

Eden Rock Charles Causley

Overview of the Poem and Context

Charles Causley grew up in Cornwall. The poet's own father died when Causley was seven and the poem 'Eden Rock' may be about his own parents. In the poem the narrator imagines his parents are young and having a picnic on the banks of a river. The narrator is on the other side and they are beckoning him to join them. This may be a real memory or an impression of his parents inviting him to the afterlife while he is close to death. Eden Rock may be a real place or the biblical Garden of Eden (Paradise).

Key Language Features

The language is often domestic, relating to the potential ordinariness of the scene: 'a sprigged dress', 'tea from a Thermos', 'the tin cups painted blue'. The setting is uncomplicated like childhood memories. The number three is referenced several times: 'The same three plates' and the 'three suns'. This perhaps relates to the family, a group of three reunited. Phrases about light and the colour white may hint at a heavenly setting: the picnic blanket is 'stiff white cloth', 'the sky whitens' and the mother's hair 'takes on the light' like a halo.

Key Structural Features

There is a regular structure within the lines here; it is steady like the steady relationship the narrator has with his parents. The first four stanzas show the narrator's vision of his parents and his loving description of them. In the last stanza and then final single line, it becomes clear that he is separated from them in some way. Having the final line being separated from the rest of the text mirrors this separation or the movement from life to death.

Key Quotations

'old H.P. Sauce bottle', 'takes on the light', 'They are waiting for me', 'Crossing is not as hard as you might think'.

Themes

Family relationships and childhood memories are explored here as is the particularly close bond between parents and child.

Potential Links

The poem explores family relationships like 'Follower' and childhood memories in 'Before You Were Mine'.



Climbing My Grandfather Andrew Waterhouse

Overview of the Poem and Context

Andrew Waterhouse was born in 1958 and died in 2001. He was an English poet, born in Lincolnshire who lectured at an agricultural college as well as writing poetry. This poem is about the narrator's imagined climb up his own grandfather, perhaps a reflection on the way small children 'climb up' onto the shoulders of their relatives. This can also be seen as an extended metaphor for growing up and the help family members give us in shaping us as adults.

Key Language Features

The extended metaphor of a climb means that the language of mountains and exploration is used throughout the poem: 'decide to do it free', 'without a rope or net', 'an easy scramble', 'traverse along his belt', 'the glassy ridge'. The grandfather is described as a mountain to be scaled – there are easy and difficult patches along the way, just as in the change from childhood to adulthood. The description is detailed and truthful about age. The grandfather is 'dusty and cracked' with 'loose skin' and 'screed cheek' but his 'smiling mouth' allows the poet to feel 'Refreshed'. The grandfather is clearly a well-loved figure as the poet feels 'his good heart'.

Key Structural Features

The poem is in first person narration. Although it looks back to the poet's childhood memories, he chose to write in the present tense making the action more immediate and exciting, increasing the sense of this being like an exploration or adventure. The progress of the child up the grandfather's body is just like that of a mountaineer up the mountain. Tension is increased through periods of difficulty in the climb. This reflects the growth of a boy into a man. The poem is solid and dense on the page, again showing the form of the grandfather/mountain.

Key Quotations

'I decide to do it free', 'trying to get a grip', 'glassy ridge of a scar', 'I rest for a while', 'the slow pulse of his good heart'.

Themes

In the poem the love for a parent/grandparent is an integral theme of the poem as is the growth of someone from child into independent adult.

Potential Links

Love for a parent/grandparent is also explored in 'Eden Rock' and 'Follower'. The growth of someone into independence is explored in 'Mother, Any Distance'.



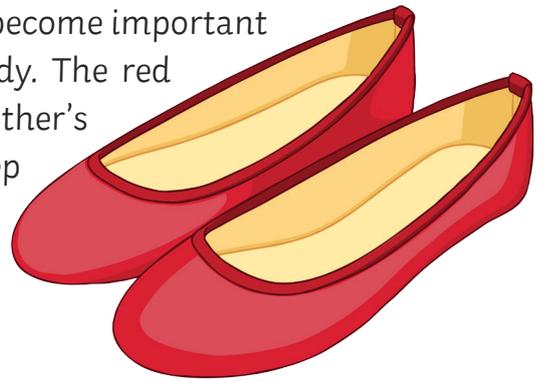
Before You Were Mine Carol Ann Duffy

Overview of the Poem and Context

Carol Ann Duffy was made the Poet Laureate in 2009. She was born in Glasgow in 1955 and explores a variety of themes in her poetry. Here she uses her personal experiences and relationship with her mother in her writing. In the poem, Duffy looks at a picture of her mother from her teenage years. Duffy's mother is imagined as young, happy and fun-loving – this contrasts with her mother's less fun-loving manner after Duffy's own birth.

Key Language Features

The poet reflects on her mother's glamorous past, calling her 'Marilyn' as in Marilyn Monroe. The excitement of the mother's youth is reflected in lines like: 'the fizzy, movie tomorrows' and the memories of her 'sparkle and waltz and laugh'. Duffy refers to herself as a baby with her 'loud, possessive yell' showing that other things become important when a woman has a baby who is 'possessive' and needy. The red shoes are 'relics' once Duffy is born and it is the mother's 'ghost' Duffy sees when looking at the picture, a deep memory of her youth. The title 'Before You Were Mine' occurs in the poem too and shows the possessiveness of the young child over her mother's time and energies.



Key Structural Features

The poem is in first person narration as Duffy speaks directly to her mother. Duffy chooses to speak in the present tense about a memory, making it more vivid to the reader. There are four stanzas of equal length – there is a consistency here, like the steady movement of time. The first two stanzas deal with the time before Duffy's birth while the latter two reflect on the mother's life after Duffy's appearance.

Key Quotations

'Before you were mine', 'the fizzy, movie tomorrows', 'shriek at the pavement', 'my loud, possessive yell'.

Themes

Changing relationships between parents and children are explored as are personal relationships in general.

Potential Links

Changing relationships between parents and children are also looked at in 'Mother, Any Distance', 'Walking Away' and 'Follower'.



Winter Swans Owen Sheers

Overview of the Poem and Context

Owen Sheers was born in Fiji but grew up in Wales. This poem was originally published in 2005 in a collection called *Skirrid Hill*. 'Skirrid' is from a Welsh word meaning separation or divorce. Here a couple walks around a lake. Their relationship is troubled but seeing the way a pair of swans swim together reminds the couple of love and they leave holding hands.



Key Language Features

The poet sets the scene after 'two days of rain' thus using pathetic fallacy to reflect their troubled relationship. The couple are out in the natural world and the language of nature is used throughout. The swans are a metaphor for love and the relationship the couple should have. There is a reminder that 'They mate for life'. The birds are 'in unison' and 'halved themselves' before coming together again. The bird metaphor continues throughout the poem as the couples hands have 'swum the distance' and are 'like a pair of wings settling after flight' by the end of the poem.

Key Structural Features

Like many poems in the collection, this one is in first person and written directly to the other person in the relationship. There is an unevenness to the stanzas in groupings of three, showing the strife of the couple. The final stanza is a couplet, showing their reunion. The swans' appearance and the direct speech of the partner provide a turning point or volta in the poem. After this, the relationship begins to heal.

Key Quotations

'clouds had given their all', 'a show of tipping in unison', 'They mate for life', 'swum the distance between us'.

Themes

Changing relationships between romantic partners and physical and emotional distance is shown in the poem. The natural world is also explored here.

Potential Links

The theme of changing relationships can also be seen in 'Sonnet 29' and 'Neutral Tones'. Nature can also be found as a theme in 'Letters From Yorkshire'.



When We Two Parted Lord Byron

Overview of the Poem and Context

Byron was one of the most famous poets of his generation. He was as famous for his scandalous behaviour as he was for his poetry. Although published in 1816, Byron claimed to have written this poem many years before possibly to protect the woman referred to in the poem. This woman may have been Lady Francis Webster who was married to a friend of Byron's at the time.



Key Language Features

The language of death reminds the reader of the death of the relationship. Byron speaks of 'knells' and how he 'grieves'. The lover is not described in pleasant terms. She is 'pale' and her kiss is 'colder' again reflecting the dead. We are told of the secrecy of the relationship in the 'silence' of the parting and grief while rumours seem to follow the woman now: 'light is thy fame'.

Key Structural Features

The poem is made up of four eight line stanzas and has a consistent rhyme and rhythm. This helps to emphasise some of the words at the end of the lines: 'broken', 'cold', 'shame'. The repetition of 'silence and tears' at the end of the poem shows how the poet has not moved on from the feelings he had in the opening stanza.

Key Quotations

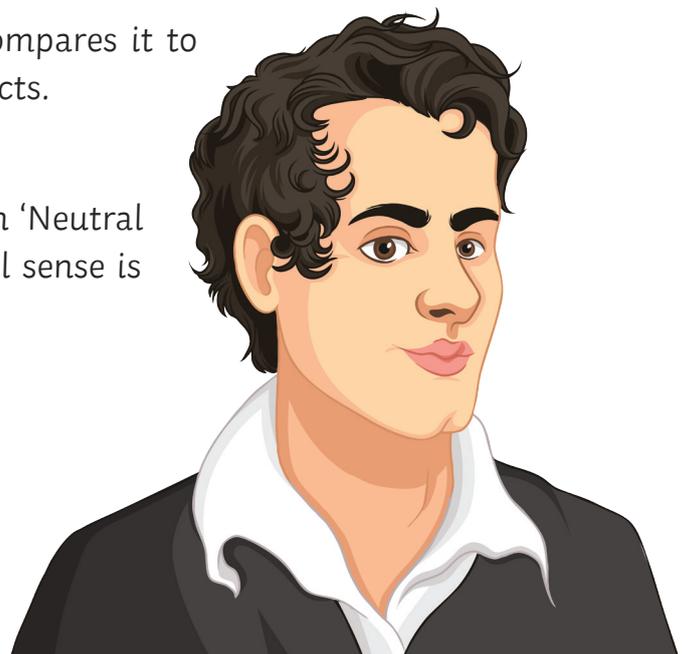
'Half broken-hearted', 'Colder thy kiss', 'light is thy fame', 'A knell to mine ear'.

Themes

The poem deals with feelings of lost love and compares it to death. The poet refers to romantic love after effects.

Potential Links

There is a feeling of distance between people as in 'Neutral Tones' and 'Winter Swans'. Distance in a physical sense is highlighted in 'Sonnet 29'.



The Farmer's Bride Charlotte Mew

Overview of the Poem and Context

Charlotte Mew was a late 19th century poet who had a troubling home life. Several of her relatives committed suicide and Mew suffered from mental illness throughout her life. In the poem, a farmer explains that he married three years ago but that his bride is terrified of men and will not let him near her. The poem reflects deep longing and the frustration of unrequited desire.



Key Language Features

The poem is written with a pastoral dialect, giving us an insight into the life of the farmer. The words 'I chose a maid' show that the woman had little choice over her marriage and this perhaps explains her feelings later. The bride is described in terms of animals. She is hunted 'like a hare' and found to be 'shy as a leveret' and 'like a mouse'. The farmer's loneliness is highlighted by the 'one leaf in the still air' and winter reminds us of the death of his hopes for a family: 'black earth spread white with rime'.

Key Structural Features

The poem is a dramatic monologue with a strong rhythm coming from the use of iambic tetrameter. The voice we hear is that of the farmer, his bride is mentioned but we, like he, 'hardly heard her speak at all'. The narrative progresses through their marriage to the present when, as Christmas approaches, the farmer feels the need for a family all the more. The frantic repetition of 'her hair' and the extended use of exclamations at the end of the poem echoes his loss of control.

Key Quotations

'I chose a maid', 'more's to do at harvest-time', 'Like the shut of a winter's day', 'We chased her', 'Oh! My God! the down'.

Themes

The farmer feels desire for his bride and, in some ways wishes to control her. Emotional distance is also dealt with here.

Potential Links

Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' deals with control over a lover. Emotional distance from a lover is also seen in 'Neutral Tones' and 'Winter Swans'.



Walking Away Cecil Day Lewis

Overview of the Poem and Context

Cecil Day Lewis was an Irish poet who was Poet Laureate from 1968 until his death in 1972. This poem was dedicated to his first son, Sean, and reflects on the deep love a parent feels for their child. Day Lewis remembers watching his son playing sports and being worried about parting from him, possibly as he left him at boarding school.

Key Language Features

We see Day Lewis using the imagery from nature to remind himself that parting from his son is natural. He sees his son as a 'half-fledged thing' left in a 'wilderness'. He also calls him a 'satellite/Wrenched from its orbit' early in the poem. This shows the poet's fear for his son in the 'wilderness'. Later the similes for his son are more positive. He is 'like a winged seed', something moving away with purpose.; the image of the wings giving some element of control. The leaving of his son is painful and there is much use of the language of pain: 'wrenched', 'scorching/Ordeals' and the parting 'Gnaws' at his mind.

Key Structural Features

First person narrative in which the narrator speaks directly to his son. This makes us feel the connection between father and son more closely. Although there is a regular ABACA rhyme scheme giving solidity and purpose to the poem, there is also extensive use of enjambment and caesura, creating a flow more like natural speech patterns. The final two stanzas reflect on the memory from the first two.

Key Quotations

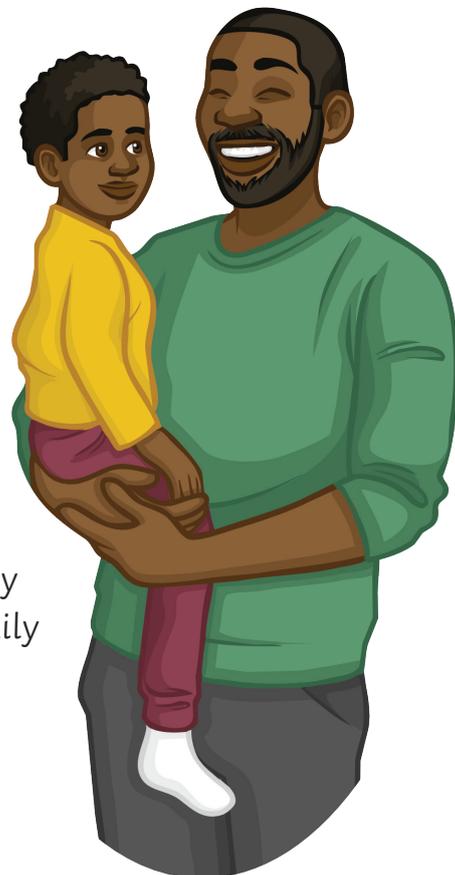
'the leaves just turning', 'like a satellite/Wrenched from its orbit', 'finds no path where the path should be', 'How selfhood begins with a walking away'.

Themes

Memories and family relationships are dealt with in the poem. The strong relationship between parents and children, in particular, is found here.

Potential Links

Memories are also shown in 'Eden Rock' while 'Climbing My Grandfather' and 'Mother, Any Distance' reflect on family relationships.



Sonnet 29 – ‘I think of thee!’ Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Overview of the Poem and Context

Barrett Browning wrote the sonnets that form *Sonnets from the Portuguese* in 1845-46. She had fallen in love with the younger poet, Robert Browning but her family did not approve of the match. The couple had a lengthy engagement before marrying and leaving Britain to live in Italy. The poems were very personal but Browning felt they were good enough for publication. Barrett Browning would only allow their publication however if they were published as translations from someone else's work rather than as her own poems. In this poem Barrett Browning considers how her thoughts about her fiancé differ from the reality of being with him.



Key Language Features

An extended metaphor features throughout the poem. Browning is a ‘palm-tree’ and the poet's thoughts are ‘wild vines’ twining around it. She requests that her lover ‘renew thy presence’ and become a permanent presence in her life, rather than being a memory. Exclamation marks show that the poet is joyous when thinking about her lover.

Key Structural Features

Like many traditional love poems, this poem is in Petrarchan sonnet form. The resolution to the poem arrives early, in the middle of line 7 and can be seen as an example of the poet's impatience to see Browning. The first phrase ‘I think of thee’ is opposed in the final line: ‘I do not think of thee’. Barrett Browning no longer needs to think of her lover, he is there with her and his physical presence is more wonderful than her thoughts.

Key Quotations

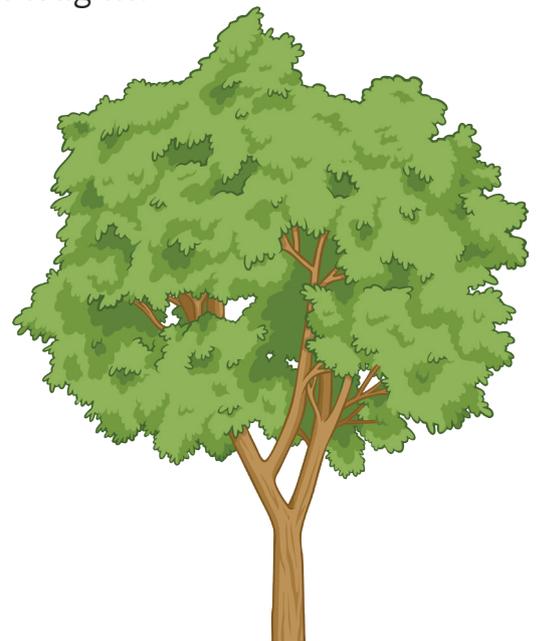
‘I think of thee!’, ‘as wild vines, about a tree’, ‘Renew thy presence’.

Themes

The poem represents longing for a distant lover and the fulfilment possible in romantic love.

Potential Links

The theme of romantic love as fulfilling is also found in ‘Sing Song!’ and ‘Love's Philosophy’.



Singh Song! Daljit Nagra

Overview of the Poem and Context

Daljit Nagra is an English poet of Punjabi descent. Since his parents emigrated from India, Nagra is influenced heavily by the immigrant experience and he often writes in 'Punglish', his play on the way Indian immigrants speak English. In this poem the young narrator talks about the shop he runs for his father. The young man is less successful in business than his father, but enjoys the company of his young bride who seems to be a rebellious woman, openly making fun of her in-laws.



Key Language Features

The strong dialect of the Indian English speaker is used in a comic way here. The shopkeeper is still under his 'daddy's' control but is rebellious as is his new wife. While the poem explores the everyday, Nagra attempts to make the love his narrator feels seem romantic. In the 'midnight hour' the couple go down the 'whispering stairs' and sit on the 'silver stool' at the shop counter. This makes the shop appear exotic and other-worldly for a time, perhaps reflecting how his love for his bride makes him feel more than a shopkeeper.

Key Structural Features

The poem is partially a monologue by the shopkeeper, although other voices interject. He is carefree and so is the poem's structure and form. The voices of the shopkeeper, wife and customers interject the narration showing a busy and loud community. There is almost a chorus in the lines of the customers, as the phrase 'Hey Singh, ver yoo bin?' is repeated. The first half of the poem refers to the daily life in the shop and his bride's little rebellions but the later part of the poem becomes more romantic, reflecting on the love the pair share when alone.

Key Quotations

'all di colours of Punjabi', 'tiny eyes ov a gun', 'a Tartan sari', 'di tickle ov my bride', 'silver stool', 'di brightey moon'.

Themes

The poem concentrates on both loving relationships between men and women and also rebellious relationships with parents.

Potential Links

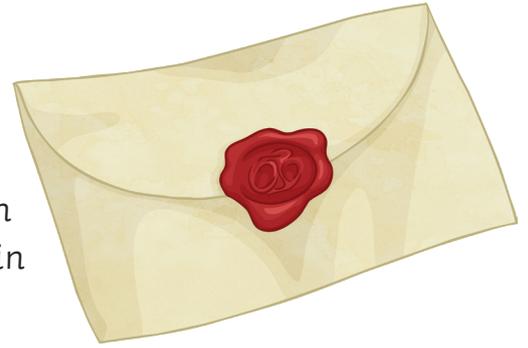
Romantic relationships are seen in 'When We Two Parted', 'Winter Swans', or 'Sonnet 29'. Relationships with parents could compare well with 'Follower' or 'Mother, Any Distance'.



Letters From Yorkshire Maura Dooley

Overview of the Poem and Context

Maura Dooley is a modern British poet from Cornwall. She lived in Yorkshire for a number of years before moving to London and knows many people there. This poem, published in 2002, comments on the differences between her life in London and that of the writer of the letter, a man working in his garden in Yorkshire.



Key Language Features

Dooley attempts to show the contrasts between her London life and his through the active verbs used to describe his life. He is 'digging', 'planting', 'breaking ice', 'clearing a path' while she is 'feeding words onto a blank screen'. His life seems more real and vital than hers, his activities more useful than her giving words to a computer (a 'blank screen' indicating that it gives little back). His letter brings 'air and light', perhaps because it includes things she feels she is missing in London. She is careful however not to over-romanticise his life. She recognises that he might not see his life as she does: 'You wouldn't say so'. It is their 'souls' that 'tap out messages'. This shows a strong and meaningful connection between the friends.

Key Structural Features

The poet writes in free verse so that it sounds like a letter or phone conversation. She begins writing about the man: 'he saw' and then switches to writing directly to him: 'You out there'. While most of the poem shows their differences, their similarities and deep connection is shown in the final two stanzas, particularly the final two lines as they watch 'the same news in different houses'.

Key Quotations

'his knuckles singing', 'It's not romance', 'heartful of headlines', 'feeding words onto a blank screen', 'pouring air and light into an envelope'.

Themes

The distance in some relationships are found in this poem while a deep connection to nature is also referenced here.

Potential Links

The poem looks at distance in relationships, like 'Sonnet 29'. It also looks at a connection to nature like 'Follower'.



Love's Philosophy Percy Bysshe Shelley

Overview of the Poem and Context

The poet was part of the Romantic movement. This movement put emphasis on showing the truth of emotion and the beauty of nature. The poem shows Shelley trying to persuade a woman to be with him. He talks about how everything in nature is connected in a loving way and how she should therefore be with him.



Key Language Features

Throughout the poem, personification is used to show aspects of nature receiving and giving love: 'the fountains mingle', 'the mountains kiss high heaven', 'moonbeams kiss the sea'. Using the words 'by a law divine' shows us that Shelley believes love is a religious experience. The language represents the physical love he wishes to experience with the woman: 'clasps', 'kiss', 'mingle'.

Key Structural Features

The poem is structured to be persuasive. The poet speaks directly to the woman of his dreams and uses rhetorical questions at the end of each stanza after a hyphen. This creates a suitably dramatic pause. The poem is deceptively simple in construction to show how simple Shelley imagines love should be.

Key Quotations

'Nothing in the world is single', 'All things by a law divine', 'sunlight clasps the earth', 'Why not I with thine?'

Themes

The poem deals with feelings of longing and frustration about a romantic relationship.

Potential Links

These feelings are also explored in the poems 'Sonnet 29', 'Porphyria's Lover', and 'The Farmer's Bride'.



Porphyria's Lover Robert Browning

Overview of the Poem and Context

'Porphyria's Lover' is one of Robert Browning's poems in dramatic monologue form. It was published in 1836 and deals with a young man who finally learns that the woman he loves cares for him. He is clearly mentally unstable and chooses to kill her while she still feels that way about him. Porphyria is a disease that can cause great pain and occasionally madness.

Key Language Features

The narrator uses pathetic fallacy to create a threatening atmosphere at the beginning of the poem. He then uses domestic language to describe how Porphyria makes him feel. 'She shut the cold out' and made 'all the cottage warm'. Juxtaposition is used to show the contrast of love and destruction: 'burning kiss' and 'heart fit to break'. After the killing he is unsure about her, opening the eye carefully 'As a shut bud that holds a bee'.

Key Structural Features

The poem is a first person narrative (dramatic monologue). The rhyme scheme is asymmetrical and the heavy use of enjambment shows the narrators' lack of stability. While the poem seems to be told in chronological order, it becomes clear at the end that Porphyria has been dead throughout the narration. For the first half of the poem, Porphyria is the active participant in the drama while the narrator does little. The narrator then becomes the active one, killing Porphyria.

Key Quotations

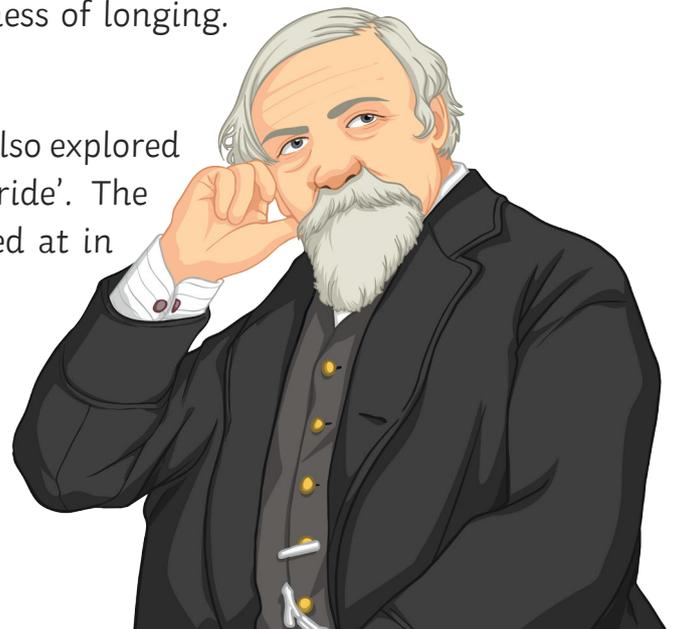
'glided in Porphyria', 'made the cheerless grate/Blaze up', 'I found/A thing to do', 'As a shut bud that holds a bee', 'And yet God has not said a word'.

Themes

The power of humans, pride and the destructiveness of longing.

Potential Links

The feelings of love and obsessive attachment are also explored in the poems 'Sonnet 29' and 'The Farmer's Bride'. The end of a relationship in a far less violent is looked at in 'Neutral Tones'.



Neutral Tones Thomas Hardy

Overview of the Poem and Context

The poem was written in 1867 but published years later in 1898. Thomas Hardy was a Dorset born poet who struggled with an unhappy marriage for many years. In this poem, the narrator speaks of a memory of a winter's day when he and his lover stood by a pond. It is clear that the relationship was on shaky ground and, in the last stanza, it becomes clear that the narrator learned bleak lessons about love from the event.



Key Language Features

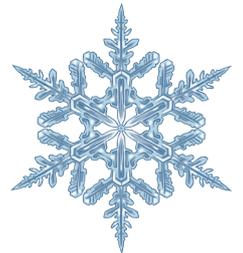
The title 'Neutral Tones' implies a lack of deeper feelings – everything is neutral. This is enhanced by the 'grey' nature of the environment. It is winter, reflecting the coldness of the couple towards one another. Even the 'sun was white' as though bleached of colour, life and warmth. This is reflected in the lover's smile, described as the 'deadest thing'. The poet still has strong emotions of anger. The pain and bitterness he sometimes feels about love is clear from phrases like 'wringing with wrong' and 'God-curst' and 'chidden of God'.

Key Structural Features

The poet addresses his former lover. The poem begins and ends with the image by the pond but, while the first three stanzas discuss a specific event, the final stanza deals with his feelings in the years since the experience by the pond. This makes the poem a more general poem about negative experiences of love.

Key Quotations

'chidden of God', 'eyes that rove/Over tedious riddles', 'the deadest thing/Alive enough to have strength to die', 'love deceives'.



Themes

The poem represents troubled romantic relationships. It refers to memories from the past.

Potential Links

The theme of romantic love's end is also found in 'When We Two Parted' and the idea of troubled relationships is found in 'Winter Swans'. Memories are also explored in 'Follower', 'Eden Rock' and 'Walking Away'.



Follower Seamus Heaney

Overview of the Poem and Context

Seamus Heaney was a Northern Irish poet. He grew up in a farming community and in the poem, 'Follower' he looks back at his life and that of his own father. He reflects on how he originally wanted to be a farmer and considers the way the child goes from being cared for to being the carer: the 'follower' to the followed.

Key Language Features

The poet is reflecting on his father's physical prowess and the hard grind of farm life. He uses strong verbs to show the power of the horses and his father: 'the horses strained' while the father's 'shoulders globed'. The father is shown reverence by the son: he is 'An expert'. Specific language of ploughing is used to reflect the value of the father's life's work: 'without breaking/At the headrig', 'Mapping the furrow'. The father walks with a 'plod' like the horses and is a powerful figure with a 'broad shadow'. The words 'tripping, falling/Yapping' show the poet as a 'nuisance' when young, like a young puppy. Later the father 'will not go away', either showing that the father is now a nuisance or is an overwhelming, ever-present entity in a son's life.



Key Structural Features

First person narrative helps us to feel the poet's reverence for his father. There is a neat structure and a steady rhythm which relates to the steady act of ploughing the fields. The opening of the poem is about the father with descriptions of his strength. Later, the poet reflects on his own desires as a child and then considers how he has become the carer for his father now who 'will not go away'.

Key Quotations

'shoulders globed like a full sail strung', 'An expert', 'Mapping the furrow exactly', 'I was a nuisance'.

Themes

The poem deals with childhood memories and the change in familial relationships over time.

Potential Links

Childhood memories are also seen in 'Eden Rock' and 'Climbing My Grandfather'. In 'Before You Were Mine' the change in relationships is explored.

