

English: Year 11

# “Steve”



GCSE English Language and English Literature

(2021-22 edition)



# **GCSE English Language**

# **English Language: Paper 1.**

("Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing.")

*Note the timings below – and ignore the rubric recommending 15 minutes of reading time!*

*It can be useful to write the actual starting times for each question at the start of your paper as a reminder before you begin.*

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## **Section A: Reading.**

**Texts:** an extract from a novel or short story from the 20th or 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Focus:** openings; endings; narrative perspectives and points of view; narrative or descriptive passages; character; atmospheric descriptions; other appropriate narrative and descriptive approaches.

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### **Question 1.**

*4 marks. 6 minutes. Spend some of this time reading the entire Source, not just the section for Question 1.*

E.g. "List four things you learn about..."

Re-read, and keep to, the *part of the text* specified in the question. Read carefully. Be precise and accurate. Keep to the question. Infer where necessary. Make just 1 point per space. Quote and/or paraphrase, but fuller phrases often work best.

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### **Question 2.**

*8 marks. 12 minutes. (Consider stealing a few from Q4.)*

The focus is on how the writer has used language to achieve something. Re-read the *part of the text* indicated in the question and then answer it. Typical format:

"How does the writer use language here to..."

"You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms"

No introduction. Bullet points a useful guide, not a strict requirement. (Sentence structure points can be forced and weak.) Be detailed and perceptive: select two to three quotations and drill deeply into each, offering at least two observations. Depth, not breadth. PETAL! Use terminology where available, but the focus is on the effect of language, not just identifying techniques.

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### **Question 3.**

*8 marks. 12 mins.*

This will relate to how the text has been structured, usually the whole of the source. Skim and scan, then answer. Typical format:

"How has the writer structures the text to interest you as a reader?"

"You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you."

No introduction. Quote where necessary, or refer in detail (e.g. "The second paragraph is just 3 lines long"). Keep the focus on structure, not language. Consider overview, then identify shifts and explain why they happen. Aim for about three points, but offer perceptive interpretations: how/ why do these things interest the reader? Structural features to explore include...

- Why does the writer begin the extract with that focus or topic?
- Does the opening paragraph give us a sense of the setting? To what effect?
- Is all information revealed early on – or are some key details withheld?
- What does the writer shift his/ her focus to afterwards, and why?
- Are there recurring patterns of imagery, repeated words, semantic fields?
- Is there a gradual shift in tone (e.g. from happy to sad or threatening)?
- Is there a shift in setting (from outdoors to indoors, from one room to another)?
- Does the focus switch between characters? Is there a narrative shift into or out of a character's thoughts and feelings?
- Is there prolepsis (flash-forward) or analepsis (flashback)? Why? What is the effect?
- Is there a section of dialogue? Why at that point? (Careful: this can lead to inane comments!)
- Is there a short paragraph (for example)? What is the effect?
- Is there a switch in tense? Or from first to second or third person?
- How does the extract end? Why does it end like that?

#### Question 4:

20 marks. 30 minutes. But consider donating a few minutes to Question 2.

The question will ask you to evaluate the extract, in response to a statement by a (non-existent!) reader. This essentially means considering what the writer intended to achieve in the selected passage and stating how far you feel that he or she achieved it. To lend weight to your views, you must support them with relevant quotations and references to parts of the text. So there are three key skills that you need to answer this sort of question:

- **understanding what** effects the writer sought to achieve in the passage (guided by the statement)
- **appreciating how** the writer sought to achieve these effects (with relevant evidence and analysis)
- **evaluating** how successful the writer was.

The above list is a good format to follow; it might look like this: "I agree with the student that the writer has created a tense atmosphere in this extract. For example, the writer describes the sky as, "...". This is tense because the simile makes us think of...". In other words, analyse language – and structure, if relevant – perceptively and in detail, as always.

The quotation in the question will probably praise the writer, and you should too – it will be a highly skilful piece of text.

You may at some stage express disagreement with the quotation in the question. However, if so, seek to explain what the writer was attempting to achieve. E.g. "I disagree with the student in the second paragraph, because the writer describes the sky as 'blue' and 'sunny,' which is not usually seen as tense. *However, I think the writer did this to...*".

Your answer to question 4 will sound more subjective and personal. Keep the question in clear focus ("I agree with the student that the writer...."), and make a clear argument.

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## Section B: Writing.

40 marks. 45 minutes. (16 for SPaG; 24 for, broadly, 'style' and 'content'.)

There will be two questions. Choose one. The questions will ask you to describe and/or narrate. A question may offer a picture as a stimulus for either type of question. Consider annotating this with observations and ideas. Typical questions include:

Descriptive: "Write a description suggested by this picture."

Narrative: "Write part of a story about...". "Write about a time when you..."

**Descriptive** responses should create a mood and/or sense of place. They should not tell a story or involve plot developments, but neither should you stick too rigidly to a given image. Explore multi-sensory detail; look beyond the focus of the photograph (to the side, above, etc.); make the scene move and come alive; change, add or remove details to enhance the effect. DROP-SHIFT-ZOOM-LEAVE often works well as a structure.

**Narrative** responses may involve characters, dialogue and plot – but there should also be description. Keep dialogue to a minimum – it's difficult for the examiner to assess your English when people are speaking informally. Avoid making your story too much based on action: it's often less subtle and sophisticated. You are writing an extract, not an entire story!

Either way, offer a clear but interesting structure (use ideas from Q3!). You can pick up extra marks for originality.

Planning is CRITICAL! Plan for 5 minutes: brainstorm ideas then number into these into an appropriate sequence.

Your language should be sophisticated and formal, but not too stiff: make it varied, engaging and stylish.

Keep abbreviations to a minimum. Avoid empty words like 'very' and 'really'; use 'many' or 'several' instead of 'a lot'. Fix your meaning with precise, well-chosen language.

Techniques to demonstrate might include the following:

- a broad, varied, sophisticated vocabulary
- precise use of adjectives and adverbs
- layered description (especially for a descriptive task)
- imagery (simile, metaphor, personification, zoomorphism)
- sound (alliteration, assonance, sibilance, fricatives, plosives, onomatopoeia)
- sentence variety (long, short, questions, triads, lists, varied syntax; avoid starting too many sentences the same way)
- a full range of punctuation (yes, that means colons and semicolons)
- a range of different senses (not just visual)
- consider present tense and/or second person pronouns – but neither is necessary, so do whatever works best
- an interesting opening and ending
- consider structural effects: a very short paragraph; a switch of narrator or perspective; analepsis for a narrative task, a description of the scene at different times or in different weather conditions, etc.

SPaG is vital. Your apostrophes, commas, capital letters (etc.) must be secure. Give at least three minutes at the end to check for dull words and inaccuracies. Cross-thought errors and trite expressions neatly, and improve them. If you forget paragraphs your grade will fall heavily. Above all, try to enjoy it! Show off what a stylish a writer you are!

## English Language: Paper 2.

*Note the timings below – and ignore the rubric recommending 15 minutes of reading time!*

*It can be useful to write the actual starting times for each question at the start of your paper as a reminder before you begin.*

### **Question 1.**

*4 marks. 6 minutes. Answering the question will take less than this, so use the surplus to read as much of the sources as possible.*

Select 4 statements – shade in boxes; cross through if you make a mistake.

Keep to the section specified by the question. Infer where required.

### **Question 2.**

*8 marks. Up to 15 minutes.*

Compare both sources on the issue specified by the question. Usually this will ask you to look for differences – so keep to this! Skim read/ read quickly both texts with the question in mind, highlighting relevant material as you go. Look for differences (or similarities, if asked) between the two.

Look at your selected material. Number them into pairs to compare (e.g. point 1 in Source A contrasts with point 1 in Source B).

No introduction. No conclusion. Use short quotations as evidence, but you can paraphrase and refer in detail to bigger ideas.

Compare texts: A1 ≠ B1; A2 ≠ B2, etc., as time allows. No language analysis is needed or rewarded, but good answers will infer, deduce, draw out the significance of - and perhaps even reasons for – the key differences. Often, these can be explained by the fact that life has changed between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries, although be specific on *how* if you make this point.

Useful acronym: SQI (Statement – Quotation – Inference). Then give a connective (“However”), and repeat an SQI for Source B, drawing out differences. A large number of comparisons is not required – two pairs is sufficient. Favour those which allow you to show perceptive reading (inference!).

### **Question 3.**

*12 marks. 15 minutes.*

Analyse how language has been used in the specified source (A or B). The question may ask you to explore how the writer has sought to persuade/ influence the reader (for a list of possible techniques to identify, see the notes on Question 5, on the other side of this sheet). But the question may ask about a different use of language - so keep alert and read it carefully. If it asks you how the writer uses language to help the reader feel as though they were there, look for how the writer uses precise descriptive details, multi-sensory descriptions (sounds, smells, etc.), imagery and inclusive pronouns (first person plural or second person). PETAL points are required here: awareness of language and its effect, with terminology. NEVER write how something is effective without also explaining why. Be specific: don't say “it draws the reader in” or “makes you want to read on” (two rather weak phrases) without clearly explaining why. Favour quality of analysis over a large number of superficial observations. Stay with the quotation and explode the quotations, aiming to say at least 2 things about each. Avoid obvious (explicit) statements: spend your time proving yourself to be a perceptive reader.

### **Question 4.**

*16 marks. 24 minutes. Use them all – there's a lot to do here!*

Typically, this will ask you to compare the two writers' views on an issue.

Think of this as the big sibling of Question 2, requiring awareness of attitude and method now, not just content.

Plan the same way: use a new colour to identify views and methods in each source.

Pair them up, but be aware that you don't have to find perfect matches. For example, you might argue that the writer of “A” uses many rhetorical questions to express her view, while the writer of “B” uses frequent repetition to express his.

Favour quotations that allow for perceptive comment (i.e. favour implicit over explicit quotations).

A suitable structure:

- a. Identify a view in one source
  - b. Quote an expression of this
  - c. Explore how the language communicates this view
  - d. Use a connective to link to the other source (you can use the same one since style isn't assessed in the Reading section.)
  - e. Follow stages a-c for the second source: identify view... quote an expression of it... analyse language.
- But as you cover the second source, make it clear how this all differs to Source “A”. (*And does the difference in century partially account for the contrast? If so, how/ why?*)

Repeat stages a-e as time permits. Two pairs of comparisons is enough for an excellent answer. Four pairs (8 PETAL points) means you've been superficial in your analysis.

If you do not compare the texts in a clear and substantial way, you will lose many marks. (Simply saying ‘However, I Source B’ without anything else is not a substantial or direct comparison of ideas or methods.)

### Question 5.

40 marks. 45 minutes. (16 for SPaG; 24 for, broadly, 'style' and 'content'.)

Plan for 5 minutes: brainstorm ideas then number into these into an appropriate sequence.

Keep to the stated form (e.g. give a salutation for a letter, a headline for an article, etc.).

Your language should be sophisticated and formal, but not too stiff: make it varied, engaging and stylish.

Keep abbreviations to a minimum. Avoid empty words like 'very', 'really', and use 'many' or 'several' instead of 'a lot'. Nail your meaning with precise language.

Techniques to demonstrate include the following 10 core persuasive techniques we've practised:

Triad

State opinions as though they were facts

Adjectives ("wonderful", "superb")

Superlatives

Rhetorical questions

First-person plural pronouns

Second-person pronouns

Flattery

Defeat the counter-arguments in advance

Emotive language

Add to this list of possible techniques the following: anecdotes, statistics, wit/ humour, lists, anaphora, imagery, expert opinion.

Vary your sentences (short, long, questions and declaratives, syntax to avoid starting the same way or to put dramatic words at the start), and consider an occasional short paragraph for impact – even a few words!

Use colons and semicolons with confidence, but naturally.

Open and end in an interesting and engaging way. Avoid starting with "I'm going to be talking about..."

Use a range of sophisticated connectives to add fluency and to steer your reader.

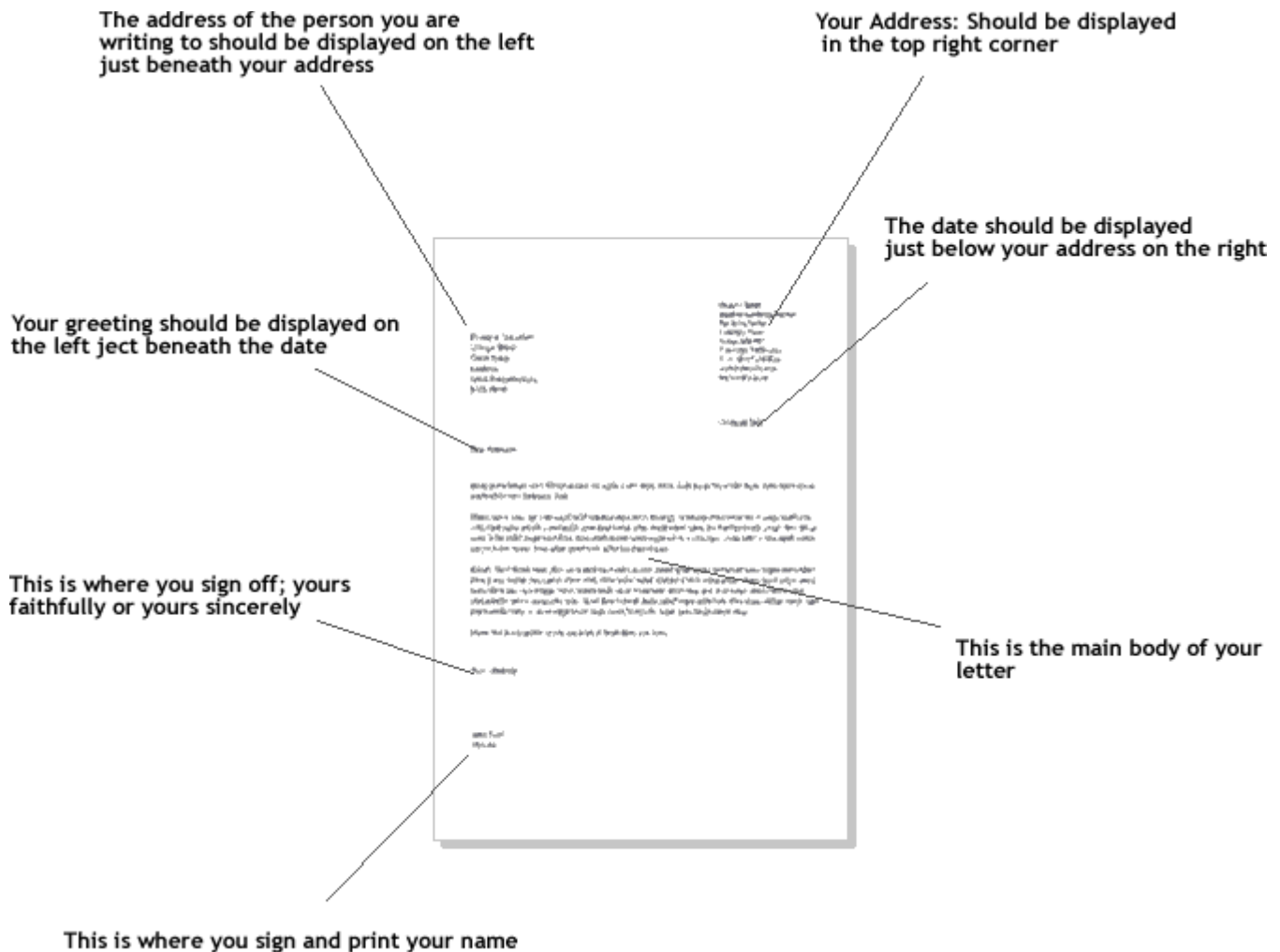
SPaG is critical. You must give at least 3 minutes at the end to check for dull words and inaccuracies. Cross-through errors or dull words neatly, and replace them.

If you forget paragraphs your grade will fall heavily.

Try to enjoy it!

Show off how stylish a writer you are; aim to convince people of your views.

# Standard layout of a letter...





# Analysing Language

“But there was nothing to say about the language!” Are you sure?! Anything below is valid, as long as you discuss the effect.

**Word choices** (*primary meanings, secondary (etc.) meanings*); **connotations**. **Monosyllabic; polysyllabic.**

**Letter sounds** (*hard; soft; aggressive; consonants; vowels; plosives; fricatives; sibilance*)

**Punctuation** – *and its effects (dashes, exclamation marks, colons, ellipses (...), etc.)*

**Semantic field** (*when a number of words have been borrowed from a particular area – such as the semantic field of sport*).

**Block capitals, italics, underlining.** (*Although these tend to make for rather simplistic observations.*)

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**Adjectives** (*including comparatives and superlatives*); **adverbs**; **nouns** (**abstract or concrete**); **verbs** (*e.g. are they powerful?*).

**Modal verbs** (*relating to probability and permission: note the difference in force between: could, would, should, might, can, must, will, etc.*)

**Pronouns** (*first person singular or plural; possessive pronouns; second person – or “direct address”; third person*)

**Prepositions:** (*words showing the relationship of one noun or pronoun to another: “I am under the table.” Others include: on, at, above, below, over, under, between, next to, on top, in, beside, etc.*)

**Articles:** *the definite article is “the”; “a” and “an” are the indefinite articles. (Note difference between “A tree” and “The tree”.)*

**Determiners:** *words which come at the beginning of a noun/ noun phrase (a, the, those, this, her, some, your, which, any, etc.)*

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**Imagery: Metaphors and similes.**

**Personification** (*giving human qualities to something*); **zoomorphism** (*giving animal qualities to something*).

**Chremamorphism** (*in some ways the opposite of personification: giving a person qualities of an object*)

**Symbolism**

**Layered detail** (*using adjectives, etc.*); and/or **multi-sensory detail** (*appealing to different senses*).

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**Sounds:** (*See “letter sounds”, above; plus:*)

**Alliteration; assonance; sibilance; onomatopoeia.**

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**Facts** (*including how they can persuade or, by being selective, mislead*)

**Opinions** (*including how these can be presented as though facts*)

(*This section is particularly suited to Language Paper 2.*)

**Statistics** (*including how these can manipulate and mislead*)

**Expert opinion.**

**Examples and anecdotes** (*very short stories to illustrate or demonstrate a point*)

**Rhetorical questions; hypophora** (*when a writer or speaker immediately answers their own question*)

**Triads** (*use of three/ tricolon: used to add emphasis*)

**Anaphora and epistrophe** (*respectively, repeating words at the start or end of successive lines or phrases*)

**Flattery**

**Hyperbole; euphemism; dysphemism.**

**Use of quotations** (*e.g. for an expert opinion, eye-witness, evidence, dialogue, etc.*)

**Tone** (*e.g. resigned, defiant, angry, measured, ironic, etc.*)

**Humour, wit, puns, irony and sarcasm.**

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**Simple sentences; compound sentences; complex sentences. Main clause; subordinate clause.**

**Short sentences; long sentences.**

**Short paragraphs; long paragraphs.**

**Headings, sub-headings.**

**Lists (syndetic; asyndetic; polysyndetic).**

**Antithesis** (*juxtaposing contrasting ideas in a sentence for effect: “some think this; others think that”*)

**Ellipsis** (*cutting out grammatical words – e.g. “Big Pile Up on M4”; also “...”*)

**Syntax** (*the word order – words can be fronted or deferred*)

**Connectives** (*for adding a new idea, introducing a similar point, introducing a contrasting point, etc.*) and **conjunctions.**

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**Declaratives** (*statements*)

**Imperatives** (*commands*)

**Questions.**

**Exclamations** (*Expressions of shock, surprise, emotion – “That’s amazing!” “For just £20!” etc.*)

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**Past tense / Present tense / Future tense.**

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**Formal / informal / colloquial** (*language of everyday conversation*); **slang; Standard English; non-Standard English.**

**Jargon** (*technical language specific to a field of study – e.g. for computers: download, hacker, virus, etc.*).

## **APOSTROPHES**

Used for two totally different reasons...

**1. To contract.** When shortening words (usually a sign of speech or of less formal writing), we put an apostrophe to show the place from where we have missed out letters. So, **cannot** = *can't*; does **not** = *doesn't*; it **is** = *it's*; etc. The position of the apostrophe is important, but the following exceptions to the rules should be remembered: shall not = *shan't*; will not = *won't*; must not = *mustn't* (we don't pronounce the first 't').

**2. To show possession/ ownership.** The apostrophe in this second use must only be applied to the 'owner'. There are three simple rules...

**a.** If the owner is singular, add 's to the owner. The sausage belonging to the girl = *the girl's sausage*.

**b.** If the owner is plural (more than one) add just ' to the owner. The explosives belonging to the girls = *the girls' explosives*.

**c.** If the owner is plural, but does not end in the letter s (i.e. we say one sheep, three sheep) then add 's to the owner (like rule 1). So, the moose belonging to the children = *the children's moose*.

Note: we don't use an apostrophe when we intend to say "belonging to it" (e.g. *Where is its head?*), although we do use one to abbreviate "it is" and "it has" (*It's used correctly here*).

## **CAPITAL LETTERS**

Generally speaking, only use these for: the start of a new sentence; days of the week; months of the year, proper nouns (names of people – *Mildred*; places – *Skegness*; brands/organisations – *Poundland*); "I" – when referring to yourself (as in, *I am a turkey*, or *I'm getting broody*); titles (*My Donut Addiction*); major cultural and historical events (*Halloween*, *Christmas*, *Easter*, *the Great Depression*); and the first spoken word of a person (*John said*, *"Time for a sausage."*). Don't use them for seasons - or for anything else!

## **COLONS**

These can be used to introduce something (a list, a speech, an idea), especially when this introduction is so announced that a slight pause is created. E.g. use them here: *My decision is this: we should eat more prunes; not here: My decision is that we should eat more prunes.*

You can also use them to summarise, develop or explain something. For example: *This sausage is cold: something's gone very wrong.*

## **COMMAS**

These subdivide your sentences to make them more orderly. Here's how: they can break up items in a list (*My toenail was purple, swollen and oozing*); they can help the reader understand the text by creating an island of words (*Love Island, let's face it, stinks*); and they can separate clauses – or sections of a sentence (*After you left, I ate my foot*). Note that in each case a short pause is formed.

## **CONNECTIVES**

These are words and phrases that add fluency to your writing. *Moreover*, they indicate to your reader where your argument is going. *Therefore*, these are vital if you want a good grade. *On the other hand*, if you don't want a good grade then totally ignore this.

## **HOMOPHONES**

Words that sound the same but that are different in spelling and/or meaning. Be sure to learn the difference between these commonly confused sets of homophones and near-homophones:

|                                 |                              |                     |                      |                         |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>to/ too/ two</i>             | <i>there/ their/ they're</i> | <i>your/ you're</i> | <i>know/ no</i>      | <i>weather/ whether</i> |
| <i>were/ where/ wear/ we're</i> | <i>of/ off</i>               | <i>lose/ loose</i>  | <i>chose/ choose</i> |                         |

## **SEMICOLONS**

**1.** Loosely speaking, these can be used instead of a full stop or connective if two independent clauses (phrases or sentences) are very closely related or contrast in some way. They create a sense of balance and precision – but they also show the examiner that you can use them! An example? *Some people hate Piers Morgan; others don't like him very much*. Notice how a full stop or connective could go in place of the semicolon and each clause would still make rather a lot of sense.

**2.** They can also be used to divide items in a complex list (a list usually introduced by a colon in which commas are used to give more information about some of the items). *Pencils are fantastic: they are more environmentally friendly than pens; they are sleek and stylish, fitting nicely into your handbag or briefcase; and they make great friends*. (Note: the comma in the second item is what really justifies the use of semicolons in this list.)

## **SPEECH/ DIALOGUE**

Spoken words in speech marks. (One or two inverted commas – but be consistent.)

Change paragraph when the speaker changes. (Unless you are presenting a mass of indeterminate voices.)

Start a person's first spoken word with a capital letter (Trevor said, "Hello.")

Unless formally introducing a line of dialogue, use a comma. (See example above.)

Use a comma inside closing speech marks to end dialogue if not the end of your sentence. ("Hello," said Trevor.)

You don't need to attribute every line (it can be ponderous and risks patronising the reader.)

Intersperse spoken words with descriptions of the surroundings, thoughts, gestures, etcetera.



# **GCSE English Literature**

## Literature Paper 1: 1:45 minutes.

### Section A: The 19th-century novel

**A Christmas Carol.** Extract given.

Answer one question based on how something is presented in the extract – and in the play as a whole.

*Include context. As above, spend 60-65% of your time on the extract.*

*30 marks – including context. 50 minutes.*

### Section B: Poetry

- (Ignore “Love and Relationships” question. Find “War and Conflict”.)
  - One question. One poem chosen by examiner and printed.
  - Select a suitable comparison poem and answer the question. Again, spend 60-65% of your time on the printed poem. Try to structure your response by making a point about poem 1, then comparing this to a point about poem 2. Repeat till end. If not, write about poem 1 for 60-65% of your time, then write about poem 2, being sure to link this second poem to the first as you go. Include context for one or both poems.

*30 marks; 45 minutes.*

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## Literature Paper 2: 1:45mins

### Section A: Shakespeare

**Macbeth.** Extract given.

Answer one question based on how something is presented in the extract – and in the play as a whole.

*Include context. Spend about 60-65% of your time analysing the language of the extract; 35-40% on the remaining text/context.*

*30 marks – including context; +4 for SPaG. 50 minutes – incl 5 mins checking SPaG carefully!*

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### Section B: Poetry

- (Ignore “Love and Relationships” question. Find “War and Conflict”.)
  - One question. One poem chosen by examiner and printed.
  - Select a suitable comparison poem and answer the question. Again, spend 60-65% of your time on the printed poem. Try to structure your response by making a point about poem 1, then comparing this to a point about poem 2. Repeat till end. If not, write about poem 1 for 60-65% of your time, then write about poem 2, being sure to link this second poem to the first as you go. Include context for one or both poems.

*30 marks; 45 minutes.*

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### Section C: Unseen Poetry

Answer **both** questions in this section.

27.1 Answer question about a poem you’ve not seen before. Probable focus: thoughts and feelings of the speaker.

*24 marks; 30 minutes.*

- 27.2 Another unseen poem printed. Write a comparison of this and the previous unseen poem. The question will typically ask you "What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present... [something: usually feelings]."

8 marks; 15 minutes.

### **MACBETH (William Shakespeare)**

**Context:** Written 1606, during the reign of King James I. James believed (as did many in this Jacobean era) in witches, and thought some had attempted to kill him when a storm threatened his ship. Witches were known to be evil and were thought able to foretell the future. In 1605 the Gunpowder plot, a Catholic attempt to kill the Protestant king and his government, was foiled. So the time of the play was one in which the king thought his life was threatened from all sides! Possibly Shakespeare's play sought to please his king by suggesting that a person who listened to witches and/or sought to commit regicide would be miserable and likely to die a grim death. This was reinforced by the belief in the divine right of kings: the idea that God had chosen the king. Therefore, to kill a king was a huge crime: a defiance of God's will. Gender: society was strongly patriarchal. Men were to be 'stereotypically' masculine: tough, dominant, decisive; active; women were seen as submissive, weaker and more emotional. (Lady M plays on these values to intimidate her husband.) Finally, the play belongs to the genre of tragedy. A tragedy typically involves an impressive protagonist who is brought down, or even dies, due to a 'fatal flaw' in his or her character. There will often be a sense of inevitability about this decline.

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**Act I:** 1. The witches plan to meet M. 2. We hear of M's achievements against the Norwegians – but also of his brutal killing of Macdonwald. He is promoted to Thane of Cawdor (the last one was also a traitor!). 3. The witches discuss their evil acts. M and B meet them: the witches make 3 predictions and M is immediately tempted. 4. D names Malcolm as his heir; M sees this as an obstacle to his ambition. 5. Lady M calls for her femininity to be removed, then tries to persuade M to murder D. 6. D arrives as a guest at M's castle; Lady M feigns kindness. 7. M debates whether to kill D; Lady M mocks and persuades him aggressively.

**Act II:** 1. M sees a vision of a bloodstained dagger, guiding him to kill D. (His inner ambition, or the witches' magic?) 2. M kills D, but is shaken by guilt and forgets to leave the daggers behind. Lady M takes charge. 3. A porter provides some light relief, while maintaining some key themes. D's murder is discovered; his sons flee in fear. 4. M is to be crowned. Macduff seems suspicious.

**Act III:** 1. B suspects that M killed D. M plans to have B and Fleance murdered. 2. M is anxious and feels unsafe. He hints to, but does not tell, Lady M that Banquo will soon be murdered. 3. The murderers kill B but Fleance escapes. 4. M sees B's ghost at the banquet – a sign of M's intense guilt? Or the start of God's punishment of a sinner? He decides to visit the witches. 5. The witches' goddess, Hecate, is angry that the witches haven't involved her in their dealings with M, and she vows to lead M to his destruction. 6. Scottish lords discuss M, and reveal that Macduff is with Malcolm in England, planning an attack on M's castle.

**Act IV:** 1. M visits the witches again. They tell him to beware Macduff, but say none of woman-born can harm him, and that he's safe until Birnam Wood marches against him. M hears that Macduff has fled to England. 2. Lady Macduff and her children are murdered on M's orders. 3. In England, Malcolm and Macduff plan to get their revenge on M to free Scotland from tyranny. Malcolm is initially suspicious of Macduff, fearing he may be a traitor. He tests Macduff's loyalty by presenting himself as a bad future king. When Macduff is dismayed, Malcolm knows that Macduff cares for Scotland. Macduff hears his family are killed.

**Act V:** 1. Lady M is seen sleepwalking, trying to wash blood from her hands. 2. Scottish lords join with Malcolm and his English army near Birnam Wood. 3. M hears Malcolm's troops are coming to get him but is unafraid because of the witches' predictions. 4. Malcolm's soldiers cut branches from Birnam Wood to disguise their numbers. 5. M hears Lady M is dead; he's then told Birnam Wood is moving! He prepares to fight. 6. Malcolm's army prepares to attack. 7. The battle begins. Macduff seeks for M. 8. Macduff and M fight; Macduff says he was not born of woman. M is killed. 9. Macduff enters with M's head on a pole. All declare their support for Malcolm, the new King of Scotland.

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**Macbeth:** An impressive warrior, fulfilling the stereotypical role of a man: powerful, brave and strong. He begins the play loyal to his king, but his vicious killing of Macdonwald raises doubts about his virtue (goodness), and he is very quickly attracted to the idea of being king by force. Is this why the witches seek him out – to draw out this evil? He starts as Thane of Glamis, then gets promoted to Thane of Cawdor – the title previously held by a traitor! (Irony. Was the last Cawdor turned by witches too? The position seems cursed! It also adds to the sense of inevitability, suggesting Macbeth will suffer a similar fate to the last one.) Macbeth wrestles in Act I with the idea of murdering Duncan. He is eventually persuaded to. Why? 1. Because the witches planted the idea in his mind. 2. Because his wife pressured him and mocked his lack of masculinity. 3. But also because, deep down, he is overly ambitious and has a ruthless streak. The intense guilt he feels after killing Duncan is good, but Macbeth gets more ruthless with time, becoming a brutal tyrant and hiring murderers to kill his own friend Banquo and Banquo's innocent son, Fleance. (Before he was following Lady M's lead – now he is taking charge, and is increasingly in control.) He also has Macduff's family slaughtered. He rarely seems happy after becoming king, and is troubled by visions of daggers and of Banquo's ghost. He seeks out the witches for guidance – an unwise decision in Shakespeare's time, since witches were seen as evil.

**Lady Macbeth:** ruthless and ambitious at the start, she immediately tries to persuade M to kill D – so that she will be queen! Note that she needs a man to be a success, but her manipulation of her husband, and her dominant role in the decision, was unusual for the time. She calls on evil spirits to take away her femininity, and makes shocking comments to M to prove how she is more a man than he is – playing on his sense of masculinity as a strong warrior. She seems less anxious and guilty than M, although admits she couldn't kill D because he looked like her father – a rare sign of humanity. Does she love her husband? Does he love her? Perhaps – but it is a love based on power. Later, M takes charge over her, as was the expectation, and sets murderers on B and Fleance without fully informing his wife. She seems heartless, but we learn that she has just hidden the guilt

and stress from herself. In Act V, she is seen sleepwalking, trying to wash the blood from her hands (as M had also wanted to do in Act II) – a clear sign that she is more tormented than she seemed. The guilt is too much and she kills herself.

**King Duncan:** a good king, as M admits when feeling unable to murder him (1.7)! Although he isn't weak: he orders the death of the Thane of Cawdor for his treachery. D admires Macbeth and praises him and his wife (dramatic irony!). His passing of kingship to his eldest son, Malcolm, is the normal way – as opposed to M's act of regicide, which disrupts the natural order. The key point is that D and M are contrasted as rulers: D is decent, open and fair; M is ruthless as a leader: a brutal tyrant/ dictator.

**The witches:** They are clearly evil. They look inhuman. They seek out bad weather (Shakespeare uses pathetic fallacy to link nasty weather to the witches). They boast about their evil acts. They talk in riddles and half-truths, clearly seeking to mislead M. They often speak in rhyme and appear to be chanting spells. (To influence M?) Why do they seek out Macbeth? Their celebration of evil ("Fair is foul and foul is fear" is interestingly echoed by M's first lines. (See key quotes, below.)

**Malcolm and Donalbain** (king's son's); **Banquo** (Macbeth's friend) and **Fleance** (his son); **Macduff** (the man Macbeth is told to fear; Macbeth has his family killed; Macduff was born by caesarean section).

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**Power and ambition:** M and Lady M are both overly ambitious. In Lady M this is immediately obvious. With M it's detectable early on, but we sense M fighting it within himself. Unfortunately for him, the witches and his wife manage to draw it out. When ambition is not linked to morals, the play suggests, or when violence is used to achieve one's personal ambitions, the result is cruelty and self-destruction. The play seems to argue that we should honour the natural order of things and 'know our place'. Macbeth was already Thane of Cawdor, and had received a further promotion at the start of the play to Thane of Cawdor. Malcolm was next in line to the throne. Macbeth should have been satisfied with this; he shouldn't have opposed the divine right of kings (context)

**Temptation:** M's over-ambition is brought out by the witches and Lady M. Lady M is forceful and aggressive in pushing him into regicide, playing upon his sense of masculinity. The witches are more subtle, just prophesising that he will be king, then disappearing before he can ask more! The witches' temptation wouldn't have worked if M didn't already desire to be king (one reason why he chose to listen to the witches' predictions, even though he probably knew them to be evil and even though he probably knew deep down they were out to deceive him: in other words, he desperately wanted to believe them!). It is his own inner desire for power, and his inner ruthlessness, that makes their plan to destroy him succeed.

**Guilt:** M's guilt is clear early on: he acknowledges D's goodness as a king and initially fights against killing him. When he kills D, he barely recognises the hands that did it as his own, suggesting he was always torn and hates that side of him which did it. He also says his hands will be forever bloody. When he kills B, the ghost at the banquet also reveals M's guilt. By contrast, Lady M shows little guilt early on, and berates her husband for not being ruthless enough. She calls on evil spirits to make herself less conscientious. In the second half, their feelings partially reverse: M, as a brutal tyrant, seems more miserable but possibly less torn by guilt: he thinks little of slaughtering Macduff's family and is happy to seek out the witches. Lady M, by contrast, is troubled by the guilt to she tries to bury, sleepwalking, seeing her hands as bloody (like M did before), and killing herself.

**Evil:** The witches are clearly evil – and so should be avoided by M! Lady M is evil, and calls on demons to make her even more so. M doesn't start as evil, but he clearly has a ruthless streak. He is led to evil, but is not blameless in killing D. Once king, M becomes more and more evil, in attempt to shore up his power and fight off any threat to his tyrannical rule.

**Types of rulers:** D's rule is fair and kind (he praises and promotes M for his services). He chooses eldest son Malcolm as his heir, which is the natural order of things. People seem happy under his rule – although wars with Norway and Scottish traitors remind us that being king is never easy! M is, by contrast, the ruthless dictator: cruel, power-hungry, mercilessly killing anyone who gets in his way, and prepared to disrupt the divine right of kings. The people are unhappy, and many join with Malcolm and Macduff's army in revolt. Note that tyrants are not shown as happy! In 4.3, Malcolm tells Macduff the qualities of a good king include justice, truth, moderation, stability, generosity, perseverance, mercy, humility, devotion, patience, courage, and bravery.

**Gender:** M begins the play as conforming to the traditional (Jacobean) male values of strength, action, bravery and heroism. His uncertainty about killing D, and his feelings of guilt, are actually good and human qualities. However, to pressure him into regicide, Lady M argues that these feelings he has are unmanly and shameful to a man. She argues that she is more masculine than him, and makes horrendous claims to prove it. (Before their meeting, she asked evil spirits to "unsex" her.) Later, M uses her argument, provoking the murderers he hires to kill B by questioning their manhood. Both he and Lady M seem to equate masculinity with naked aggression, which is crude and reductive. In the scene where Macduff learns of the murders of his wife and child, Malcolm consoles him by encouraging him to take the news in "manly" fashion, by seeking revenge upon Macbeth. Macduff shows the young heir apparent that he has a mistaken understanding of masculinity. To Malcolm's suggestion, "Dispute it like a man," Macduff replies, "I shall do so. But I must also feel it as a man" (4.3). A good leader, too, should have feelings and show kindness, like Duncan. Finally, it is possible to argue that Shakespeare's play is sexist against women. Lady M pushes M into evil (like Eve led Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge?). The evil witches are, of course, female. Women seem to be the main cause of evil in this play! On the other hand, is Shakespeare progressive in showing women can be strong and ambitious? And/or is he sympathetic, arguing that contemporary women could only acquire power by being aggressive and scheming?

**Appearance and reality:** The witches trick M with misleading language. M becomes duplicitous: publicly loyal & confident but private scheming, anxious & guilt-ridden (see his "asides"). Lady M tells him to hide his evil. Malcolm pretends to be corrupt to test Macduff's loyalty (4.3). M compares life to acting (5.5: i.e. the play is illusion!). Malcolm's army uses camouflage.

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**Structure:** the structure shows a steady but dramatic decline of the protagonist. At the start he is loyal, brave and impressive (although there are signs of over-ambition and ruthlessness). Then he is shown as uncertain, guilt-ridden and weak/ less masculine (in the build up to, and immediate aftermath of killing Duncan); however, it could be argued that his plot to kill Duncan is also brave. Later he becomes ruthless and evil, less troubled by guilt, but still unhappy. At the end he is killed –

effectively punished for his sins (note how Macduff putting his head on a pole mirrors M's earlier decapitating of the traitor Macdonwald, as described in 1.2). This structure of M's demise feels inevitable from early on: the last Thane of Cawdor was also caught and killed. The witches' 3 bits of advice to Macbeth in 4.1 (beware Macduff; no one born of woman can harm you; and you're safe until Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane) also give a sense of how the second half of the play will proceed, making Macbeth's downfall seem inevitable. Finally, note how the structure fits the idea of a tragedy (a great man is brought down by a fatal flaw), and how the Christian message of sinners being punished is clearly illustrated by the play's chain of events.

**Witches (1.1)** Fair is foul and foul is fair.

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**Captain (1.2):** For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),  
Disdaining Fortune with his brandished steel  
Which smoked with bloody execution,  
[...] carved out his passage  
Till he faced the slave\* - [...]  
Till he unseamed him from the navel to the chops,  
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

\*[Macdonwald]

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**Macbeth (1.3):** So foul and fair a day I have not seen. *[Compare witches in 1.1!]*

**Macbeth:** Speak, if you can! – What are you?

**Macbeth:** Would they had stayed!

**Macbeth** [to Banquo]: Your children shall be kings./ **Banquo:** You shall be King. *[Why did M avoid saying this?!]*

**Banquo:** to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths... to betray 's in deepest consequence.

**Macbeth:** *[Aside]* This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill – cannot be good. If ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.

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**Macbeth (1.4):** *[Aside]* The Prince of Cumberland!\* – That is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!  
Let not light see my black and deep desires!

\*[Malcolm: just named by D as next in line]

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**Lady Macbeth (1.5):** Yet do I fear thy nature.  
It is too full of the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldn't be great –  
Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it.

**Lady Macbeth:** Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here!  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,  
Stop up th' access and passage to remorse [...]  
Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall you murdering ministers....

**Lady Macbeth:** look like the innocent flower  
But be the serpent under 't.

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**Macbeth (1.7):** We will proceed no further in this business.

**Macbeth:** I dare do all that may become a man –  
Who dares do more is none.

**Lady Macbeth:** What beast was't then



That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man!

**Lady Macbeth:** I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the baby that milks me.  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have dashed the brains out! - had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.

**Macbeth:** If we should fail,-

**Lady Macbeth:** We fail?  
But screw your courage to the sticking place  
And we'll not fail!

**Macbeth:** I am settled - and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show! -  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

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**Macbeth (2.1):** Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

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**Macbeth (2.2):** What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes!  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No - this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

To know my deed, 't were best not know myself.

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**Macbeth (3.2):** O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!

*[Of the planned murder of Banquo and Fleance:]*

There shall be done

A deed of dreadful note.

**Lady Macbeth:** What's to be done?

**Macbeth:** Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
Till thou applaud the deed."

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**Macbeth (3.4):** It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood.

I am in blood

Stepped in so far, that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

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**(4.3) Malcolm** *[to Macduff, grieving at the murder of his family]:* Dispute it like a man.

**Macduff:** I shall do so. / But I must also feel it like a man.

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**Lady Macbeth (5.1 - sleepwalking!)** Out, damned spot!

What, will these hands ne'er be clean?

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**Macbeth** *[5.5 - having learned of his wife's death, and expecting an attack any moment]:*

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time -

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

### **A CHRISTMAS CAROL (Charles Dickens)**

**Context:** Written in 1843 (the Victorian era). Poverty was widespread: the 1840s was known as 'The Hungry Forties.' Social conditions for the poor were often desperate. Working days were long, bleak, poorly paid, and often dangerous; children worked too, although 1843 did see some small improvements (children 13 or younger could "only" work a maximum of 9 hours and could no longer be used as chimney sweeps). Increasing mechanisation in the countryside meant a reduction in the number of agricultural jobs available. People poured into London and other cities, rapidly swelling the urban population. Provisions for basic infrastructure (housing, sewerage, etc.) couldn't keep up. As a result, London was crowded and filthy, with widespread disease, while pollution created thick, cold fogs. Despite this, many people – Scrooge included – resented paying to help support the poor. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was a controversial attempt to control poverty and reduce the financial 'burden' on the state. One key policy was that no able-bodied man would be able to receive financial relief unless he entered a workhouse. Conditions in such places were dreadful – intentionally, many argued, so that the poor would instead choose to fend for themselves. People who couldn't pay their bills were sent to prison with their family, and conditions here too were, predictably, appalling. In 1824, Dickens's father had been imprisoned for debt. Dickens, still a child, was sent to work in a factory, thereby witnessing at first-hand the grim plight of the destitute. His early career as a journalist exposed him to more hardship and injustice. This novella is a clear attempt to expose the plight of the poor, and to challenge the views of a society that *declared* itself to be Christian, but which showed little of the generosity, compassion and equality proposed by Christ.

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**Stave I:** Christmas eve, but cold, foggy, miserable weather – as if reflective of Scrooge's spite and miserable nature (pathetic fallacy/ symbolism). He works in a counting house, but his partner, Marley, has been dead for 7 years. Scrooge still hasn't removed Marley's name from his sign (because he's miserly, but also perhaps because he misses his former companion). Scrooge watches over his poor worker, Bob Cratchit, but refuses to pay him well or allow him to work in warm conditions. Scrooge's happy nephew, Fred, invites Scrooge to Christmas dinner, but he rudely refuses. Next, two gentlemen ask Scrooge for a donation to help the poor. Again, Scrooge rudely refuses, saying the Poor Law already provides for them. The men protest that the current provisions for the poor are dreadful, but Scrooge sends them away. Bob asks for Christmas Day off; Scrooge eventually agrees but is angry and asks Bob to come in extra early on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Scrooge returns home. In a dark and tense sequence, he hears noises and is visited by the ghost of Marley. Marley is tormented because he now sees the error of his ways but can no longer do anything to help the poor. He says that he and ghosts like him are in heavy chains according to the sins they committed in life. (This fits the Christian idea of being punished for sins after your death; see also "Purgatory".) Marley warns Scrooge to make mankind his business, not money. He says Scrooge will be visited by 3 ghosts, starting tonight at 1am.

**Stave II:** The Ghost of Christmas Past arrives. He shows Scrooge himself as a boy unhappy at boarding school, neglected by his peers and by his father. Scrooge had a bond with his sister, Fan, but she died in later life after giving birth to Fred. Scrooge is next shown his former employer, Fezziwig, throwing a generous party for his staff and showing them kindness. Scrooge starts to regret his treatment of Fred and Bob. Finally, Scrooge is shown the moment when Belle, his former fiancé, broke off her engagement with him, accusing him of valuing money more than her. He sees her in married life, happy with children. Her husband says he saw Scrooge that day, lonely. At this point, Scrooge begs to be released from this vision.

**Stave III:** The Ghost of Christmas Past arrives next, in green robes and near a feast of food. He shows Scrooge people busy, cheerful and kind to each other on Christmas morning, and sprinkles happiness on them. Scrooge is next taken to the meagre home of the Cratchits, who are preparing for a modest dinner. The children have been working. Tiny Tim is crippled and seems soon to die, because the family have no money to look after him. The ghost says if he dies he will help reduce the surplus population – quoting Scrooge from earlier. But the kind family try to remain cheerful. Scrooge next sees more celebrations, often involving the poor. Then he is taken to Fred's Christmas party. Scrooge enjoys himself at this social event, though no one can see him. The ghost grows older. He shows Scrooge two desperate and starving children, Want and Ignorance, and says that they are the creation of humankind. Scrooge asks how they can be helped. The ghost mocks him, and quotes his earlier claim: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" The ghost vanishes. A hooded figure approaches.

**Stave IV:** The silent and hidden Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is terrifying to Scrooge. It shows him a group of businessmen discussing the death of a dead man without sympathy. He sees a dingy pawn shop where a group of poor, insensitive people sell the (stolen) articles of a dead man whose body nobody looked after. When Scrooge asks if no one felt emotion at the death of this man, he is shown a poor couple happy because they no longer have to pay such a high debt. Finally he is shown the Cratchit household, where the family struggle to cope with Tiny Tim's death, despite Fred's kind offer of help. Scrooge asks who the neglected, uncared for dead man is. He is shown a grave with his own name. He begs the ghost to be allowed to change and says he has learned his lesson. The ghost disappears, and Scrooge is returned to his room.

**Stave V:** Scrooge is surprised to see he hasn't missed Christmas Day. On a sunny clear day that seems again to be symbolic, Scrooge is shown to be cheerful and benevolent to everyone he meets, wishing them a Happy Christmas. He gives a boy money to send a large turkey to Bob Cratchit. He apologises to the men who asked for charity and gives a large donation. He attends Fred's Christmas party and shocks the guests with his warmth. Next morning, he raises Bob's salary and promises to help his family - which he does, becoming a second father to Tiny Tim.

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**Structure and Allegory:** The novel is divided into five staves (a musical term, fitting the novella's title of a Christmas carol), which clearly chart Scrooge's transformation. The first staff shows him as a sinner. The middle three staves show 3 ghosts – and the three stages of his life (where he was, where he is, where he will be - IF he doesn't change). The final staff shows him as saved. Staff V revisits many characters from Staff I (making the novella partially cyclical) to show just how much Scrooge has changed. Note also the transformation from darkness and negativity in Staff I (fog, gloom, and the repetition of the word "no"), to positivity, happiness and light (a clear sky; and see the first word of Staff V: "Yes!"). Scrooge's transformation is complete. The novella is an allegory: a symbolic story in which each thing represents something else. Scrooge represents the sinner who is led back to God. Each ghost represents something (see below), as, clearly, do the two children called Want and Ignorance! See the following character notes for how other figures symbolically represent larger aspects of society.

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**Scrooge:** Almost a caricature (an unrealistic, simplistic presentation of a person in which characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect) - like a pantomime villain: mean, miserly, antisocial, denying (Dickens associates him with the word "no"), and cold – both metaphorically and physically! His transformation begins with the visit of Marley's ghost and continues throughout the novella. At the end he is the opposite of everything he was at the start. Scrooge symbolically represents the attitude of many selfish, wealthy people in Victorian Britain, and his change shows what such people need to do. An interesting question is why Scrooge is like he is. He seems to have been lonely and let down by people from childhood (e.g. his father and school colleagues); Fan's death was another loss to him, as was the death of Marley – which may be why he never painted over Marley's name (or was that just to avoid spending money?). Arguably, Scrooge turned to wealth and pushed people away to avoid being hurt further. This partially explains his actions, but it doesn't justify them: he had, after all, a kind employer in Fezziwig, but didn't learn from his lesson. However, as much as Scrooge keeps away from people, he is also hurt by loneliness. Scrooge changes quickly – perhaps too quickly for the novella to be fully effective? Or maybe this rapid transformation reminds us that Scrooge was unhappy and secretly desperate to change. In allegorical terms, Scrooge represents greed, apathy, and everything opposed to the Christian spirit of compassion and generosity.

**Fred:** Scrooge's nephew - the son of Scrooge's sister, Fan. Fred is cheerful and generous, despite Scrooge's hostility. He invites Scrooge to his for Christmas dinner, and keeps the offer open even when Scrooge attacks his cheerfulness. However, he also stands up to Scrooge, accusing him of meanness. Fred presents a clear contrast to Scrooge, thereby emphasising just how unpleasant Scrooge is, but also how kind people can be despite poverty. Fred happily welcomes Scrooge back in Staff V.

**Bob Cratchit & family:** These represent, allegorically, the poor of England, who suffer desperately at the hands of such people as Scrooge: ruthless employers, the ignorant, the self-interested, the callous. Bob's son, Tiny Tim, is disabled and seems destined to die, reminding Dickens's readers that social provisions for the frail were woefully inadequate and in urgent need of reform. Bob's daughter, Martha, works to help sustain the family. Despite this, the Cratchits are cheerful despite their poverty, and decent in their forgiveness of Scrooge (although Bob's wife at first refuses to toast him). This depiction allows Dickens to remind his readers that the poor are decent people – more moral than many with wealth and power (note the similarity here to *An Inspector Calls*!). Dickens also clearly wants his readers to sympathise with the Cratchits, and to desire better conditions for such working-class people. The novella has been accused of being sentimental and unrealistic, presenting the Cratchits/ working class as happy, content, and unfailingly kind when in truth their lives would be squalid and miserable. (Consider why he did this...)

**Belle:** Belle symbolises what Scrooge has lost: real love. As she says, she (and love of humanity in general), has been replaced by the love of money.

**Fezziwig:** He symbolises what a manager, and person of authority (including politicians?) should be to his staff (or people he is responsible for): kind and generous. Dickens implies that too few bosses and people of power are like this in his society.

**Jacob Marley:** Marley is a warning to Scrooge of the punishment that awaits if he does not change. He too was materialistic and now suffers the fate of being sensitive to human suffering yet unable to help. Scrooge must learn from his lesson.

**The Ghost of Christmas Past:** This indistinct ghost represents memory. He looks both old and young, representing the stages of a person's life, but also perhaps symbolically representing his function of allowing the older Scrooge to look at his younger self. His glowing head suggests the illuminating power of the mind (memories). The light also links the ghost to God – the Light of the World – while the holly symbolically connects to Jesus's crown of thorns. (See Christian values, below.) The ghost shows Scrooge his descent from childhood into selfishness and misery.

**The Ghost of Christmas Present:** This ghost is the central symbol of the Christmas ideal. Robed and big-hearted, next to a feast of food, he resembles the old image of Santa Claus, and symbolises (with his open robe, revealing his 'heart') generosity, goodwill, and celebration. He is bare-footed and wears a wreath of holly, again linking him with Jesus (and Christian values). He shows Scrooge poverty, but also people trying to remain positive and charitable, especially at this time of year.

**The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come:** A clear representation of death – and the fear of death. He signals to Scrooge that a lonely, miserable death awaits him if he does not change, and also, perhaps, eternal damnation. But even this ghost shows compassion and forgiveness, its hand visibly shaking when Scrooge pleads to allow him to correct his sins.

**The Narrator:** Not to be mistaken for Dickens, the narrator is almost a character in his own right, often sharing his feelings and opinions, including sharp criticism of Scrooge in Staff I ("Oh, but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone..."). The narrator serves to add colour and humour to the story with his opinions; he also serves to direct the reader's response, telling us that

Scrooge is mean, like an audience member shouting “Boo! Hiss!” when the villain appears. (Do his initial condemnations show a lack of understanding, an inability to see *why* Scrooge is like this?)

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**Inequality and the plight of the poor.** Poverty is clear in the description of the Cratchits’ slender feast, and in the conditions of the family, especially Tiny Tim. We are also reminded of the desperate state of the poor by the dreary pawn shop, and the sordid people who ruthlessly sell Scrooge’s remaining possessions (they seem cruel, but poverty and desperation has brutalised them); recall also the two men who appeal for charity. Scrooge’s callous response represents the attitude of many wealthy and upper-class people in Victorian society: he appeals to the provisions offered by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1843 (prisons and workhouses) and argues that the death of the poor will help solve London’s population explosion – which was no doubt the view of others at this time. The novella is angry, political and didactic: Dickens attacks his society for its selfishness and cruel social policies, while seeking to encourage change by shining a spotlight on the sufferings of the poor. The Cratchits may seem more like stereotypes than real people, but by giving them a voice, and by presenting their anguish, Dickens seeks to awaken the conscience of his educated, often financially-comfortable readers. A possible criticism of the book is that the Cratchits are difficult to believe in as real people: too kind, too happy. (See notes on the Cratchits, above.) Does their acceptance of poverty without complaint weaken the political argument of the novella? Shouldn’t they be more clearly miserable and unhappy to show the pressing need for change? Or does their kindness and decency make us support more strongly the need for social reform?

**Christmas and Christian virtues.** If the book has a political aim, it also has a religious aim. The title of the book, and the time of year in which it is set, reminds us of Christ and Christianity. Scrooge turns his back on the alleged Christian virtues of kindness, generosity, forgiveness and rejecting materialism. Again, Scrooge seems symbolic here of many business leaders fattened by a ruthless brand of capitalism. Fred, by contrast, is cheerful, generous and embodies what people (and good Christians) should be. The Ghost of Christmas Present is also an embodiment of this, with his feast suggesting generosity and celebration. Scrooge will come to embrace Christmas, and all that it represents. Note that the religious and the political ideas of the book are related: if people are true to Christian values, Dickens suggests, then society will be more equal and the poor will no longer suffer. As it is, Dickens accuses Victorian British society of betraying the Christian values that it claims to follow. Recall how the novella starts off foggy, but by the end a clear and “Heavenly” sky is revealed: Scrooge is now able to access God and the values promoted by Christ in the New Testament. Note: the novella’s promotion of Christian ideals is not entirely typical of religious texts. Christian texts and sermons can present virtue as rather solemn and austere, turning one’s back on wealth and frivolity. Dickens, by contrast, demonstrates a Christian life as happy, social and celebratory. The novella may offer strong Christian values and have didactic intentions, but it is also playful, entertaining and humorous. In this sense, it might be said to anticipate a more modern appreciation of Christmas – albeit with less emphasis on presents and materialism!

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#### Stave I:

- “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!”
  - “Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire;”
  - “secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.”
  - “The cold within him froze his old features... made his eyes red, his thin lips blue”
  - “External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. [...] Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, “My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?” No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o’clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men’s dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, “No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!” // But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked.
  - “Once upon a time -- of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve...”
  - “It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal.”
  - “the houses opposite were mere phantoms.”
  - “The door of Scrooge’s counting house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters.”
  - Scrooge to Fred: “What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor enough.”
  - Fred: “What reason have you to be morose? You’re rich enough.”
  - Scrooge: “Are there no prisons?” [*The Ghost of Christmas Present quotes him in stave III, along with the next quotation:*]
  - “If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”
  - Marley: “Business! ... mankind was my business!”
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#### Stave II:

- *The Ghost of Christmas Past (some key details are in bold print):* “It was a strange figure -- like **a child**: yet not so like a child as like **an old man**, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child’s proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was **white** as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands

the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the **purest white** and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of **fresh green holly** in its hand; and, in singular **contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers**. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a **bright clear jet of light**, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was **not** its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and **what was light one instant, at another time was dark**, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever."

- [On returning to his old school] "Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?"

- Ghost: "'A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.'"

- Fan: "Father is much kinder than he used to be, that Home's like Heaven!"

- Scrooge on Fezziwig and employers generally: "'He has the power to render us happy or unhappy'".

- Belle: "'Another idol has displaced me.'"

- Scrooge to Belle: "'This is the even-handed dealing of the world [...] There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty.'"

- Belle: "'You fear the world too much.'"

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### Stave III:

- *The Ghost of Christmas Present*: "It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure that **its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice**. Its **feet**, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, **were also bare**; and **on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath**, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as **its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice**, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was **an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it**, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust."

"Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons"

- "a little saucepan"

- "God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim [...].

- Of the Cratchits: "They were not a handsome family; [...] their clothes were scanty [...]. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time".

- "They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread."

- Ghost: "'They are Man's [...]. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware of this boy'".

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### Stave IV:

- "The Phantom, slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery. It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one out-stretched hand...."

- A businessman is told that "'Old Scratch" has died."

'So I am told... Cold, isn't it?'" [*In other words, these businessmen cared nothing for Scrooge.*]

- Old Joe in the pawn shop, handling Scrooge's blankets: "'I hope he didn't die of anything catching?'" [*Again, these people care nothing for Scrooge's death other than what they can make from selling his few possessions: an ironic detail, since Scrooge only cared about money in his life, too!*]

- Scrooge: "'I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.'" [*Christmas here represents Christian values.*]

- Scrooge: "'The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me.'" [*All three ghosts – but also the holy trinity of God the father, the son and the holy ghost.*]

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### Stave V:

- "Yes!" [*The first word of the chapter! Contrast the repeated word "no" in Stave I*]

- "Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!"

- "Golden sunlight: Heavenly sky"... "Oh, glorious! Glorious!"

- Scrooge: "'Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!'"

- "He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good as man, as the good old city knew"

- [*After saying scrooge always kept Christmas well:*] "May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, every one!"

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**OZYMANDIAS** (Themes: *powerful/ arrogant rulers; time/ nature as destroyer; the power of art*)

"whose frown/ And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command"

"Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair./ Nothing beside remains."

"The lone and level sands stretch far away"

CONTEXT: refers to Ramses II; Napoleon was an arrogant military leader at this time; Shelley was a Romantic poet and left wing, arguing for greater equality and democracy.

**LONDON** (Themes: *corruption of government; need for revolution; powerlessness of people in the face of oppression*)

"I wonder through each chartered street, / Near where the chartered Thames does flow"

"How the chimney-sweeper's cry/ Every black'ning church appals,/

And the hapless soldier's sigh/ Runs in blood down palace walls."

"The mind-forged manacles I hear"

CONTEXT: Blake was a Romantic poet, concerned with individual freedom, equality, democracy; he saw London as corrupt, and the government as oppressive; prostitution and STDs were rife; children slaved as chimney sweeps; Blake thought the Church and the monarchy ("palace") did little to help; the French revolution occurred shortly before this poem – Blake wanted something similar to happen in England.

**Extract from THE PRELUDE** (Themes: *the power of nature; the power of conscience; the power of the imagination*)

"Small circles glittering idly in the moon" [nature as beautiful]

"a huge peak, black and huge,/ As if with voluntary power instinct,/ Upreared its head."

"the grim shape/ Towered up between me and the stars" ... "with purpose all its own"

"With trembling oars I turned,/ And through the silent water stole my way."

CONTEXT: part of a long autobiographical poem (The Prelude), in which Wordsworth reflected upon his development as a child into a poet. As a Romantic poet, Wordsworth valued nature and saw it as powerful; he also valued the power of the human imagination – which is clearly evident in this poem.

**MY LAST DUCHESS** (Themes: *powerful/ arrogant men; the power of art; the powerlessness of women*)

"That's my last Duchess painted on the wall"

"This grew; I gave commands;/ Then all smiles stopped together"

"Notice Neptune, though, /Taming a sea-horse"

CONTEXT: The poem is about a real Duke (of Ferrara) in Italy, whose first wife dies at the age of 17 in suspicious circumstances. In Browning's society (Victorian era: rigidly patriarchal), women's sexuality was often regarded as dangerous, and needing to be controlled. Browning was more open-minded. The father of his wife was controlling and opposed to his marriage. The poem is a dramatic monologue: a single speaker, as though talking in a play, who often reveals (without meaning to!) the flaws in their character.

**THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE** (Themes: *the glory and excitement of war; war as a chance for heroism; propaganda*)

"Was there a man dismayed?"

"Theirs not to make reply,/ Theirs not to reason why,/ Theirs but to do or die."

"Into the jaws of Death, / Into the mouth of Hell"

"Flash'd all their sabres bare, / Flash'd as they turn'd in air/ Sabring the gunners there"

CONTEXT: The poem describes a British disaster that took place in the Crimean war due to a miscommunication. As Poet laureate, Tennyson attempts to present this in the best possible light, seeing the war as a heroic defeat.

**EXPOSURE** (Themes: *the powerlessness of men in war; power of nature; the harsh reality of conflict; memories of home*)

"The merciless iced winds that knife us"

"But nothing happens"

"Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army"

"on us the doors are closed"

CONTEXT: Owen fought and died in WWI; unlike Tennyson, he knew first-hand the true horrors of trench warfare. The winter of 1917 was particularly cold. During this, Owen had to lie outside for days to spy on the enemy. He wrote the poem in 1918.

**STORM ON THE ISLAND** (Themes: *power of nature; duality of nature: tame or hostile; political interpretation: civil war*)

"Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate"

"spits like a tame cat/ Turned savage."

"Space is a salvo./ We are bombarded by the empty air."

CONTEXT: Heaney was an Irish poet from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He often wrote about the power of nature. However, this poem can also be seen as a comment on the civil war ravaging Ireland. Stormont (see title!) was a place heavily involved in conflict.

**BAYONET CHARGE** (Themes: *idealistic patriotism vs the terrifying reality of combat; nature as harmed by war*)

"Suddenly he awoke and was running"

"The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye"

"In what cold clockwork of the stars and nations/ Was he the hand pointing that second?"

"King, honour, human dignity, etcetera/ Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm"

CONTEXT: Hughes wrote often about nature and its power: here, nature is a victim. This poem was written early in his career, when he was inspired by Wilfred Owen (see Exposure!). Hughes had no experience of war, but his father fought and nearly died in WW1.

**REMAINS** (*Themes: guilt; memory; reality of war*)

"probably armed, possibly not" (x2!)

"pain itself, the image of agony"

"dug in behind enemy lines"

"his bloody life in my bloody hands"

CONTEXT: This poem comes from a collection of war poetry called "The Not Dead": Armitage interviewed many soldiers about their experiences and turned some of them into poetry. Note the colloquial language. Literary context: see the reference to Macbeth in the last line.

**POPPIES** (*Themes: the powerlessness of those left behind; grieving for loss; Christian symbolism*)

"Sellotape bandaged around my hand,/ I rounded up as many cat hairs as I could"

"All my words/ flattened, rolled, turned into felt"

"On reaching the top of the hill I traced/ the inscriptions on the war memorial"

CONTEXT: Poppies have been associated with war and remembrance since WWI. The word "Armistice Sunday" refers to November 11<sup>th</sup>. Note Biblical reference ("the top of the hill") = Calvary, the hill on which Christ was killed.

**WAR PHOTOGRAPHER** (*Themes: the reality of war – not appreciated by editors and readers; the power of art – or not?!*)

"spools of suffering set out in ordered rows"

"A hundred agonies in black and white/

from which his editor will pick out five or six

for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyeballs prick

with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers"

CONTEXT: "Belfast, Beirut, Phnom Penh" are locations that have been ravaged by war. Duffy knew two war photographers. She sympathises with what they see and do, despite apathy at home.

**TISSUE** (*Themes: the frailty of paper, but also its great power and strength; the same for people – "skin tissue"*)

"Paper that lets the light/ shine through, this/ is what could alter things./

Paper thinned by age or touching."

CONTEXT: Dharker is a Muslim; the reference to the Koran (the sacred text of Islam) is used to make the point of how something so fragile as paper can hold such mighty texts – even the words of Allah.

**THE EMIGREE** (*Themes: memory – its importance for our identity; whether our memories are truthful or distorted; countries affected by war and tyrants; being exiled as a result of conflict; being exiled from our childhood?*)

"There was once a country... I left it as a child

But my memory of it is sunlight clear"

"The worst news of it cannot break

My original view, the bright, filled paperweight."

"It may be at war"

CONTEXT: Many people were forced by war and famine to flee their country in recent history. Rumens herself is English and was not an emigree: the poem is not autobiographical in any simple way. However, this opens up a possible secondary interpretation of the poem as about someone leaving their childhood and trying to reclaim it.

**CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY** (*Themes: one country culturally dominating another; the importance of our country for our identity*)

"Dem tell me/ Dem tell me /Wha dem want to tell me"

"Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat"

"and even when de British said no

she still brave the Russian snow" [Mary Seacole, who nursed in the Crimean war]

"But now I checking out me own history

I carving out me identity"

CONTEXT: Agard is from Guyana and moved to England as an adult. England was a colonial power, that imposed its values on many countries – including in the Caribbean. Agard often writes in his dialect to give a sense of his national identity. Toussaint L'Ouverture was a Haitian revolutionary. Nanny the Maroon was a Jamaican national heroine who fought against slavery. Mary Seacole was a Jamaican nurse in the Crimean war.

**KAMIKAZE** (*Themes: power of nature; power of memory (the pilot's childhood); country/war/patriotism vs the individual; rigid society; guilt*)

"Her father embarked at sunrise/ with a flask of water, a samurai sword"

"the dark shoals of fishes/ flashing silver as their bellies/ swivelled towards the sun"

"till gradually we too learned

*To be silent, to live as though  
He had never returned"*

CONTEXT: Kamikaze refers to a Japanese practice in WW2 where a pilot would fly a plane into a target. To be selected for such a mission was seen as an honour for the pilot and his family. Japanese society at this time was rigid: to go against it was to bring shame upon yourself and your family.