical language.'* Jean Sprackland is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Give

*This perhaps accounts for the
'mania' – the water is not
behaving as it should*

I tried the soft stuff on holiday in Wales,
a mania of teadrinking and hairwashing,
excitable soap which never rinsed away,

*Sibilance and alliteration of 'f'
perhaps suggests disdainful
tone*

but I loved coming home to this.
Flat. Straight. Like the vowels,
like the straight talk: *hey up me duck*.
I'd run the tap with its swimming-pool smell,
get it cold and anaesthetic. Stand the glass
and let the little fizz of anxiety settle.
Honest water, bright and not quite clean.
The frankness of limestone, of gypsum,
the sour steam of cooling towers,
the alchemical taste of brewing.

*Contrasts with 'mania' and
'excitable' and creates
calmness*

*Suggests a sort of magical
transformation*

*The rain provides 'pity' on
such nights*

On pitiless nights, I had to go for the bus
before last orders. I'd turn up my face,
let rain scald my eyelids and lips.

It couldn't lie. Fell thick
with a payload of acid. No salt –
this rain had forgotten the sea.

*Suggests bombing – normally
negative, but positive here*

*She is open and receptive to
the water – learning rather
than 'speaking'*

I opened my mouth, speaking nothing
in spite of my book-learning.

I let a different cleverness wash my tongue.

It tasted of work, the true taste
of early mornings, the blunt taste

*Links to 'honest' and 'it
couldn't lie'.*

of don't get mardy, of too bloody deep for me,
fierce lovely water that marked me for life
as belonging, regardless.

* www.jeansprackland.com

Themes and Ideas (A01)

In 'Hard Water', Sprackland explores her roots through her relationship to different kinds of water. The soft water of the first stanza is foreign because it is 'tried' in 'Wales'. '[Tr]ied' suggests playing and 'holiday' lends a sense of ephemerality to the water; it will be gone when the holiday is over. 'Mania' adds to the sense that there is something wrong with the soft water because it provokes such a frenzied reaction in the speaker.

The water of Stanza 2 is the water of 'home' and is 'loved'. The additives to the water do not make it impure but rather add a sense of solidity. It eases 'the little fizz of anxiety' with its 'anaesthetic' quality. Its impurity is linked to 'honesty'; like the water and the town, we are all 'not quite clean'. The water is right and honestly reflects its environment of 'cooling towers' and 'brewing'.

In Stanza 3, tap water is replaced by 'rain'. Normally a negative, pollution now becomes positive, linking the speaker to her roots. The pollution is honest and unpretentious. The speaker invites the 'scald' of the rain and its 'acidity' as she turns up her face and opens her mouth. The scars from the water which she says 'marked me for life' are symbols of 'belonging' and will stay with her forever, 'regardless' of where she goes or what she does.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Use of dialect to reflect the honesty of the water.* 'Vowels' are 'flat' and 'straight' like the 'talk' of her home town. Dialect phrases are italicised for emphasis and represent, through the acid rain, a 'different cleverness' which replaces her 'book-learning' with 'silence', perhaps the silence of deep reflection and understanding. 'Too bloody deep for me' suggests an honest acceptance of our lack of ability to understand some things as opposed to the implied smugness of 'book-learning' which is silenced by the rain.
- *Use of statement and short sentences* also suggest honesty and bluntness: 'Flat. Straight.', 'It couldn't lie', 'Fell thick / with a payload of acid'.
- *Each stanza looks at a different aspect of water.* Stanza 1 is short, perhaps to reflect the shortness of the 'holiday' and dismiss 'the soft stuff' as unreal and somehow wrong. 'But' changes the mood to a positive one at the start of Stanza 2. Hard water is impure but 'loved', reflecting the security of home. Running the tap water is done with the precision and care of a religious ceremony, implying a spiritual connection between the speaker and her home represented by the water. In Stanza 3, 'acid' rain provides comfort on 'pitiless nights' and grounds the speaker, reminding her of her roots 'in spite of [her] book-learning'. The poem ends with a positive affirmation of 'belonging, regardless' emphasised with a caesura in the short final line – each three-syllable word almost shouted like a battle-cry.

Targeting C

How does Sprackland contrast the soft water from Wales with the hard water of her home town? How can something polluted and impure be better than something pure and clean?

Targeting A/A*

How does Sprackland link the 'honesty' of the water to the dialect and mindset of her home town? Students could explore how both are impure and imperfect but that this is a positive for Sprackland.

Compares with...

'Cold Knap Lake' – water as metaphor

'Price We Pay for the Sun' – place providing identity

'Below the Green Corrie' – attachment to place

London

William Blake

Background and Context

William Blake (1757–1827) was a poet, painter and printmaker. His work, although appreciated and respected after his death, was largely undervalued in his lifetime. Although devoutly religious, Blake was a consistent and fervent critic of organised religion which he saw as ineffective in tackling social and moral injustice and restrictive to free thinking and expression of emotion. Blake lived in London for most of his life and so speaks of conditions in the capital from first-hand experience.

See pages 267–268 for more on Romanticism and the French Revolution

London

The speaker can read people's inward emotions – negative emotions lead to real or imaginary scars. Perhaps a prophetic gift?

I wander through each chartered street,

Near where the chartered Thames does flow,

And mark in every face I meet

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

Natural phenomena like rivers could now be 'owned'

In every cry of every man,

In every infant's cry of fear,

In every voice, in every ban,

The mind-forged manacles I hear:

Established religion prevents people from thinking creatively and positively

Reference to widespread child labour and loss of innocence at an early age

How the chimney-sweeper's cry

Every black'ning church appalls,

And the hapless soldier's sigh

Runs in blood down palace walls.

Blake angered by the church's lack of will to stop child labour

Another reference to powerlessness and lack of individual freedom

But most through midnight streets I hear

How the youthful harlot's curse

Blasts the new-born infant's tear,

And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

Commenting on how innocence is lost immediately and never recovered

Biblical language suggesting a possible punishment from God

Two religious ceremonies (wedding and funeral) are juxtaposed to suggest that positive values like love and family are doomed to end in death – again implicating the Anglican Church

GLOSSARY

chartered – Royal Charters allowed private ownership of formerly common land

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The poem describes a journey around the London of the 1790s. The speaker gives us snapshots of everyday life which build up a bleak picture of restrictive property laws, child labour, the effects of war and social unrest and finally prostitution and disease. The poem is a mixture of social comment and prophecy: Blake adopts a biblical tone, reminiscent of an Old Testament prophet.

At the start, Blake criticises private ownership of property as dispensed through Royal Charters which were thought by many to dispossess and restrict the rights of common people. Stanza 2 moves on to explore how living in contemporary London leads to the appearance of 'mind-forged manacles' – a reference to the repression of free-thinking – and how this is reflected in the voices and cries of ordinary people. Perhaps Blake is suggesting that the hardship of modern life, combined with an intolerant church, lead to fear and suppression.

In Stanza 3, Blake rebukes the Anglican Church for not preventing child labour. He also describes a 'hapless soldier' sacrificed on behalf of the privileged rulers within 'palace walls'. This may refer to the recent war with Revolutionary France.

The final stanza is even darker, reflected in the change of time to 'midnight'. Here, he highlights the social ills caused by prostitution, especially sexually-transmitted diseases, which change marriage from the basis for procreation into a lethal dice with death.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Rhythm and rhyme.* The poem is written in the form of a simple song with four beats per line and a consistent and full abab rhyme. This form would generally be associated with less shocking subject matter and thus increases the impact of Blake's nightmarish vision.
- *Repetition for a variety of effects.* In Stanza 1, Blake repeats 'chartered' to emphasise the spread of privately-owned property – even the river is now legally 'owned'. He also plays on the word 'mark', using it first to mean 'notice' but then to suggest that people's unhappiness is worn on their faces, almost like scars. In Stanza 2, Blake uses 'every' four times to emphasise the widespread effect of the 'mind-forged manacles'.
- *Dark colours create a hellish atmosphere.* In Stanza 3, the soot from the young chimney-sweeper's work literally falls onto the walls of the church and hangs there as a mark of reproach for the church's inability or unwillingness to act against child labour. Later, the walls of the palace are smeared an incriminating blood-red, perhaps due to war or revolution.

Targeting C

How does Blake use a range of details from a walk round London to build up an atmosphere of misery and unhappiness?

How does Blake use imagery, for example 'mind-forged manacles' and 'marriage-hearse'?

How does Blake use sounds to heighten the power of his descriptions – 'cry', 'hear', 'sigh', 'voice', 'ban', 'curse'?

Targeting A/A*

How and why does Blake use images of barriers like 'walls' and 'manacles'?

How does Blake's poem criticise wider social trends by focusing on individuals like the 'chimney-sweeper', 'youthful harlot' and 'hapless soldier'?

What is the effect of using a simple song form for such shocking subject matter?

Compares with...

'Neighbours' – criticism of social issues

'A Vision' – how ideal societies do not exist

'The Moment' – how our mental attitudes can blind us from important truths

Extract from **The Prelude**

William Wordsworth

Background and Context

See page 268 for more about the Romantics

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was a leading figure among the early Romantic poets. He is strongly associated with the Lake District, his home for many years and the inspiration for many poems. *The Prelude* was intended to form the first part of a longer poem called 'The Recluse' which was never completed. In the 1850 introduction, Wordsworth states his aim was to 'compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature and Society, and to be entitled the Recluse; as having for its principle subject the sensations and opinions of a man living in retirement.' *The Prelude* deals, often autobiographically, with the early life and experiences of the 'Recluse'. This extract is often known as 'The Stolen Boat'. *The Prelude* is a pivotal Romantic poem and could be used to introduce the idea of the sublime in nature as part of a series of lessons about this cluster.

Extract from *The Prelude*

The young Wordsworth portrays himself as freeing the boat, perhaps to make himself feel better about his crime

Juxtaposition of opposite emotions suggests confusion

Pride comes before a fall – perhaps this is one of the lessons he learns

Pride in his skill as an oarsman

Compare with 'like a swan'. The confidence has gone to be replaced by a panicked thrashing at the water

GLOSSARY

pinnace – a small sailing ship

bark – a small boat

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –

He knew the boat was there, suggesting a premeditated crime

Foreshadows the encounter with the mountains to follow and perhaps represents the voice of Wordsworth's conscience

Hints at a supernatural element. 'little boat' (line 2) and 'small circles' (line 9), emphasises his smallness compared with the mountain – suggesting the insignificance of humanity in the face of awe-inspiring natural phenomena

Commas force pauses in the rhythm and emphasise the repetition of the word 'huge', intensifying his reaction to the mountain

The mountain blocks out the stars and separates him from the light of heaven, perhaps because of his sin

Emphasises the physical effect of his fear

The Romantic idea of the sublime contained a major spiritual element: that which cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind

Contrast of 'day' and 'dreams' to emphasise the omnipresence of his fears

And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Repetition of negatives – four in the final sentence

Themes and Ideas (A01)

As part of a much longer work, this extract deals with a childhood memory and its effects on Wordsworth at the time. However, the speaker is the adult Wordsworth who uses the childhood experience to illustrate his adult views on nature, particularly its sublimity. Like 'Cold Knap Lake', *The Prelude* deals with memory; there is more certainty as to events but the emotional effects are dealt with metaphorically, haunting his thoughts as 'huge and mighty forms'.

Wordsworth explores how the mountain seemed to chasten him for his crime and, more importantly, how he learned that there is a darker side to nature. His idealised view of nature consisting of 'pleasant images' was shattered by 'huge and mighty forms' which led to a 'darkness' in his thoughts, reflecting the inability of the human mind to understand the sublime in nature. The adult Wordsworth, another layer in the narrative, is perhaps suggesting that one cannot understand nature without recognising its ability to shock and scare us and that this revelation is part of growing up.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Blank verse mirrors the patterns of natural speech.* Wordsworth wanted his poetry to be accessible to as many people as possible and keeps his language and rhythm simple and straightforward, with occasional breaks in rhythm.
- *Regular enjambment* from lines 11 to 22 suggests the movement of the rowing boat through the water and evokes the strokes of the oars.
- *Contrast between positive and negative views of nature.* Nature's beauty is evoked through phrases like 'one summer evening', 'small circles glittering idly in the moon', 'one track soldier / Of sparkling light', 'stars', 'like a swan'. The negative side is evoked through 'a huge peak, black and huge', 'grim shape', 'with purpose of its own' and 'huge and mighty forms'.
- *Personification adds a chilling sense of purpose to the mountain's presence.* The mountain seemed to have a 'voluntary power instinct' and 'upreared its head'. It grew 'in stature' and 'strode after' him. The mountain was alive but 'not like living men', suggesting a supernatural power.

Targeting C

How does Wordsworth show two different sides to nature in this extract?

What does the young Wordsworth learn through his experience of stealing the boat?

Targeting A/A*

How does Wordsworth use different kinds of darkness and light to create different effects?

How does Wordsworth vary the iambic pentameter of the poem to create different effects?

Compares with...

'Crossing the Loch' – boat trip as a learning experience

'Storm in the Black Forest', 'Below the Green Corrie', 'Wind', 'The Moment' and 'Spellbound' – the awesome power of nature and humanity's relative insignificance

'Cold Knap Lake' – autobiography and childhood memory

The Wild Swans at Coole

W. B. Yeats

See page 267 for more on the Gaelic Literary Revival and the Easter Rising

Background and Context

Coole Park was the hub of the Gaelic Literary Revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Literary figures such as Shaw, Synge and Yeats were drawn to Coole Park as it provided an inspirational place to work and an opportunity to develop shared ideas with like-minded writers. The 'hospitality and enthusiasm' of Lady Gregory (Coole Park's owner) provided Yeats with a haven from the distractions of the outside world and the encouragement of a dedicated mentor. 'The Wild Swans at Coole' was first published in 1917, when Yeats was in his early 50s. Yeats had seen the Easter Rising of 1916 as a heroic failure and, across Europe, World War 1 still raged.

Exploring the Poem

Stanza 1

- 4 'Mirrors' – reflect life but not perfectly, especially when 'brimming water' is the mirror. This creates a note of uncertainty. Yeats is attempting to 'mirror' the scene at Coole Park
- 4–5 'still sky; / Upon the brimming water among the stones' – sibilance suggests the sound of water – also 'swans' in line 6
- 5–6 half-rhyme of 'stories' and 'swans' suggests they are linked
- 6 'nine-and-fifty' – precise observation of the number of swans suggests a long and careful period of reflection

Stanza 2

- 7 'nineteenth' – Yeats first visited Coole Park in 1898 and was the first to carve his initials into Lady Gregory's Autograph Tree. References to numbers suggest time and experience have limits, as do lives.
- 8 'count' – together with the numbers 'nine-and-fifty' and 'nineteenth', suggests Yeats is counting down to the waning of his life
- 11–12 full rhyme of 'rings' and 'wings' contrasts with earlier half-rhyme, suggesting swans are more comfortable and natural in flight

Stanza 4

- 20–21 'cold / Companionable streams or climb' – alliteration of hard 'c' perhaps suggests the cool, freshness of the water
- 23 'wander where they will,' – alliteration of 'w' perhaps suggests the freedom of the swans by evoking the sound of the wind

Stanza 5

- 26 caesura after 'mysterious' forces us to pause and reflect on the swans' mystery and beauty
- 30 ? – ends with a question, an uncertain conclusion

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Yeats explores the powerful effect that a place can have on us, focusing on how this view can change as we get older. The poem initially creates a peaceful, tranquil atmosphere with trees in 'their autumn beauty', welcoming 'woodland paths' and a 'still sky'. These descriptions also parallel the poet's inner feelings. Yeats may be reflecting on the 'autumn' and 'twilight' of his life. Yet the 'brimming water' contrasts with the other peaceful descriptions and suggests a disturbing undercurrent in Yeats' feelings.

Now, 19 years since he first counted the swans, 'his heart is sore', yet when he was younger he 'trode with a lighter tread'. The swans take flight before Yeats was 'well finished' suggesting that we do not have time to accomplish all we would like to in life. 'All's changed' refers to himself rather than the outside world. The fact that the swans are as unchanging as the 'stones' in the water throws this mutability into even greater relief.

Yeats contrasts his lethargy with the vigour of the swans: they are 'unwearied'; the streams are 'companionable' suggesting his isolation; 'their hearts have not grown old'; they have 'Passion or conquest' ahead of them whereas, for him, those days have gone. The end of the poem evokes the inevitability and sadness of the swans' departure; they are 'wild' and free, representing the freedom, happiness and joy in beauty that Yeats feels he is losing as he grows older.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *A variety of verbs describe the different movements of the swans.* Most of the movements contrast with Yeats' feelings about himself. The swans 'scatter wheeling' suggesting the beauty and freedom of flight. Also, the swans are unhurried; they can 'paddle', 'wander' and 'drift', whereas Yeats feels bound by the human condition as he enters the 'twilight' of his life.
- *Ideas of stillness and permanence are explored.* The word 'still' appears four times and is open to different interpretations: stillness can suggest an inner peace or calm; it can also suggest the permanence of places, which contrasts with the transitory nature of our lives; as an adverb, 'still' suggests continuance and the forward movement of time, whereas we can only move back through memory and recollection.
- *Variety of metre, rhyme, rhythm and cadence within a regular overall structure.* Consistent iambic rhythm in Stanza 1 lulls the reader into thinking all is well. However, 'the water' breaks this rhythm and gives the first sign of disturbance, much as the 'brimming water' contrasts with the stillness of everything else.

Targeting C

How does Yeats portray the beauty of the swans? How does this contrast with his own feelings? Point students towards the idea that the swans seem to be everything that Yeats feels he is not.

Targeting A/A*

How does Yeats use sound and rhythm to create a variety of effects? Encourage students to read the poem aloud – this really helps.

Compares with...

'Cold Knap Lake' – swans, water and memory

'The Blackbird of Glanmore' – birds as symbols / memory, revisiting the past

'The Moment' – humans as transitory, nature as permanent

Spellbound

Emily Brontë

Background and Context

Emily Brontë (1818–1848) was a member of the famous literary Brontë family, along with sisters Charlotte and Anne. Emily published her work under the name of Ellis Bell, to avoid prejudice against female writers; her sisters also chose androgynous pen names. From the age of 5, Emily lived in Haworth, Yorkshire, where her father was curate. She is most famous for her classic novel *Wuthering Heights*, a gothic love story set against a backdrop of the wild Yorkshire countryside.

The Brontë children created an imaginary world called Gondal, an island in the North Pacific. Emily continued to inhabit this world creatively after her siblings had left it behind. Gondal was ruled by a powerful woman and it is not difficult to see the attraction for a woman living in a world where her gender was a distinct disadvantage to her literary ambitions.

Spellbound

First-person perspective with speaker at centre The night is darkening round **me**,

Alliteration suggests sound of wind The **wild winds** coldly blow;
But a **tyrant** spell has bound me
And I cannot, cannot go.

Repetition emphasises inability to move; caesura suggests two unsuccessful attempts to move The **giant trees** are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow.

Emphasises need for quick action and therefore the power of the spell And the storm is **fast** descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Ambiguity: 'move' can relate both to physical and emotional movement. Is the storm 'drear' or not? **Clouds** beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

Title suggests the power of nature to control people, creating a supernatural, gothic tone. We don't yet know it's nature that's spellbound her: this creates tension.

'tyrant' suggests that the feeling of being trapped is unwelcome; 'spell' reinforces the title

'giant' serves to emphasise the power of the storm

Repetition of 'clouds' and 'wastes' suggest smallness of the speaker; 'above' and 'below' suggest how completely the speaker is surrounded

A change here. Now the speaker does not want to leave and seems to have willingly succumbed to the power of the spell

GLOSSARY

drear – literary form of 'dreary' from OE 'gory'

Themes and Ideas (A01)

'Spellbound' is a first-person narrative in which the speaker finds herself trapped or 'spellbound' as night and a violent storm approach. She is bound by a 'tyrant spell' although it is unclear what this spell actually is – and it is perhaps more frightening because of this. At first the speaker seems desperate to leave but, by the last stanza, there is a change of mood and a sense of complicity between the speaker and the 'tyrant spell', possibly brought on by awe at the power and immensity of nature. Or perhaps it is because the speaker is fully in the power of the 'tyrant spell' – she 'will not' as well as 'cannot' go. There is some ambiguity in the penultimate line: the storm may have 'moved' her emotionally, suggesting a growing fascination with the power of nature. Perhaps the 'spell' holding her is so powerful that not even the devastating force of the weather can compel her to leave.

The power of nature is evoked through a series of descriptions: night, wind, trees, snow, storm and clouds. However, nature is not seen as positive but rather as a supernatural power able to exert a strong hold over individuals for reasons that are not made clear.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Alliteration and assonance* heighten the power of her descriptions. The 'w' sound in 'wild winds' evokes the noise of the wind. Plosive 'b' sounds in 'bending', 'bare' and 'boughs' evoke a feeling of heaviness, perhaps relating both to the weight of the snow on the branches and to the speaker's own heavy, motionless limbs. 'O' and 'ow' sounds feature regularly, suggesting the noise of the wind or something supernatural.
- *Repetition of last line of each stanza*, with variation, highlights the effect of the weather on the speaker. The first one, 'And I cannot, cannot go' is unequivocal and definite. The second one, 'And yet I cannot go' is slightly less positive. The final line, 'I will not, cannot go' suggests that the speaker is held as much by her own fascination with the wild weather as by any 'tyrant spell' – or that perhaps, the two things are the same.
- *Lyric form with numerous repetitions, strong rhythm and full rhyme*. In *Aspects of lyric in the poetry of Emily Brontë*, Maureen Peeck-O'Toole states, 'it becomes apparent at the end that the speaker, in fact, wants and wills to be spellbound. The repetitions provide the incantatory quality that befits a "bewitching"'. In other words, Brontë uses the lyric form to make the poem sound like the spell it is describing ... and to spellbind the reader.

Targeting C

How does Brontë use the weather to create a dark, menacing atmosphere? Ask students to explore how sounds add to this effect.

Who might the speaker of the poem be? Why is she outside on such a 'drear' night?

Targeting A/A*

How does the form and structure of the poem add to its meaning?

Compares with...

'Wind', 'Storm in the Black Forest', 'Below the Green Corrie', 'The Prelude' – power of nature to overawe humanity

Below the Green Corrie

Norman MacCaig

Background and Context

Norman MacCaig (1910–1996) was born in Edinburgh and became Fellow of Creative Writing at Edinburgh University. He spent much of his time at his holiday home in Assynt in the Scottish Highlands, which became a major influence on his poetry. 'Below the Green Corrie' describes a favourite area of MacCaig's in the remote North West Highlands of Scotland and explores how we can develop strong attachments to particular places.

He places the mountains above himself, perhaps suggesting nature is more important than humanity

Below the Green Corrie

The mountains gathered round me
like bandits. Their leader
swaggered up close in the dark light,
full of threats, full of thunders.

Repetition of 'full' to emphasise danger; also creates lilting, lyrical tone

Has now become an image of positive power rather than threat as in Stanza 1

But it was they who stood and delivered.
They gave me their money and their lives.
They filled me with mountains and thunders.

Emphasises his own clumsiness as opposed to the confident swagger of the mountains

My life was enriched
with an infusion of theirs.
I clambered downhill through the ugly weather.

And when I turned to look goodbye
to those marvellous prowlers
a sunshaft had pierced the clouds
and their leader,

Suggests words are not necessary to convey the understanding between speaker and mountains

Short lines build up to the climactic image

that swashbuckling mountain,
was wearing
a bandolier of light.

Poem ends positively

GLOSSARY

bandolier – an ammunition belt worn across the shoulder or round the waist

corrie – a glacial lake or tarn, also known as a cirque

Themes and Ideas (A01)

'Below the Green Corrie' explores the majesty and beauty of nature. The speaker (probably the writer himself) describes his feelings while walking near high mountains and living in their shadow. At first the mountains seem threatening but the speaker realises that the threat is more of a revelation of the power of nature and that the encounter has left him 'enriched' rather than intimidated.

MacCaig takes a modern romantic view of nature and explores how the sublime beauty of the mountains invites a close relationship between humanity and the natural world, with humans being the ones who benefit. MacCaig explores his obvious attachment to the place described in the poem and, perhaps because the sublime is more than the human mind can recognise on a conscious level, uses imagery to try and unravel his relationship with the mountains.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Extended metaphor compares the mountains to bandits.* At first they seem intimidating. 'Gathered round me' suggests an imminent attack, 'swaggered' suggests an easy, arrogant confidence and 'thunders' perhaps suggests a possible mode of attack. The image is then subverted in Stanza 2 when, rather than robbing or attacking him, 'it was they who stood and delivered', giving 'their money and their lives'. The speaker now possesses the 'thunders', a metaphor for the mountains' power which has been given to him in the form of an 'infusion', suggesting a close physical link. In the final stanza, a shaft of sunlight falls on the 'leader', whose 'bandolier of light' suggests a link between the mountains and the heavens, highlighting the fact that the mountains' majesty is linked to a higher power, perhaps God. The personification of the mountains throughout suggests the closeness of the relationship: they are interacting as equals.
- *Weather images reflect the speaker's mood.* When the mountains seem intimidating, the speaker is surrounded by a 'dark light', the oxymoron suggesting the awe and fear he feels. By the end of the poem, his relationship with the mountains transcends the 'ugly weather' and 'a sunshaft had pierced the clouds', suggesting the light of recognition of what the mountains truly mean.
- *The semantic field of transference suggests the gifts the speaker receives from the mountains.* 'Filled', 'enriched' and 'infusion' suggest a kind of mystical communion between speaker and nature. The mountains seem to infuse MacCaig with their sublime qualities, perhaps resulting in the finished poem we see on the page.

Targeting C

How does MacCaig explore the idea of the mountains as 'bandits'? Ask students to trace the image through the poem, noting how it changes.

Targeting A/A*

How does MacCaig develop a close physical and mental relationship between the speaker and the mountains? Explore the idea of giving and receiving and the wordless conversation between them during the encounter.

Compares with...

'The Prelude', 'Wind' and 'Spellbound' – power of nature to shock and inspire

'Storm in the Black Forest' and 'The Moment' – humanity's relationship with nature

'Hard Water' – attachment to a particular place

Storm in the Black Forest

D. H. Lawrence

Background and Context

David Herbert Richards Lawrence (1885–1930) was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, the son of a coalminer and former schoolmistress. He is most famous for novels like *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. He also wrote nearly 800 poems. He was anthologised in *Georgian Poetry* along with Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, Walter De La Mare and Siegfried Sassoon.

The Georgian poets were deeply influenced by the Romantic movement. Although Lawrence's writing became increasingly modernist, he felt, like the earlier romantics, that the strong expression of personal emotion was vital for the spontaneity of poetry. 'Storm in the Black Forest' probably refers to a storm witnessed by Lawrence in the summer of 1929 near Baden Baden*.

Storm in the Black Forest

Repetition suggests intensity of lightning

Now it is almost night, from the bronzey soft sky
jugfull after jugfull of pure white liquid fire, bright white
tipples over and spills down,

Suggests beauty and value, and that the sky can be moulded or worked like bronze by a force with enough power

One of many verbs denoting rapid, brief movement (also 'spills', 'wiggles', 'tumbling')

and is gone
and gold-bronze flutters bent through the thick upper air.

Suggests a deliberate cause for the lightning – perhaps a mischievous or angry god

And as the electric liquid pours out, sometimes
a still brighter white snake wiggles among it, spilled
and tumbling wriggling down the sky:

Sibilance evokes the snake through suggestion of a hissing sound; also the shape of the letter 's'

and then the heavens cackle with uncouth sounds.

Consonance of hard 't' and 'k' sounds suggests crackling of thunder

And the rain won't come, the rain refuses to come!

Exclamations reflect increasing frustration of speaker as well as a desire to control; or possibly the fact that he is impressed with the power of nature – its ability to exceed humanity's attempts to contain it

Suggests enslavement and that a desire to control nature is impossible and morally wrong

This is the electricity that man is supposed to have mastered
chained, subjugated to his use!

Ironic double-meaning perhaps: it can mean 'meant' but also 'presumed', suggesting presumptuousness of humanity

supposed to!

* Thanks to Keith Sagar, *D. H. Lawrence: A Calendar of his Works* (Manchester University Press, 1979)

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Lawrence describes a powerful electrical storm using a range of techniques in the first two stanzas to evoke the force and potency of lightning. The mood changes in the final two shorter stanzas as Lawrence explores the relationship of humanity with nature through the speaker's views on the storm. The speaker is in awe of the storm, reflecting that it 'refuses' to rain, expressing a strong desire for the rain to start and commenting that lightning is 'the electricity that man is supposed to have mastered'.

The use of exclamations suggests how deeply impressed the speaker is by the storm and perhaps echoes the story of King Canute, sitting on the beach ordering the tides of the sea to go back. In the story, Canute knew he would fail and did this to show his followers that their flattery of him was unjustified. Perhaps Lawrence is making a similar point, namely that our supposed mastery of nature is extremely superficial.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *A range of imagery is used to describe the storm.* First, the lightning is described as a liquid as 'jugfull after jugfull of pure white liquid fire, bright white / tipples over and spills down'. The repetition of 'jugfull' and the unusual spelling hint at the large amount of lightning. 'Pure' and 'white' suggest its natural uncontaminated innocence and beauty. 'Tipples' and 'spills' suggests the lightning is random and uncontrolled – an idea reinforced at the end of the poem. In Stanza 2, the lightning is compared to a 'snake', suggesting particularly bright forks which stand out from the others. The comparison to a snake suggests the speed of the lightning and perhaps also its deadly potential. At the end of the stanza, personification is used to suggest a malicious, mischievous intent behind the storm as the 'heavens cackle with uncouth sounds'.
- *Verb choices reflect the unconfined power of the storm:* 'Tipples', 'spills', 'pours', 'flutters', 'tumbling' and 'wriggling' all suggest rapid, uncontrolled movements.
- *Form and rhyme reflect content.* Consistent enjambment suggests the fluid movement of the lightning, spilling over. Rhyme appears deliberately random: sometimes internal like 'night' and 'white', 'still' and 'spilled'; sometimes half-rhyme like 'sky' and 'white', 'down' and 'gone', reflecting the randomness of the lightning as it strikes seemingly at will.
- *Variation in line length* reflects flashes of different size and frequency or, visually, the spilling over of the liquid fire, with occasional pauses as after 'and is gone'.
- *Repetition* of the conjunction 'and' highlights the persistence and power of the storm.

Targeting C

How does Lawrence build up a picture of the intensity and variety of the lightning in the storm? Point students towards the different ways Lawrence describes lightning.

Who is the speaker and what is important about what he says in the last two stanzas?

Targeting A/A*

How does Lawrence use sounds to portray the storm? Ask students to explore use of rhyme, assonance, consonance, sibilance and repetition.

Compares with...

'Spellbound', 'Wind', 'Below the Green Corrie' and 'The Prelude' – power of nature to inspire awe in humanity

'The Moment' – humanity's arrogance in assuming any control over nature

Wind

Ted Hughes

See pages 114 and 122 for more on Ted Hughes

Background and Context

Ted Hughes (1930–1998) was born in Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire. Although his poems cover a huge range of topics, nature and humanity's place in it and relationship with it is a recurrent theme. 'Wind' is taken from his first collection of poetry, *Hawk in the Rain* (1957).

Exploring the Poem

Stanza 1

4 'Floundering black astride and blinding' – 'Floundering' and 'blinding' suggest wind's effects on its 'victims'

Stanza 1 & 2

'wet / Till day rose' – enjambment going over two stanzas shows night turning into day and emphasises that the wind carries on and affects both

Stanza 2

8 'lens of a mad eye' – a kind of uncontrolled malevolence

Stanza 3

9 'noon' – time of day has changed again; the wind is still just as powerful
 9 'I scaled' – walking outside is as dangerous as climbing a mountain
 10 'coal-house door' – everyday tasks have become Herculean labours
 11 'brunt' – normally used as noun; may suggest speaker is bearing the brunt of the wind. (The word in Middle English meant blow or attack.)

Stanza 3 & 4

'The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope, / / The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace, / At any second to bang and vanish with a flap' – extended metaphor comparing the hills to a tent, suggesting that they can be blown away at any moment never to return

Stanza 4 & 5

'The house / Rang like some fine green goblet in the note / That any second would shatter it.' – enjambment suggests gale continuing through transition to evening; fragility of the house highlighted through comparison to a glass

Stanza 6

21 'Or each other' – the wind has disrupted normal relationships and left individuals feeling isolated and afraid, even in their most comfortable surroundings
 23–24 'Seeing the window tremble to come in, / Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons' – at the end, Hughes again describes the effect of the wind on its victims, as in Stanza 1. A day has passed, the gale is continuing, nothing has changed.

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Many of Hughes' poems deal with the sometimes uncomfortable relationship between humanity and nature. In poems like 'Jaguar', 'Hawk Roosting' and 'Pike', there is tremendous admiration for the power and single-mindedness of the animals but also a degree of fear, perhaps because the animals represent a primeval part of us.

The idea is explored here as Hughes describes a house being attacked by the wind. The wind has physical effects – 'wind that dented the balls of my eyes' – but also more serious mental and emotional ones – 'we grip / Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought, / Or each other', suggesting the wind's power has scratched through the veneer of civilisation and left people isolated and unable to take part in 'normal' human activities like conversation and reading. It has tapped into some subconscious idea that there is something greater, more powerful than us, that we can neither fully apprehend nor comprehend.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Structure* Six stanzas deal with different aspects of the gale, each one usually suggesting a shift in time so we end up with roughly a 24-hour period. The fact that the wind blows for the entire day (Hughes says the poem was inspired by a three-day gale) suggests its relentlessness and ability to disturb people's thoughts. The structure also serves to highlight different aspects of the wind. At night, Hughes evokes sounds and movement (Stanzas 1, 5 and 6); during the day, he focuses on visual images and the physical battle of going outside (Stanzas 2, 3 and 4).
- *A variety of sound techniques and metrical variations evoke the storm* Onomatopoeia like 'crashing' and 'booming' creates strong aural impressions. In 'a black- / Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly', the assonance of short vowel sounds together with the staccato rhythm created by successive monosyllabic words mirror the gull's effort to fly against the wind; this is combined with the simile of the iron bar to highlight two powerful and conflicting forces. The long 'o' vowel and two syllables of 'slowly' suggest both the bar starting to bend and give and the gull losing its battle. Consonance in 'brunt wind that dented' uses harsh 't' sounds to suggest the struggle of walking into the wind.
- *Imagery* is used to suggest different aspects of the wind and the speaker's reactions to it. Personification is used to suggest deliberate violence: the 'wind wielded / Blade light', 'stampeding the fields' and 'flung a magpie away'. The house is compared to a ship in Stanza 1, suggesting it is without foundation and floating freely at the mercy of the wind. This is developed in the final stanza as the speaker feels 'the roots of the house move' as if it is being plucked up by a giant hand. Both these images explore the speaker's disorientation.

Targeting C

How does Hughes use imagery to highlight the power of the wind? Choose the three most effective images and explain their meaning in detail.

How does the speaker of the poem feel during the gale? Identify words and phrases which suggest how the speaker is feeling, and comment on them.

Targeting A/A*

How does Hughes use sound effects to create strong sensory impressions on the reader?

What is Hughes suggesting about the relationship between humanity and nature in general, through the ideas explored in 'Wind'?

Compares with...

'Storm in the Black Forest', 'Spellbound', 'The Prelude' and 'The Moment' – the majesty and power of nature, and humanity's powerlessness in the face of it

Place

Comparison Grid

	Human arrogance	Environment and identity	Learning experiences	Beauty and danger of nature	Birds as symbols	Water	Memory and past events	Social commentary	Personification	Awe, wonder and spirituality
'Below the Green Corrie'		✓							✓	✓
'The Blackbird of Glanmore'			✓		✓		✓			✓
'Cold Knap Lake'				✓	✓	✓	✓			
'Crossing the Loch'		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
'Hard Water'		✓	✓			✓	✓			
'London'	✓	✓				✓		✓		
'The Moment'	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
'Neighbours'	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
'The Prelude'	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
'Price We Pay for the Sun'	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
'Spellbound'				✓						✓
'Storm in the Black Forest'	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓
'A Vision'	✓	✓						✓		
'The Wild Swans at Coole'		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
'Wind'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓