Christina Rossetti was born in London in 1830. Her work covers a wide range of styles and forms, and she wrote ballads, sonnets, love lyrics, nonsense rhymes and children's books. She died in 1894.

**Pre-reading activities for 'Remember'**

1. Work in pairs. Imagine that you and your partner are close friends, but that you will never see each other again (for whatever reason).
   
   (a) Person A writes down what he or she would like to be remembered for, and what he or she values about the relationship with Person B.
   
   (b) Person B writes down what he or she will remember about Person A and their friendship.
   
   (c) Compare your notes to your partner’s, and see if there is any content that is common to both.
During-reading activities for ‘Remember’
1. (a) Think of a euphemism that is commonly used in modern life to substitute for Rossetti’s ‘silent land’ (line 2).
   (b) Explore the connotations of the expression ‘the silent land’ (line 2).
2. Line 4 seems to suggest that the speaker is unable to make up her mind. What underlying emotion might cause her to behave in this way?
3. Consider the poet’s choice of the word ‘corruption’ in line 11. What meaning do you think is intended in this context?

Remember
Remember me when I am gone away,
   Gone far away into the silent land;
   When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
   You tell me of our future that you planned:
     Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
   And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
     For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
   Than you should remember and be sad.

Notes on ‘Remember’
Understanding the poem
- The poem could be interpreted as the speaker addressing a loved one directly, seen in the use of ‘you’ (line 3) and ‘our’ (line 6), in the form of a letter to be read after her death.
- The speaker focuses on memories of moments of their time spent together, revealing her concern that she wants to be remembered. This is highlighted by the repetition of the word ‘remember’ throughout the poem.
- The couple anticipated that they would share a future together, but this was not to be. The speaker succumbed to some disease
or 'corruption' (line 11) and eventually led to her death. Neither prayers nor 'counsel' (line 8) could change the outcome.

- The tone and focus shift over the course of the poem, signified by the word 'yet' (line 9). Where the first part of the poem looks back and clings to memories, the second part seeks to find a way to move forward.

- The speaker seems to be giving her partner permission to let go of the memories and his sorrow in order to 'smile' (line 13) and live positively after her passing. She demonstrates the selfless depth of her love, as she is able to suppress the human need to be remembered so that her beloved has a chance at a happy life after her death, unburdened by guilt.

Form and structure

- Rossetti uses the form of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet to convey her message. The first two quatrains of this sonnet start with the word 'remember' (lines 1 and 5), and the tone is mournful.

- The c-d-e-e-c-e rhyme scheme used in the sestet of lines 9–14 establishes a break from the octave. This break is also seen in the tone and content of the poem.

- Rossetti uses the octave to address memories and remembering, while the sestet focuses on the process of forgetting and moving forward.

Poetic/language devices

- Rossetti uses euphemism to discuss difficult subject matter: Death becomes 'gone away' (line 1), while the afterlife is expressed as 'the silent land' (line 2).

- The simple imagery of the physical linking of hands in line 3, as well as the speaker's reluctance to be separated, underlines the strong connection between the speaker and her beloved.

- Notice that despite the use of words with negative connotations in the sestet, for example 'grieve' (line 10), 'darkness' and 'corruption' (line 11), Rossetti establishes a lingering mood of positive acceptance. What might have been a depressing poem with sad content becomes a poem that ultimately celebrates life.

Sound devices

- The long syllables used in the opening lines force a slow, mournful reading of the sonnet. This is contrasted by the pace of lines 9 and 13, for example, which is more 'up-beat' and positive.

Post-reading activities for 'Remember'

1. Provide a different euphemism that Rossetti could have used in place of 'gone away' (line 1).
2. Which line of the poem shows that the couple expected to share many years of life together?

3. What does 'to counsel' (line 8) mean in the context of the poem?

4. What can you infer about the character of the speaker's beloved? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.

5. How does the form of the poem contribute to its content?

6. Which of the following descriptions best fits the speaker: 'egocentric', 'self-sacrificing' or 'thoughtful'? Use evidence from the poem to motivate your choice.
Cummings

E E Cummings was born in 1894, in Massachusetts, in the United States of America. He served as an ambulance driver in World War I, and was detained in France for several months. After the war he lived in France, studying art, and finally settled in New York. Cummings was one of the most experimental poets of the twentieth century, and the style of his poetry is unusual: he uses distorted syntax, unusual punctuation, new words and slang words. These elements make his poems look complicated, but the ideas contained in them are generally quite simple. Cummings died in 1962.

Pre-reading activities for ‘somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond’

Imagine that a friend approaches you with an idea of travelling after school to foreign lands for an extended period of time. Neither of you has much funding, so you will need to find ways to sustain yourselves through some casual employment along the way.
1. Without thinking too deeply, write down a list of adjectives to describe your feelings about each of these countries.
2. Do you know where these countries are positioned geographically? If not, find out.
3. Draw up a list of the positives and the negatives for this proposal. What excites you about the idea? What scares you about it?
4. Write an email to your friend to answer him or her.

During-reading activities for ‘somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond’

1. Note the many ‘errors’ or deviations present in the poem.
   (a) List all the ‘errors’ you can find in the poem. (Note: ‘errors’ are instances in the poem in which conventional poetry and language rules are broken.)
   (b) What is your initial reaction to this rule breaking?
   (c) Why do you think the poet deliberately makes these ‘errors’?
2. (a) Think of synonyms for the word ‘frail’ (line 3).
   (b) Find other words and expressions in the poem that have similar meanings.
3. (a) What would be a more usual word to use in place of ‘unclose’ (line 5)?
   (b) What is the effect of the poet’s invented word?
   (c) Identify the irony contained in the phrase ‘the power of your intense fragility’ (line 14).
   (d) Consider the theme of travel in the poem. Do you think the speaker is referring to a physical journey to a foreign country? If not, what sort of travelling is he talking about?

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond

any experience, your eyes have their silence:
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me, or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose
or if your wish be to close me, i and
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,
as when the heart of this flower imagines
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the colour of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

Notes on ‘somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond’

Understanding the poem

• Cummings uses unusual words, punctuation and sentence structure. Once the reader adjusts to the strange language use and relaxes, the emotional associations are not difficult to understand.

• This is a love poem, although it is quite an unconventional one. The speaker seems to be attempting to understand his beloved’s power over him, but he admits that her appeal is intangible and difficult to pinpoint. He cannot work out why she has this ability to move him, but he welcomes it nonetheless.

• The poet makes use of images of nature and the concept of travel to develop his ideas.

Form and structure

• Given all the unusual features of Cummings’ writing, it might be surprising to see a definite form being used. The poem is composed of regular four line stanzas and each stanza deals with a new, separate point.

Poetic/language devices

• The idea of closing and opening recurs in this poem. The first stanza hints at this with the use of the word ‘enclose’ (line 3), which becomes more significant in the light of the later reference to ‘unclose’ (line 5), ‘closed’ (line 6), ‘open’ (line 7), ‘close’ (line 9), ‘shut’ (line 10), and ‘closes/and opens’ (lines 17–18).

• The poem often uses run-on lines, or enjambment. In one instance the line could even be said to ‘jump over’ words to complete the thought, as in line 7 where ‘Spring’ skips over the content in brackets to find its object, ‘her first rose’ (line 8).
The poet skilfully makes use of imagery, and expresses the images through the use of similes and vivid personification. This can be seen in the capitalisation of ‘Spring’ (line 7), and the rain’s ‘hands’ in the final line.

**Sound devices**
- Notice the alliteration of the hard ‘c’ sound repeated in line 15 which gives extra power to the words and draws the reader’s attention.
- The sound of the word ‘enclose’ (line 3) is echoed by its opposite ‘unclose’ (line 5). Perhaps Cummings is saying that in the context of his love’s power over him, both actions are equally wondrous.
- The fact that there is little rhyme used in the first four stanzas makes the use of rhyme in the final stanza all the more noticeable.

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**Post-reading activities for ‘somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond’**

1. (a) List the elements of nature that are referred to in the poem.  
   (b) Quote the word that tells us that the snow is not wilfully destructive.

2. Identify the figure of speech in ‘though i have closed myself as fingers’ (line 6).

3. (a) Explain how ‘fragility’ can have ‘power’ (line 14).  
   (b) Describe the extent and ability of this power.

4. (a) Describe the atmosphere or mood of this poem.  
   (b) How does the poet create this mood?

5. Explore the metaphor of travel as it is used in the poem, and evaluate its effectiveness.

6. Comment critically on Cummings’ unusual use of punctuation and sentence structure.
Mazisi Kunene was born in South Africa, in 1938. He studied in South Africa and in the United Kingdom, and worked as an academic in the United States of America before returning to South Africa. His best known work is the poem, ‘Emperor Shaka the Great’, which was originally written in isiZulu and translated into English. He died in 2006.

Pre-reading activities for ‘First Day after the War’

Think back to South Africa’s hosting of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. (If you cannot recall anything about that time, imagine it.) Now put yourself in the shoes of a radio journalist who is attending the opening game between South Africa and Mexico. It is 11 June 2010. The weather is chilly, but the heat generated by the hundreds of South African fans makes the temperature rise. Details from the actual match:

Siphiwe Tshabalala scored off a pass through Mexico’s defence by Teko Modise to score the first goal of the tournament. Mexico later equalised. In the dying moments of the game, a shot by Katlego Mphela hit the post, denying South Africa a win.

1. As the radio journalist, make some notes on the game to be able to give an on-air report of about 3 minutes. Be sure to describe the atmosphere and mood of the crowd.

2. Deliver your on-air report to the class. Follow the prompt: ‘We now cross live to ... who will give us an update.’
During-reading activities for ‘First Day after the War’
1. Which senses does Kunene use in this poem?
2. Think about the connotations of the word ‘coiling’ (line 3). Do you think it is intended to be understood as a positive image in this context?
3. Consider the pronoun ‘her’ in line 4. How could this be interpreted in an abstract way?
4. How does Kunene convey the joy of the time?

First Day after the War
We heard the songs of a wedding party.
We saw a soft light
Coiling round the young blades of grass
At first we hesitated, then we saw her footprints,
Her face emerged, then her eyes of freedom!
She woke us up with a smile saying,
‘What day is this that comes suddenly?’
We said, ‘It is the first day after the war’.
Then without waiting we ran to the open space
Ululating to the mountains and the pathways
Calling people from all the circles of the earth.
We shook up the old man demanding a festival
We asked for all the first fruits of the season.
We held hands with a stranger
We shouted across the waterfalls
People came from all lands
It was the first day of peace.
We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon.

Notes on ‘First Day after the War’
Understanding the poem
• Mazisi Kunene wrote much of his poetry in South Africa, in the time of apartheid, a period in which black people were discriminated against and oppressed. His poem describes the joy that people felt at the ending of this system of government.
• The poem lists a number of ways in which the people celebrate the news. Notice the variety of the actions and the jubilation this shows. The news is so wonderful that we see how people of all types celebrate together and ‘held hands with a stranger’ (line 14).
Form and structure
- This poem uses free verse which seems appropriate for its theme. Notice the repetitive form of the line structure of lines 12 to 15, perhaps implying that the overwhelming joy prompted an unrestrained physical response, and that the people ran around responding impulsively to the situation.

Poetic/language devices
- Kunene uses simple but effective diction to capture the scene. This seems to add to the spontaneous nature of the excitement displayed – the actions speak for themselves.
- The ‘soft light’ (line 2) creates an image of contained optimism and hope, as if the viewers are not sure whether to believe what the light might be indicating. This uncertainty is clear in the hesitation in line 4 until the truth ‘emerged’ (line 5), and the realisation set in.
- Notice the contrast that follows as ‘without waiting’ (line 9) the celebration begins that unifies humanity ‘from all lands’ (line 16).

Sound devices
- The poem begins with a reference to the ‘songs’ of a party and the association of sound and joy is carried through the poem from the onomatopoeia of ‘ululating’ (line 10) to the shouts of enthusiasm that compete with nature’s music as the people ‘shouted across the waterfalls’ (line 15).
- The alliteration of ‘first fruits’ (line 13) alerts the reader to the significance of the moment, while the use of this device in the final line lends the ‘Ancestors’ renewed stature as they are ‘travelling tall’ (line 18) in response to the event.

Post-reading activities for ‘First Day after the War’
1. What clues suggest the rural setting of the poem? Quote from the poem to support your answer.
2. Why do you think the people ‘ran to the open space’ (line 9)?
3. Discuss the possible literal and figurative meanings of the ‘footprints’ (line 4) and the ‘young blades’ (line 3).
4. (a) What does the expression ‘shook up’ (line 12) mean? (b) How do you interpret it in this context? (c) Who might the ‘old man’ (line 12) be?
5. Critically comment on the effectiveness of the final line of Kunene’s poem.
Roy Campbell was born in Durban in South Africa, in 1906. He was educated in Durban and then spent a year at Oxford before returning home, where he established a satirical literary magazine, entitled *Voorslag*. Campbell used irony and humour to expose and criticise people, often targeting Afrikaners. He lived in France and Spain and served in the English army in World War II. Campbell eventually settled in Portugal, where he died in a vehicle accident in 1957.

**Pre-reading activities for ‘The Zulu Girl’**

How well do you think you know your mother, or the person who raised you? Many of us go through life taking our caregivers for granted, not always appreciating that they are unique individuals in their own right. For this task you are going to write a diary entry – as your primary caregiver. The time of the diary entry is set: The entry needs to be written just before your mother or caregiver saw you for the first time.

1. Interview your mother or caregiver or see if you can find out the information in other ways. Find out answers to the following:
   - Where was she living and what were her circumstances when she first saw you?
   - What were her hopes, fears and ambitions for herself, and for you?
   - What was happening at the time in the community, in the country and in the world?
   - Who was her favourite musician/actor/writer?
   - What did she do in her leisure time?

2. Write a diary entry from the perspective of your mother/caregiver as she anticipates seeing you for the first time.

3. Share it with your mother/caregiver. Allow her to assess its accuracy.

**During-reading activities for ‘The Zulu Girl’**

1. Carefully read the first stanza.
   (a) What is the setting of the poem?
   (b) What is the job that the girl is doing?
   (c) What does the word ‘flings’ (line 3) suggest about her attitude?

2. What are the connotations of ‘prowl’ (line 8)?
3. Identify the comparisons used in the third stanza.
   (a) What is being compared to what?
   (b) Are these comparisons effective?
4. Which word in the fourth stanza alerts the reader to a change in mood?
5. Examine the artwork, Virgin and Child (Madonna Colonna) by Raphael on page 41. The artwork represents the traditional view of the Madonna. In what way can the Zulu woman in the poem be considered a version of the Madonna figure?

**The Zulu Girl**

When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder,
Down where the sweating gang its labours plies,
A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder
Unslings her child tormented by the flies.

She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled
By thorn-trees: purples with the blood of ticks,
While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled,
Prowl through his hair with sharp electric clicks.

His sleepy mouth plugged by the heavy nipple,
Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feeds:
Through his frail nerves her own deep languors ripple
Like a broad river sighing through its reeds.

Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes
An old unquenched unsmotherable heat—
The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes,
The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Her body looms above him like a hill
Within whose shade a village lies at rest.
Or the first cloud so terrible and still
That bears the coming harvest in its breast.

**Notes on ‘The Zulu Girl’**

**Understanding the poem**
- On the surface, this poem is simply an observation of a Zulu woman feeding her child. Upon closer consideration, however, it becomes clear that the poem is also about oppression, specifically of women.
The first stanza gives a description of a hot landscape where the labourers work. A Zulu woman flings down her hoe as if rebelling against her work. She loosens the child tied to her back who is ‘tormented by the flies’ (line 4). The description of the labourers as a ‘gang’ (line 2), and the reference to the Zulu mother as a ‘girl’ (line 3) lumps them together as a people, rather than individuals. The woman’s actions imply a disregard for the labour that she is doing and the image of the tormented child is a reminder that he should not be in the hot fields at all.

The second stanza illustrates the care that the mother shows for her child: she is looking for ticks and lice on him, which emphasises the poor conditions in which they are forced to live.

In the third stanza, the woman breastfeeds her child. He is hungry and tugs at her nipple like a ‘puppy’ (line 10). This image again points out the way in which the people in the poem are viewed: if the child is viewed as a puppy, his mother is viewed as a dog. The mother, however, does not see her child in this way, and feels an overwhelming tenderness for her child.

In the fourth stanza, the underlying message becomes clear. The young child is a symbol of the might of the Zulu nation: in him, there is an ‘old unquenched, unsmotherable heat’ (line 14) that refers back to the fierce warriors of the Zulu tribe. The strength of the Zulu tribe still exists in the Zulu people in spite of the oppression that they experience.

In the final stanza of the poem, the mother metaphorically becomes a hill that overshadows a whole village. She is no longer just the mother of one child; she represents all the mothers of all the children of oppressed people.

She is also compared to the first cloud that brings the rain that will lead to a harvest. This is a metaphor that
suggests that the children of the tyrants will some day reap the harvest of their suffering; in other words, they will overcome their oppression with help from mothers like the ‘Zulu Girl’ in the poem.

**Form and structure**
- Campbell makes use of a regulated form to structure his message. The five stanzas of four lines each follow the same rhyme pattern: The first stanza uses *a-b-a-b*, the second *c-d-c-d*, and so on. The different stanzas are thus related to each other because of this noticeable pattern.

**Poetic/language devices**
- As mentioned in ‘Understanding the poem’ on pages 40–41, the poet uses imagery, symbol, metaphor and diction to add meaning to the poem throughout.
- The simile in stanza three, which compares the child to a ‘puppy’ (line 10), implies an innocent, harmless and natural activity. However, the ‘broad river’ (line 12) contains more than nutritional sustenance. The reader is informed that this child is absorbing much more and the dash used at the end of line 14 tells us what this is.
- The power of the final stanza is largely due to the use of metaphors that imply a day of reckoning is inevitable. The nation might be ‘at rest’ (line 18) now, but their power is not gone.

**Sound devices**
- The rhyme of the stanzas provides the poem with regular rhythm.
- Sound is also employed to add richness to the image of the ‘grunting’ (line 10) child, the sound of the mother’s nails rustling through the child’s hair with onomatopoeic ‘clicks’ (line 8), and the personified ‘sighing’ (line 12) of the river as the mother’s milk passes to her child.

**Post-reading activities for ‘The Zulu Girl’**

1. What does the inclusion of the colour ‘red’ in line 1 tell us about the scene?

2. List all the words in the poem that suggest heat, and provide short definitions for each of them.

3. What is your understanding of ‘curbed ferocity’, and who are the ‘beaten tribes’ (line 15)?

4. Explain what the child ‘imbibes’ (line 13) on both a literal and figurative level.
During-reading activities for ‘An African Elegy’

1. What are your expectations of the poem after reading the title?
2. (a) Pick out words that are positive in the first stanza, and then identify negative ones.
   (b) What is the overall effect, positive or negative?
3. What is the ‘mystery’ (line 8) referred to in the second stanza?
4. Why do you think ‘Time’ (lines 2 and 19) is written with a capital letter?
5. How can the ‘ocean’ be ‘full of songs’ (line 28)?

An African Elegy

We are the miracles that God made
To taste the bitter fruit of Time.
We are precious.
And one day our suffering
Will turn into the wonders of the earth.

There are things that burn me now
Which turn golden when I am happy.
Do you see the mystery of our pain?
That we bear poverty
And are able to sing and dream sweet things
And that we never curse the air when it is warm
Or the fruit when it tastes so good
Or the lights that bounce gently on the waters?
We bless things even in our pain.
We bless them in silence.

That is why our music is so sweet.
It makes the air remember.
There are secret miracles at work
That only Time will bring forth.
I too have heard the dead singing.

And they tell me that
This life is good
They tell me to live it gently
With fire, and always with hope.
There is wonder here

And there is surprise
In everything the unseen moves.
The ocean is full of songs.
The sky is not an enemy.
Destiny is our friend.

Notes on ‘An African Elegy’
Understanding the poem
- Traditionally, an elegy is a mournful poem that often focuses on death.
- Okri’s elegy, however, is not mournful; rather it is reflective and thoughtful.
- The speaker asks the unique African spirit for answers to life’s paradoxes. He explores the miracle of what being African means to him: the endurance for suffering, the ability to find joy and beauty in the midst of pain, a spiritual union with nature’s bounty, and an irrepressible sense of optimism despite all indicators pointing in the opposite direction.
- The speaker seems to believe that the tendency to hope and the sensitivity to recognise wonder is a shared trait of Africa’s people.

Form and structure
- Okri has made use of a structure where each stanza is of equal five line length, giving the form regularity and a distinct pattern.
- There are a variety of line lengths within each stanza; the short lines are somewhat isolated from the enclosing lines, and for this reason they tend to ‘stand out’ for being short.
Post-reading activities for ‘An African Elegy’

1. Make a list of all the positive things that Okri says about Africa and being African.
2. What do you think the speaker means by the line ‘We are precious?’ (line 3)
3. Does the speaker respect the dead? What makes you say this?
4. How does the poet connect each negative aspect in the poem with something positive?
5. Explain how one can live life ‘gently/With fire’ (lines 23–24).
6. Do you think Okri is being overly idealistic, or do you agree with what he is saying about Africa and Africans? Motivate your answer.

Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe was born in Nigeria, in 1930. He studied at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, and taught at various universities in Nigeria and the United States of America. Achebe wrote novels and poetry.
Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang
(A Person is a Person Because of Other People)

By holding my mirror out of the window I see
Clear to the end of the passage.
There's a person down there.
A prisoner polishing a doorhandle.
In the mirror I see him see
My face in the mirror,
I see the fingertips of his free hand
Bunch together, as if to make
An object the size of a badge
Which travels up to his forehead
The place of an imaginary cap.

(This means: A warder.)

Two fingers are extended in a vee
And wiggle like two antennae.

(He's being watched.)

A finger of his free hand makes a watch-hand's arc
On the wrist of his polishing arm without
Disrupting the slow-slow rhythm of his work.

(Later. Maybe later we can speak.)

Hey! Wat maak jy daar?
Jeremy Cronin was born in Cape Town, in South Africa, in 1949. He became active in the South African Communist Party, and was arrested and sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment for being active in the struggle against apartheid. After he was released, and South Africa became a democracy, he became a member of parliament.

Pre-reading activities for ‘Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang’
1. Have you ever attempted to communicate with a classmate without words?
   (a) Form groups of three members per group, and attempt the points below and on the next page:
   - The first member of the group must try to communicate a simple emotion to the second – using only the eyes – without the third group member watching.
• The second member then conveys the same emotion to the third member.
• The third member then returns it to the first member who began the cycle.

(b) How accurately was the emotion communicated?

2. Now repeat the exercise, but attempt a more complex message. This time, body language and gestures may be used, but they need to be discreet. How effectively can you communicate without words?

**During-reading activities for ‘Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang’**

1. How many languages are used in this poem? Name them.
2. What is the term given to the African philosophy of the title?
3. Replicate the hand-signals described in the poem.
4. Notice Cronin’s use of brackets, italics and line arrangement to describe the incident. How does this help the reader to understand the poem?
No. Just polishing baas.
He turns back to me, now watch
His free hand, the talkative one,
Slips quietly behind

– Strength brother, it says,

In my mirror,

A black fist.

Notes on ‘Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang’

Understanding the poem

- This poem captures the scene of one prisoner communicating discreetly with another, under the watchful eye of a warder. The cleverness of the participants is shown as they find ways to maintain human contact, communicating with sign language in defiance of the deprivation of imprisonment.

- As readers, we are invited to imagine how the human connection described in the scene would have provided the speaker with considerable comfort, strength and encouragement. This scene demonstrates ubuntu in action.

Form and structure

- A noticeable feature of this poem is its visual layout. The narrative is provided on the left, while a ‘translation’ is provided in brackets on the right.

- The format of this translation or explanation is varied as the poem progresses. The first insertion in line 12 announces itself as an explanation, the second (line 15) and third (line 19) give the explanation directly, while the last insertions lose the brackets, as if the reader has now learned the poem’s language and no longer needs them.

Poetic/language devices

- This poem uses punctuation and typography (the way in which it is printed or set out) to convey the poet’s message.

- Notice the poet’s use of italics for different purposes, as well as the use of dashes. The use of italics in lines 20 and 22 seems to indicate direct speech. It is most effective that ‘Strength brother’ (line 26) is also written this way, as the two prisoners are communicating so effectively they may as well be using direct speech.

- The use of the present tense makes the content feel immediate, and in the last stages of the poem, as we are instructed to watch, we feel as though we are sharing the cell and watching the signals with the speaker.
Sound devices
- It could be considered ironic that although this is a poem without formal ‘sound devices’, it is centred on sound and the lack of it. Cronin refers to a ‘talkative’ (line 24) hand which, of course, is completely silent.
- The poem is commenting on sound by emphasising its absence.

Post-reading activities for ‘Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang’
1. Provide an explanation for the prisoner’s use of the mirror.
2. Find evidence in the poem that prisoners are kept occupied with time-wasting chores.
3. Explain the link between an ‘imaginary cap’ (line 11) and a guard.
4. Discuss Cronin’s use of different languages in the poem.
5. The poem is written in an informal style. How does the style contribute to the meaning of the poem?
6. This poem illustrates truths about the human condition. Explore how the poem shows the cruelty of isolation as a form of punishment, and why it was a favoured treatment of political prisoners.
7. Assess whether the poem is an appropriate demonstration of the concept of *ubuntu*.

Dennis Brutus

Dennis Brutus was born in Zimbabwe, in 1924. He spent some years abroad there. He was
you heard' (line 4) is not just a perfectly” along with him. She ultimately gives him the mood so is perhaps concealing that she did in fact want him to what he wanted her to do if she never said this out loud. His final shot ends our eavesdropping on their conversation at an effective moment, and his simple line says more for its brevity.

**Sound devices**
- As the entire poem consists of conversation, it is unsurprising that it captures the rhythm of natural speech patterns. The arrangement of words on a line captures the pauses and flow of speech. The punctuation also contributes to the authenticity of the sound of real conversation. The dash used in line 7 reflects the insertion of an additional detail he wants to include. Similarly, the use of questions in line 15 gives the impression of his giving voice to the thoughts that ran through his head. The emphasis on ‘Someone’ (line 17) shows the speech inflection, implying that if it was not her speaking, then it must have been another (but surely it had to be her?).

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**Post-reading activities for ‘The Telephone’**

1. Although the poem consists of dialogue and describes a conversation, mention is also made of silence. Quote the words that show this silence.

2. Why do you think this poem is called ‘The Telephone’?

3. What do you think the poet’s intention is in writing this poem? Consider the prominent role of nature in the poem as you formulate your response.

4. The speaker says that he ‘bowed’ (line 17). What are the connotations of this action, and how could this enrich the interpretation of the poem?

5. What do you think happens next? Provide more dialogue to complete the story, staying true to the characters as they have been revealed so far.

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**Gerard Manley Hopkins**

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in Essex, near London, in 1844 and studied at Oxford, where he converted to Roman Catholicism. He was ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1877, and some of his poems reflect the conflict he felt between his religious vocation and the attractions of the sensory world. Hopkins experimented with poetic techniques,
and he attempted to capture the natural world through his original use of rhythm, alliteration and internal rhyme. Hopkins died in 1889 of typhoid fever.

A farrier is a blacksmith who specialises in shoeing horses. This depiction of a farrier is called Shoeing Imaum, and was painted by John Frederick Herring Snr.

**Pre-reading activities for 'Felix Randal'**

At this stage of your school career, you have probably formed strong friendships with some of your peers. Now think back to your first impression of these individuals when you met for the first time. Did you like each individual on first meeting? Possibly not. Try to recall what your feelings were towards those whom you now consider friends. As you have spent time with the same group of people, friendships will have evolved – those you initially did not notice, or even disliked, may have developed into close friends.

1. Select one of those unexpected friendships, and try to determine what helped to form the friendship. Did you share a tough experience together? What caused the relationship to develop? In what way(s) was your initial impression of your friend inaccurate?

2. Imagine that this friend is in trouble, and has been falsely accused of something. Write a character reference for your friend that will
During-reading activities for ‘Felix Randal’

1. What does a farrier do? Look up this occupation if it is unfamiliar to you.
2. Identify the tone of the first line. How is the speaker feeling?
3. (a) What does it mean to ‘pine’?
   (b) What is the effect of the repetition ‘pinning, pinning’ (line 3)?
4. What do you think caused the death of Felix Randal? What ailments were common in England in 1885? Do some research to help you with this question.
5. Explain the reference to ‘Being anointed’ (line 6).
6. Pick out the words and phrases from lines 9–11 that show the speaker’s emotional reaction to the death of Felix Randal.

Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier, O he is dead then? my duty all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pinning, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!
Notes on ‘Felix Randal’

Note: Where a line of the poem is indented, this shows it forms part of the previous line.

Understanding the poem

- In this sonnet, Hopkins reflects on the long illness and death of Felix Randal, and comments on his own role (as priest) in caring for the dying man. Hopkins has, in ministering to Felix Randal’s soul, developed a sense of compassion and connection with the dying man.

- Hopkins recalls the big fellow who was equal to the most physically demanding job of shoeing the largest horses, and describes his decline as he became sick: ‘Sickness broke him’ (line 5) as he began to lose his hold on ‘reason’ (line 3). Hopkins makes a distinction between the physical and spiritual health of Randal, and takes some comfort or ‘sweet reprieve’ (line 7) from the fact that Randal had been administered the ‘last rites’ to prepare his soul for the afterlife.

Form and structure

- This sonnet consists of two a-b-b-a rhymed quatrains (the octave) followed by two rhymed c-c-d stanzas making up the sestet.

- Each section has a particular function, allowing Hopkins to develop his theme. The octave states the situation and establishes the background leading up to Randal’s death. The sestet allows the speaker’s emotional state to find voice as he addresses the dead man directly, and expresses his regard for him. His own sense of loss and sorrow is made explicit in this section of the poem.

Poetic/language devices

- A notable feature of this sonnet is the shift in tone. The opening line comes across as matter-of-fact, whereas the sestet provides a stark contrast as the raw feelings of the speaker become clear. The tone changes to one of loss and grief.

- Hopkins uses his structure to establish some distinct contrasts. He shows us the strapping healthy Randal who once was ‘powerful amidst peers’ (line 13) and we can then draw the contrast with the ‘pinning, pining’ (line 3) man who was broken by ‘some/Fatal four disorders’ (lines 3–4).

- A contrast is also provided by describing the spiritual state of Randal who acquires a ‘heavenlier heart’ (line 6) after time spent with the speaker. This time spent together also causes the development of their relationship from perhaps one of mutual tolerance to a close one where each genuinely cared for the other.
Hopkins’ use of compound adjectives like ‘hardy-handsome’ (line 2) gives his poem a liveliness and freshness. The diction of the last stanza lends power to the content, as the reader can visualise Felix Randal ‘at the random grim forge’ (line 13) performing impressive physical feats.

Sound devices
- This poem demands to be read aloud. The rhythm of pauses and flow is made clear by the punctuation and word order.
- In the first line, three points are made, separated by the commas and the question mark. The use of alliteration in ‘hardy-handsome’ (line 2), ‘reason rambled’ (line 3) and ‘Fatal four’ (line 4) not only increases the impact of the words due to their sound, but also due to the linking of these words.
- The final two lines of the poem create a strong rhythm as the short phrases ‘random grim forge’, ‘powerful amidst peers’ (line 13), ‘great grey drayhorse’ and ‘bright and battering sandal’ (line 14) balance each other and cumulatively build the image of strength.

Post-reading activities for ‘Felix Randal’
1. Quote the phrase from the poem that tells us of the speaker’s belief that Felix Randal’s soul had been saved.
2. Relate the physical decline of Felix Randal.
3. Discuss the connotations of the word ‘mould’ (line 2) and its application in this context.
4. Comment on the poet’s use of tone in the poem. Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. Ministering to the sick and dying forms an integral aspect of the function of a priest. Given the clues provided in this poem, do you think Hopkins was effective in this function? Motivate your answer.
Wystan Hugh Auden was born in York, in the United Kingdom. At Oxford, he became associated with a number of radical poets and authors, including Stephen Spender. Many of his poems focus on social ills, as well as a concern with the workings of the mind. He lived and worked for many years in the United States of America and returned to the United Kingdom in 1972, where he died a year later.

Pre-reading activities for ‘Funeral Blues’

If one has not experienced it, it is extremely difficult to try to explain the depth of pain and sorrow of a broken heart. We use this term
quite loosely in romantic contexts, but when it refers to the response of real grief, the concept of a broken heart is difficult to comprehend. Think of an experience when you lost someone you loved. If you have not had such an experience, you can imagine how terrible it must be. Compose a short poem for that person that explains your grief at losing them.

**During-reading activities for 'Funeral Blues'**

1. Notice the plea for certain actions to take place in the first stanza.
   (a) Why would someone want to ‘Stop all the clocks’ (line 1)?
   (b) Identify all the references to sound.
   (c) Why would the speaker want these sounds to stop?
2. Why do you think capital letters have been used in ‘He Is Dead’ (line 6)?
3. Consider the implications of the description ‘He was my North, my South, my East and West’ (line 9).
4. Link the verbs in the final stanza to their objects: ‘put out’ (line 13), ‘pack up’, ‘dismantle’ (line 14), ‘Pour away’ and ‘sweep’ (line 15). In what way are these verbs appropriate?

**Funeral Blues**

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead.
Put crêpe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.
Notes on ‘Funeral Blues’

Understanding the poem

- This poem is an expression of grief and heartache. The speaker describes his pain and links his overwhelming emotion of despair to the world around him. The reference to ‘clocks’, ‘telephone’ (line 1), ‘dog’ (line 2) and ‘pianos’ (line 3) examines the mourner’s reaction to his immediate, domestic surroundings through the lens of loss. The poem then expands the surroundings to the public arena with ‘aeroplanes’ (line 5), ‘doves’ (line 7) and ‘traffic policemen’ (line 8), and finally ends in the universal sphere of ‘stars’ (line 13), ‘moon’, ‘sun’ (line 14), ‘ocean’ and ‘wood’ (line 15). The third stanza describes their special relationship, and gives a personal account of what the dead man meant to the speaker.

- It is clear from the outset what the subject of the poem will be with the title ‘Funeral Blues’. The choice of the word ‘Blues’ is an effective one as this could refer to a depressed mood, and also describes a slow, sad musical piece. The reader immediately understands the call for everything to cease – time, noise, music – as soon as reference is made to the ‘coffin’ and ‘mourners’ (line 4). The stark message ‘He Is Dead’, to be written on the sky for all to see, implies the speaker’s need for the world around him to register the passing of his beloved.

Form and structure

- The poem comprises four stanzas of equal length. Each stanza’s four lines rhyme regularly in an a-a-b-b, c-c-d-d, e-e-f-f, g-g-h-h pattern.

- Each stanza explores a different aspect of the speaker’s grief. The first stanza explores the domestic or home environment, the second broadens to his local and public surroundings, the third stanza explains the nature of the speaker’s love for the deceased, while the fourth stanza looks beyond to elements of nature in the greater universe.

Poetic/language devices

- Auden effectively captures the speaker’s sense of devastation and grief with his images in the first stanza. The speaker’s world has ended, and he feels that life has changed forever. It seems wrong for the world to continue on with the telephone ringing or dogs barking in the face of his loss.

- The personification of the aeroplanes ‘moaning’ (line 5) shows the speaker’s projection of his grief to his broader surroundings, as is the powerful image of the words scribbled on the sky for all to see (line 6).

- Describing the loved one as the points of a compass suggests that he, the departed, provided a sense of direction
and grounding for the speaker, as well as being his entire world. The impact of the loss is further emphasised with the explanation that ‘he’ was there for the daily grind of work as well as the moments of ‘Sunday rest’ (line 10). We see the depth of the relationship as it gave meaning to the various times of the day – with their implications, and through ‘my talk, my song’ (line 11) was one that thrived through both ordinary conversation and companionship, as well as moments of joy.

- Line 12 achieves its emotive impact through its simplicity, coupled with the use of the colon to state its devastating realisation.

- The final stanza plays on images often associated with romantic love: the starlit night sky, the shining moon, romantic walks along a beach or picnics in the wood. These conventions are destroyed as the speaker calls for all these symbols to be stripped of their meaning as ‘nothing now can ever come to any good’ (line 16).

- Auden achieves a remarkable balance of tone. The speaker’s grief is starkly evident and his sorrow, confusion and even anger or bitterness at his loss is readily apparent. But Auden never allows the tone to become overly sentimental. As a result, the grief seems real and moving as we share and understand the speaker’s bereavement.

**Sound devices**

- The rhythm of the poem is regular, and the rhyme scheme contributes to this. This is fitting for a ‘Blues’ musical piece of the title. Notice how the regularity of the rhythm breaks down in the last line: This echoes the meaning as the speaker expresses his utter despair at his beloved’s death.

- Auden allows the aeroplanes to ‘moan’: The onomatopoeia here encourages us to hear the low hum of a light aircraft in the sky overhead. References to sound are effectively used in the opening stanza with the contrast created between ordinary household noises and the call for silence, only to be broken by the solemn, ‘muffled drum’ (line 3) of the funeral procession.

**Post-reading activities for ‘Funeral Blues’**

1. State the possible meanings of the word ‘Blues’ in the title, and relate this to the poem itself.

2. Identify the colour contrast found in the second stanza, and show how this reflects the speaker’s mood.
3. Discuss the nature of the relationship described in the third stanza, and comment on how this information is conveyed.

4. Critically evaluate the impact of this poem as an expression of loss and grief. Support your response with evidence from the poem.
Cecil Day Lewis was born in Ballintubber, in Ireland, in 1904 and died in 1972. He was educated at Wadham College, in Oxford, and later became a lecturer at the University of Cambridge. He also taught poetry at Oxford and Harvard universities. Lewis was named Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 1968. His poetry is characterised by the introduction of modern diction and often addresses relevant social issues of the time, as well as the nature of relationships.

Pre-reading activities for ‘A Hard Frost’

In this activity, you will test your vocabulary against that of your peers.

- Form groups of four or five.
- Take each of the four seasons in turn, beginning with spring, then summer, then autumn and then winter.
- One by one, each person in the group must provide a single word, image or feeling that you associate with that season. Your list of words may include food or clothes items, but the link to the season must be evident.
- The participants are allowed a limited time in which to offer their word, and repetition is not allowed.
- As soon as one member fails to come up with a word, move on to the next season. Count as you go to see which season inspires the longest list.
- To make the exercise more interesting and challenging, choose a letter with which each word must begin.
During-reading activities for ‘A Hard Frost’

1. What does the use of ‘brilliant’ (line 3) mean in this context?
2. How has the windowpane (line 4) been transformed?
3. Describe the altered appearance of the elm trees in your own words.
4. In what way is this scene a ‘mockery’ (line 11)?
5. From the context, deduce what the word ‘fairings’ (line 13) probably means.

A Hard Frost

A frost came in the night and stole my world
And left this changeling for it – a precocious
Image of spring, too brilliant to be true:
White lilac on the windowpane, each grass-blade
Furred like a catkin, maydrift loading the hedge.
The elms behind the house are elms no longer
But blossomers in crystal, stems of the mist
That hangs yet in the valley below, amorphous
As the blind tissue whence creation formed.

The sun looks out, and the fields blaze with diamonds.
Mockery spring, to lend this bridal gear
For a few hours to a raw country maid,
Then leave her all disconsolate with old fairings
Of aconite and snowdrop! No, not here
Amid this flounce and filigree of death
Is the real transformation scene in progress
But deep below where frost
Worrying the stiff clods unclenches their
Grip on the seed and lets our future breathe.

Notes on ‘A Hard Frost’

Understanding the poem

- This poem describes the appearance of a hard frost that formed overnight. Think of the patterns that frost forms on glass, and how it sparkles in the early morning sunlight.
• The speaker comments on how the world’s appearance has been radically altered by the layer of frost, and in such a way that suddenly the surroundings seem almost spring-like (although the absolute opposite is the case). The glittering and sparkling of the reflected frost creates a bright image but, as the speaker admits, this is ‘too brilliant to be true’ (line 3). The speaker notes that as opposed to this fake appearance of spring, the ‘real’ spring is beginning to make itself felt unnoticeably underground.

**Form and structure**

• The poet arranges his content into two stanzas, of similar length. He does not use traditional rhyme schemes, and the line and stanza arrangement is set up to support the content. The first stanza describes the scene, while the second stanza comments on it and exposes the ‘truth’ of the first.

**Poetic/language devices**

• Lewis uses an extended metaphor to compare the image of frost on a window to different features of spring. This is an intriguing choice of comparison, as he describes how the effects of frost can remind the viewer of its opposite, spring.

• The imagery suggests spring flowers and the freshness of new growth, such as ‘maydrift loading the hedge’ (line 5) or ‘blossomers in crystal’ (line 7). Despite the glittering beauty, from the outset the speaker points out that this appearance is deceiving. He accuses the frost of theft as it has stolen away the expected scene and replaced it with a fake. The frost is given almost magical, mystical powers in its ability to accomplish this transformation.

• The metaphor comparing the white frost blanket to a wedding dress (lines 11–13) contains quite a disapproving tone. The wedding dress is being lent to a country maid for a few hours, but she will be left terribly sad when she has to return it and resume her usual, boring appearance.

• The personification of the last two lines creates an image of a contest of strength taking place beneath the ground where the earth is surrendering its frozen hold to the power of spring. This allows the seeds the chance to sprout, grow and break out of the soil to promise future life and growth.

**Sound devices**

• The poem focuses on the tension between appearance and reality. Unsurprisingly, there is no overt reference to sound. The heavy coating of frost would blanket the world in sharp silence, and the brittle crispness of this is implied in the mention of ‘crystal’ (line 7) and ‘diamonds’ (line 10).

• The alliteration of ‘flounce and filigree’ (line 15) suggests the disapproving tone of the speaker.
Post-reading activities for ‘A Hard Frost’

1. Explain the comparison of frost to a thief, used in the first line of the poem.

2. Name the plants mentioned in the first stanza that are used to describe this ‘spring’ scene.

3. Comment on the effect of the figure of speech used in lines 11–14.

4. Explore how the poet uses punctuation to convey emotion in the poem.

5. Critically evaluate the poetic technique of the extended metaphor, and how it is used in this poem. How effective is it? What might be the potential risks of using this technique? Use evidence from the poem to formulate your response.
David Rubadiri was born in 1930, in Malawi. He studied in Uganda and Cambridge. In 1964, when Malawi gained independence, Rubadiri was appointed Malawi’s first ambassador to the United States of America and to the United Nations. He left the government in 1965 when he and President Hastings Banda had a disagreement, but he later returned to the Washington embassy after Banda’s removal from power.

A Cloudy Day by Sydney Carter

Pre-reading activities for ‘An African Thunderstorm’

Imagine that there has been a fierce storm in your area, and significant damage has been caused to infrastructure such as roads and bridges. The impact on people living in informal settlements has been devastating, as homes have been destroyed and people have lost all their possessions.

As a concerned citizen, write a formal letter to the local newspaper to express your feelings about the impact of the storm, and to call for action.

- Include in your letter a plea for help and suggestions as to what might be done to avoid such devastation in the future.
During-reading activities for ‘An African Thunderstorm’

1. How does the word ‘African’ in the title affect your expectations of the content of the poem?

2. (a) Count the number of participles (words ending in ‘-ing’) used in lines 1–9.
   
   (b) What effect does this have on the description of the scene?

3. What image does the line ‘Like a madman chasing nothing’ (line 9) produce?

4. Consider the connotations of the words ‘pregnant’ and ‘stately’ in the lines ‘Pregnant clouds/Ride stately on its back’ (lines 10–11).

5. Has the full ferocity of the storm arrived by the end of the poem? Explain your answer.

6. The artwork on page 155, A Cloudy Day by Sydney Carter, deals with subject matter similar to that of the poem. Does the painting have the same atmosphere as the poem? Explain your answer.

An African Thunderstorm

From the west  
Clouds come hurrying with the wind  
Turning  
Sharply  
Here and there  
Like a plague of locusts  
Whirling  
Tossing up things on its tail  
Like a madman chasing nothing.

Pregnant clouds  
Ride stately on its back  
Gathering to perch on hills  
Like dark sinister wings;  
The Wind whistles by  
And trees bend to let it pass.

In the village  
Screams of delighted children
Toss and turn
In the din of whirling wind,
Women –
Babies clinging on their backs –
Dart about
In and out
Madly
The Wind whistles by
Whilst trees bend to let it pass.
Clothes wave like tattered flags
Flying off
To expose dangling breasts
As jaggereed blinding flashes
Rumble, tremble, and crack
Amidst the smell of fired smoke
and the pelting march of the storm.

Notes on ‘An African Thunderstorm’

Understanding the poem

- Rubadiri’s poem captures the looming arrival of a fierce storm. The anticipation of its arrival is both exciting and frightening. The wind is described as a mighty force, unpredictable in its direction, and carrying with it ominous clouds. The strength of the wind seems to suggest that worse is to follow once the storm hits.

- The poem describes nature’s forces conspiring to bring this powerful storm, and then narrows the focus to its effect on people in its path. The inhabitants of a village are seen reacting to its approach, with the contrasting responses of children and mothers.

- The village is clearly vulnerable to the force of the storm. The poem ends with the storm almost breaking overhead as the flashes of lightning and crack of thunder arrive.

Form and structure

- The poem is divided into two parts which divide the content into the general and the specific. The first part, made up of stanzas one and two, describes the storm as it gathers momentum, and the third stanza describes its impact on human existence.

- The irregular number of words on a line, with many single-word lines, captures the unpredictable progress of the wind and the accompanying clouds. This technique is also evident in the second part of the poem, where the frantic movement of the village women as they ‘Dart about/In and out/Madly’ (lines 22–24) is physically demonstrated by the line divisions.
The description of ‘The Wind Whistles by/And trees bend to let it pass’ in the second stanza (lines 14–15) is almost exactly repeated in the third stanza, in lines 25–26, although ‘And’ has been replaced with ‘Whilst’ (line 26). The path of the storm has not been diminished by the trees. In fact, the trees give way to allow it to progress unhindered.

**Poetic/language devices**

- Rubadiri makes use of vivid imagery and figures of speech to convey the various elements of the storm. Line 6 introduces the simile of the approaching ‘plague of locusts’, underlining the appearance and potentially destructive nature of the storm. It also locates the setting in Africa. The further simile comparing the wind to a monster thrashing its tail about ‘Like a madman chasing nothing’ (line 9) emphasises the unpredictable nature of the storm, which adds to its danger. The description of the clouds ‘Gathering to perch on hills/Like dark sinister wings’ (lines 12–13) makes the clouds reminiscent of some bird of prey waiting for the opportune moment to strike.

- The third stanza continues in its depiction of noise and movement as villagers anticipate the storm’s arrival. We notice how the children react with ‘Screams’ (line 17) of delight, possibly because of the thrill of potential danger. The women hurriedly attempt to prepare for the storm, although it seems that their efforts may be pointless as the ‘Clothes wave like tattered flags’ (line 27), completely at the mercy of the wind.

- The poem ends with the storm breaking, but stops before it actually hits. The progress of the ‘pelting march of the storm’ (line 33) tells the reader that this storm cannot be stopped and will be a mighty one.

**Sound devices**

- This poem utilises sound effectively. Much use is made of onomatopoeia as the wind is ‘whirling’ (lines 7 and 19) and it ‘whistles’ (lines 14 and 25). The noise in the village has the screams of children competing with ‘the din of whirling wind’ (line 19). As the storm gets closer, its imminent arrival is heralded by the onomatopoeia of the ‘Rumble, tremble, and crack’ (line 31) of the thunder, and the impact of lightning striking the earth.

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**Post-reading activities for ‘An African Thunderstorm’**

1. Compare the different reactions of the children and the adults in the village to the approaching storm.
The description of ‘The Wind whistles by/And trees bend to let it pass’ in the second stanza (lines 14–15) is almost exactly repeated in the third stanza, in lines 25–26, although ‘And’ has been replaced with ‘Whilst’ (line 26). The path of the storm has not been diminished by the trees. In fact, the trees give way to allow it to progress unhindered.

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Post-reading activities for ‘An African Thunderstorm’

1. Compare the different reactions of the children and the adults in the village to the approaching storm.
2. Quote an image from the poem that suggests the danger and destructive qualities of the coming storm.

3. Contrast the different ways in which the wind and the clouds in the storm build up.
   (a) Does the speaker portray these elements as equally powerful?
   (b) Do their roles change as the storm approaches? Discuss fully, supporting your answer with evidence from the poem.

4. Comment on how the form of this poem enhances its content. Note the structure of the stanzas and lines, particularly.

5. Do you think the poem ends effectively? Should the speaker not have described the impact of the storm on the people and the village, or the storm’s aftermath? Evaluate the poet’s intentions in this poem, and say whether you believe they were effectively realised or not.

William Blake

William Blake was born in London, in the United Kingdom, in 1757. He was a poet, artist and mystic, and his poetry is amongst the most lyrical and prophetic in the English tradition. Blake was a non-conformist and a radical who was concerned with many of the social injustices of the day, as well as being profoundly spiritual. Both aspects are reflected in his works. He died in poverty in 1827, and his genius was only truly recognised after his death.

Pre-reading activities for ‘The Garden of Love’

Evaluate the situation that follows, and answer the questions on the next page:

In the area where you live, there is a patch of open land that has a stream running through it. The open land is used by pedestrians as a short cut from the adjoining residential area to the commercial business district. The open land is very popular with children from the community as a play area. It is also used by teenagers as a meeting spot and an area to ‘hang out’ with friends. Unfortunately, the area is often scattered with litter, and the stream is polluted with rubbish, posing a potential health hazard. The Town Council wants to allow the land to be re-zoned for commercial use, possibly developing it into a golf course. However, before any plans can be finalised, the authorities want to consult the various stakeholders to determine the best course of action.
1. Imagine that you have been asked to gather the various interested parties together to discuss the situation. You want to be sure that all voices are heard. Draw up a list of who should attend such a meeting as representatives of the various groups.

2. Compile an agenda for such a meeting. Your agenda should include: an outline of what is to be discussed, the names of representatives who would be invited to participate, the order of the discussion items, and the time allocation for each item.

### During-reading activities for 'The Garden of Love'

1. Why do you think the ‘Garden of Love’ (line 1) is written with capital letters?
2. Why can the speaker not enter the ‘Chapel’ (lines 3 and 5)?
3. How does the speaker feel about the presence of this chapel?
4. What has replaced the flowers in the ‘Garden of Love’ (lines 8–9)?
5. What do you understand by the expression ‘walking their rounds’ (line 11)?

### The Garden of Love

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;
So I turn’d to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore,

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:

And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

### Notes on ‘The Garden of Love’

#### Understanding the poem

- In this poem, the speaker describes revisiting a place he remembers from his childhood, only to find that it has been taken over by a chapel or church. He is prevented from entering,
so he attempts to explore the surrounding garden instead. Here he finds that the place which used to be full of ‘sweet flowers’ (line 8) has been filled with graves and tombstones instead. In addition, patrolling priests, in their dark robes, prevent him from experiencing or reliving his ‘joys & desires’ (line 12).

- This poem could be interpreted in different ways. On one level it is simply a mark of the passage of time, and that as a result of human expansion, an open area of his childhood no longer exists. While this is cause for dismay for the speaker, it is surely not particularly surprising.

- However, the fact that it is a religious building that has usurped this land could imply a broader comment on organised religion and its influence on ‘innocent’ pleasures and freedom.

**Form and structure**

- This poem consists of three stanzas of four lines each. The stanzas are used to focus attention on different issues: The first stanza tells us of the speaker’s discovery; the second reveals the speaker’s feelings about the building but expresses hope for consolation to be found in the garden; the third stanza describes the speaker’s disappointment that this, too, has undergone drastic change.

- The rhyme scheme makes use of end-rhymes in the first two stanzas, using the pattern of \( a-b-c-b \), \( d-e-f-e \). The poet uses internal rhyme with ‘gowns’ and ‘rounds’ in line 11, and ‘briars’ and ‘desires’ in line 12.

**Poetic/language devices**

- Blake makes use of punctuation to add emphasis to his content: ‘Garden of Love’ (lines 1 and 7) is capitalised as the proper noun to name a special place, one that had a specific name. The word ‘Chapel’ (lines 3 and 5) is also capitalised, which given that ‘chapel’ means a ‘small church’, seems to underline the importance of its position to the speaker. This is echoed by the capital letter for ‘Priests’ (line 11), as if these members of the church loom large in this place. The capital letter and fullstop are used to highlight the sign ‘Thou shalt not’ (line 6), making the command forbidding and hostile.

- The poem’s diction is simple and straightforward, capturing the natural expression of the speaker’s experience. The use of innuendo is apparent as the speaker does not express his anger, disappointment or outrage explicitly, but implies it in the phrase ‘where flowers should be’ (line 10) and ‘binding with briars’ his ‘joys & desires’ (line 12).

- The reference to the ‘Priests in black gowns’ (line 11) who are ‘walking their rounds’ (line 11) is not a positive image. A
perfectly acceptable situation where priests are perhaps saying prayers in the chapel grounds is given rather sinister overtones. The ‘black gowns’ seem somewhat threatening, while the action of the priests suggests they are like guards or sentinels to keep out ‘undesirables’.

- The use of tenses in ‘never had seen’ (line 2) and the garden that ‘bore’ (line 8) flowers in the past suggests the passage of time. In a figurative interpretation, it could be implying that this experience amounts to a sudden realisation of what has been in front of the speaker for some time, but he was unable to ‘see’ the reality clearly before.

**Sound devices**

- The rhythm of the poem is mostly regular, due to the steady meter and rhyming. However, the change in rhyme, pace and rhyme structures of the final two lines draws the reader’s attention.
- Perhaps the speaker suggests that his world is now out of balance with his realisation, and this new reality requires a different form of expression.

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**Post-reading activities for ‘The Garden of Love’**

1. How do we know that the speaker had positive memories of the place the poem describes?

2. What does the word ‘midst’ (line 3) mean in the context of the stanza?

3. The speaker seems to paint a negative picture of what the garden has become. Without changing the ‘facts’, discuss how a different impression could have been created.

4. Comment on the effectiveness of the description ‘binding with briars’ (line 12).

5. What view of organised religion could Blake be presenting in this poem? Find evidence in the poem to support your answer.