

Cluster 1

Character and Voice

The poems in this cluster share a focus on people – as individuals in some cases and in others as character types used to comment on aspects of the human condition.

Sometimes, as in 'The Clown Punk' or 'The Hunchback in the Park', we are invited to observe a character from an outside perspective. Other poems use the first person or dramatic monologue to offer a direct insight into a character, for example 'Medusa' or 'Casehistory: Alison (head injury)'.

Some poets use form and structure to communicate a 'voice' – often in surprising and illuminating ways, as in 'My Last Duchess' or 'Checking Out Me History'.

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

- Is there one specific **character**, or is the poet focusing on a 'character type'? What is the poet using this character for – do they represent something about human nature in general?
- Whose is the **voice**? Is there a clear persona or is the poet speaking directly to the reader? Crucially, **how** is this voice created? What **techniques** does the poet use?
- What is the **effect** of the **voice** – does it create **irony** / **empathy** / **pathos**?
- Consider **perspective**: from whose point of view is this poem written? Is it **first person**, **second person** or **third person** address? To whom is the poem delivered? In dramatic monologues there is often a specific 'audience', for example. Is the poem set in the moment or is it more reflective?
- Why has the poet written this poem? What **feelings**, **attitudes** and/or **ideas** is the poet considering through their presentation of this character?
- How does the poet communicate their ideas? What aspects of **language**, **structure** and/or **form** are particularly significant in this poem? What **literary techniques** is the poet using to achieve their effects?

The Clown Punk

Simon Armitage

Background and Context

'The Clown Punk' comes from the collection *Tyrannosaurus Rex Versus the Corduroy Kid* (2006), which deals with themes of conflict between different 'types' or 'groups' of people. This poem is based on a real character and a real event: Armitage has described how this heavily-tattooed figure once leaned towards his car when he was stopped at traffic lights. Figures from the 'high punk' era of the late 1970s presented an aggressive, nihilistic attitude towards the establishment in their music as well as their striking physical image. Armitage explores this image in 'The Clown Punk', examining the reaction the punk wishes members of the establishment to have towards his appearance, and combating this with his own ironic view.

See page 268 for more on the punk movement

See page 42 for more on Simon Armitage

The Clown Punk

Driving home through the shonky side of town,
three times out of ten you'll see the town clown,
like a basket of washing that got up
and walked, towing a dog on a rope. But
don't laugh: every pixel of that man's skin
is shot through with indelible ink;
as he steps out at the traffic lights,
think what he'll look like in thirty years' time –
the deflated face and shrunken scalp
still daubed with the sad tattoos of high punk.
You kids in the back seat who wince and scream
when he slathers his daft mush on the windscreen,
remember the clown punk with his dyed brain,
then picture windscreen wipers, and let it rain.

Juxtaposition of types: a 'clown' is deliberately ridiculous and silly, whereas a punk wishes to be seen as a dangerous rebel

Simile is used to mock – makes him sound undignified, ridiculous

Stereotypical image creates more pathos than threat

Enjambment draws attention to the expected reaction, negating the automatic reaction of fear completely

Verb suggests a poorly executed painting

Use of imperative verb 'picture' highlights the power of the imagination: that children can create images of their own to combat their fear

Full rhyme and repetition of 'town' draws attention to key idea as well as creating a humorous tone

Word structurally highlighted to draw attention to the change of direction from ridicule to pathos

He is 'image' only

Play on word 'sad' creates both pathos and criticism: he is pathetic as well as tragic

Colloquial, informal language to provoke laughter rather than fear and lighten the tone in order to reassure the children whom the poem addresses

Imperatives instruct children how to wash away his image

GLOSSARY

shonky – dilapidated, run down

Themes and Ideas (A01)

In this poem the 'voice' is the poet's own. The 'character' is the punk, a local figure in Armitage's home town. The register is relaxed and informal, presenting the event and the feelings it provokes through colloquialisms and everyday language.

The punk movement was arguably one of the most significant periods in modern musical culture, strongly linked to rebellion against the established middle-class culture of the 1970s. The punk of this poem appears to conform to expectation in terms of his behaviour: he 'slathers his daft mush on the windscreen' presumably with the intention to shock and frighten. He is an outsider – not only to the car but also to established society.

Yet the title of the poem brings together two equally visually striking figures: the clown and the punk. Armitage uses a simile to suggest that the punk is a figure to be subtly mocked ('like a basket of washing that got up and walked'). He assumes that we will immediately laugh and, instead, describes a rather pathetic image of the man as he ages, looking ridiculous with his 'deflated face and shrunken scalp'. He seems to be suggesting that we ought to pity rather than mock him, although there is a more subtle sense that both these reactions are being fostered as a way of combating the children's immediate sense of fear – the reaction that of course the punk wants us to have. The reference to 'dyed brain' suggests that the man's choice of visual persona goes much deeper than the surface image. There is pathos in the fact that the image the punk has chosen to display to the world is indelible and therefore impossible to change. The final couplet possibly offers some redemption to the punk himself – as if his persona can be wiped away.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *The semantic field of image creation*, created by 'pixel', 'ink', 'daubed', 'dyed' and 'picture', perhaps suggests that this figure is more 'image' than 'reality' – his 'image', which is a fundamental aspect of the persona he presents to the outside world, is in reality nothing more substantial than a 'picture'. It is a creation.
- *Second person address* towards a general audience at first, although towards the end of the poem Armitage speaks directly to the children who are frightened of this character. His ironic mockery of the punk's attempt to shock is possibly designed to combat their fear, thereby diminishing the punk's power. The use of *imperatives* in the final couplet guides the reader's reaction as well as the children in the back of the car.
- *Form and structure*: Armitage plays subtly with this, creating some sound patterns with assonance and consonance ('skin/ink' and 'scalp/punk'). The only full rhymes are at the very start and end of the poem ('town/clown' and 'brain/rain'). These rhymes encapsulate the vignette being described, containing it within a specific moment in time.

Targeting C

How does Armitage want the reader to feel about the clown? Students could consider whether he wants us to pity or mock him.

Targeting A/A*

How does Armitage subtly convey to the reader his attitudes to the clown punk? Ask students to consider use of irony and subtext.

Compares with...

'Give' and 'The Hunchback in the Park' – outsiders

'On a Portrait of a Deaf Man' and 'The Hunchback in the Park' – perspective and point of view
'Medusa', 'The River God' and 'Ozymandias' – powerful characters

Checking Out Me History

John Agard

Background and Context

John Agard (1949–) was born in Guyana and moved to the UK in 1977. His mixed-race heritage provides thematic material for much of his work: issues of cultural identity, political voice and patriotism are subjects he writes about with passion. In 'Checking Out Me History', published in 2007, he employs the Caribbean Creole often used in his performance poetry to present the voice of a young black man angered and disenfranchised by the lack of relevant cultural history in his education. The character, although a persona, resonates with Agard's personal feelings.

Exploring the Poem

GLOSSARY

Toussaint L'Ouverture – leader of the Haitian Revolution of 1797

Nanny the Maroon – leader of the Jamaican Maroons, runaway slaves in the 18th century who resisted British forces

Caribs – ethnic group descended from African slaves and Amerindians, they resisted but were eventually displaced from the Caribbean by European forces in the 19th century

Arawaks – West Indian people, treated so harshly by the Spanish in the 15th and 16th centuries that the entire population of 60,000 was wiped out

Shaka the Zulu – most famous, influential Zulu leader and warrior

Mary Seacole – Jamaican heroine of Crimean War, she paid her own way to the Crimea where she fed, nursed and cared for injured British soldiers

Stanza 1

1 introduces refrain 'Dem tell me' which implies passivity, being lectured by an authority figure

Stanza 2

4–5 refer to attempts by authority figures to blind the persona to his own history and identity

Stanza 3

6 refers to a date from white British history
7 mention of a children's story (based on fact) suggesting the equal irrelevance of both to his cultural identity

Stanza 4

10–21 italicised story of Toussaint L'Ouverture stresses its relevance
18 metaphor suggests danger and threat
20 'beacon' suggests symbol, light, danger, guide

Stanza 5

22–25 increasingly fictional quality to the 'history'

Stanza 6

26–31 metaphors to describe power, illumination and strength

Stanza 7

32–35 contrast of figures from white European and black history

Stanza 9

40–49 story of Mary Seacole narrated with lyrical elegance, again with metaphors linked to light ('healing star', 'yellow sunrise')

Stanza 10

52–53 change of tone marked with 'but now' to suggest taking control, and contrast between past (history) and present.
53 use of 'identity' as the final word focuses the reader clearly on the theme of the poem

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The opening phrase, 'Dem tell me', becomes a repeated refrain. The 'dem' is an unspecified authoritarian voice – parent, teacher, political body – who, through omission, 'blinds' the speaker to any wider perspective on political or cultural history (specifically, black African and Caribbean). Agard fuses British history with fairy tale and nursery rhyme, suggesting they have equal cultural insignificance to him and implying that our sense of cultural identity starts being formed at a very young age.

Tales of black cultural and political figures are italicised, emphasising their importance as well as their separateness from the accepted view of history taught by the British. The tone of these passages is markedly different also: they have a lyrical, poetic quality and include figurative language perhaps suggesting that the figures have a far greater significance to Agard's view of his cultural heritage. Whereas the rest of the poem is delivered in a sing-song style with repeated refrains and matter-of-fact language, these passages have a dreamlike tone, using imagery of light and fire to connect the figures linguistically as well as thematically.

Agard chooses figures who exemplify struggle, rebellion and power, demonstrating his desire to assert the voice of black culture. He highlights the dilemma faced by those who have no power to further their political or social cause, and therefore have no choice but to rebel. In the last two lines, he joins this rebellion with the powerful shift from 'Dem tell me' to 'But now I'. The poem does not end with a full stop, indicating that his journey is not over.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Imagery, particularly metaphorical language*, unites Toussaint L'Ouverture, Nanny the Maroon and Mary Seacole. Toussaint is described as a 'beacon', Nanny as a 'fire-woman', Seacole as 'healing star' and 'yellow sunrise'. These images suggest power, vision and leadership.
- *Rhyme* is used for specific effect within a free-verse poem, drawing attention to particular ideas, images and feelings. In lines 40–45 the full rhymes of go/no/snow highlight Mary Seacole's defiant attitude, foreshadowing Agard's own defiance in the final stanza.
- Agard also plays with *rhythm*. Using a refrain creates a mounting accusatory tone with 'dem tell me'. The 'story' of Toussaint L'Ouverture is delivered as a chant, as if Agard is orally offering his support to the revolution.
- *The overall lack of punctuation* as well as the use of Creole represents a refusal to follow standard English and an assertion of pride in the poet's own language and heritage.

Targeting C

Is there a difference in the type and form of language used to present the white figures and the black figures? Students could identify and comment on what Agard seems to be suggesting about his different attitudes towards them from the language he uses to present them.

Targeting A/A*

How might Agard's use of rhythm and repetition link to the idea of indoctrination? Students could explore the links between the tone of the poem and the way ideas are presented.

Compares with...

'Singh Song' – language and cultural identity

'Casehistory: Alison' and 'On a Portrait of a Deaf Man' – sense of identity

Horse Whisperer

Andrew Forster

Background and Context

Andrew Forster (1964–) is a Yorkshire-born poet and writer whose first collection, *Fear of Thunder* (2007), was greeted with acclaim. His poetry is often described as ‘sensory’ and ‘narrative’ in style. Horse whisperers were very important in the days before machinery, when farmers relied a great deal on horses. Their ability to communicate with horses, and calm them down, gave them an almost supernatural aura. In his poem, Forster uses the ‘voice’ of one horse whisperer to speak for a wider group whose skills with horse-taming were later rejected by a changing society.

See page 267 for more about horse whisperers

This poem explores ideas of superstition and belief, and the power of natural forces. Forster suggests that the rejection of one tradition is symptomatic of humanity’s tendency to discard established customs in the name of progress; to turn admiration and awe into distrust and even violent rejection.

Horse Whisperer

<i>Anonymous ‘they’ suggests a large group – possibly rural/farming community</i>	They shouted for me when their horses snorted, when restless hooves traced circles in the earth and shimmering muscles refused the plough.	<i>At first he is desperately needed</i>
<i>Evokes the senses in the reader – using smell to tame/communicate with the horse</i>	My secret was a spongy tissue, pulled bloody from the mouth of a just-born foal, scented with rosemary, cinnamon, a charm to draw the tender giants to my hands.	<i>Refusal to be tamed</i>
<i>Horses perceived as dignified and majestic</i>	They shouted for me when their horses reared at the burning straw and eyes revolved in stately heads. I would pull a frog’s wishbone, tainted by meat, from a pouch, a new fear to fight the fear of fire, so I could lead the horses, like helpless children, to safety.	<i>Repetition to reinforce the message that the need was all on one side</i> <i>A reference to ‘The Toadmen’ who used bones of toads as charms to tame horses</i>
<i>He has made a pact – identifying with an established group</i>	I swore I would protect this legacy of whispers but the tractor came over the fields like a warning. I was the life-blood no longer. From pulpits	<i>Secrets of his trade</i> <i>Symbol of modern technology/mechanisation</i> <i>Condemned by religion</i>
<i>Enjambment emphasises the change in attitude – how he is looked down on, cast out</i>	I was scorned as demon and witch. Pitchforks drove me from villages and farms. My gifts were the tools of revenge. A foul hex above a stable door so a trusted stallion could be ridden no more. Then I joined the stampede, with others of my kind, to countries far from our trade.	<i>Suggests medieval superstition</i> <i>Identifying with the horses</i> <i>Suggests power, strength, speed and ultimately being part of a group</i>

A visually intense description of power and strength

Repetition of pride – embodied in the horses, but possibly also in himself and his 'trade'

Still I miss them. Shire, Clydesdale, Suffolk.

The searing breath, glistening veins,

steady tread and the pride,

most of all the pride.

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The ancient tradition of horse whispering has its roots in folklore and superstition. Often surrounded with Masonic-like secrecy (a 'legacy of whispers'), the skill of the horse whisperer was far more to do with body language and empathy than 'charms' and 'hexes'. Forster is possibly using the changing perception of horse whispering to exemplify the human tendency to discard and scorn 'outmoded' ideas when they are no longer needed. The persona or 'voice' here remains the same, although attitudes towards him alter fundamentally through no fault of his own.

Initially, humans needed the skill of the horse whisperer to help them tame the majesty of the horse – often portrayed as a mystical animal. The tools of his trade are merely props which at first give his art a sense of mystique and ritual but then become a focus for superstitious fear, which coincides with the replacement of the horse by 'the tractor'. The horse whisperer clearly identifies with the forces of nature; when the traditional customs he embodies are rejected, he at first wreaks 'revenge' on those who turned against him before joining 'the stampede' away from distrust and antipathy. Forster evokes a powerful sense of awe for the horses through the language used to describe them, ending the poem with the repetition of 'pride', not only the horse's pride, but also the lost pride he once took in the role.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Vocabulary / lexis is used to exemplify tension between beauty and danger.* Respect and admiration for the power and beauty of nature ('shimmering', 'stately', 'glistening', 'steady', 'trusted') contrasts with negative language ('shouted', 'restless', 'bloody', 'demon', 'burning', 'revenge'). The contrast suggests a tension between fear/awe and need/admiration.
- *The use of free verse* reflects the shifting and changing perceptions of human nature. Enjambment emphasises key ideas: 'I was the life-blood / no longer', 'so a trusted stallion could be ridden / no more.' The free verse also intensifies the effect of repeating 'the pride' in the final two lines, creating a pattern within an otherwise free-flowing form in order to intensify the message it contains.
- *Senses are evoked* through descriptions of sound and smell as well as sight. The powerful use of alliteration in the first stanza creates the 'whispering' which resonates throughout the poem: 'shouted/snorted/restless/traced/circles/shimmering/secret/scented'.

Targeting C

How does Forster use language to demonstrate his admiration for the horses? Students may find it useful to identify all the words and phrases used to describe the horses in the poem.

Targeting A/A*

How is the theme of 'old versus new' exemplified through the contrasting language in the poem? Ask students to consider the ways in which the persona's attitude towards those who discard established traditions is demonstrated.

Compares with...

'Medusa' and 'The River God' – malevolent or vengeful power

'The Hunchback in the Park' – isolation and loneliness

'Ozymandias' – change, the passing of time and the decline of power and influence

'Brendon Gallacher' – loss, regret, nostalgia

Medusa

Carol Ann Duffy

Background and Context

One of Britain's best-known poets, Carol Ann Duffy (1957–) became the first female Poet Laureate in 2009. 'Medusa' is taken from *The World's Wife* (1999), a collection in which female figures from history or the wives of literary or historical figures are given their own 'voice'. In 'Medusa', it is the Gorgon eventually slain by Perseus in ancient Greek mythology who delivers her dramatic monologue.

Medusa

<i>Length of line symbolises the snakes on her head</i>	A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy grew in my mind, which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes, as though my thoughts hissed and spat on my scalp.	<i>Alliteration and sibilance used to suggest the sound of the snakes</i>
<i>Plosives emphasise her strength of feeling</i>	My bride's breath soured, stank in the grey bags of my lungs. I'm foul mouthed now, foul tongued, yellow fanged. There are bullet tears in my eyes. Are you terrified?	<i>Her pain has made her dangerous (literally her tears turn to stone as they leave her eyes)</i>
<i>Semi-repetition creates a sinister, emphatic quality to her statement</i>	Be terrified. It's you I love, perfect man, Greek God, my own; but I know you'll go, betray me, stray from home. So better by far for me if you were stone.	<i>She will possess him at all costs – a suggestion of madness or obsession perhaps? Rhyme scheme intensifies the impact of 'stone'</i>
<i>Everything she looks upon is destroyed – there is a sense of mindless destruction, so all-consuming is her jealousy</i>	I glanced at a buzzing bee, a dull grey pebble fell to the ground. I glanced at a singing bird, a handful of dusty gravel spattered down.	<i>Is there a sense that she hates her reflection?</i>
<i>Verb links with 'spattered' to demonstrate strength of her power to destroy</i>	I looked at a ginger cat, a housebrick shattered a bowl of milk. I looked at a snuffling pig, a boulder rolled in a heap of shit.	<i>Repetition of question displays her insecurity</i>
<i>Strength of word intensifies her attitude to her life</i>	I stared in the mirror. Love gone bad showed me a Gorgon. I stared at a dragon. Fire spewed from the mouth of a mountain. And here you come with a shield for a heart and a sword for a tongue and your girls, your girls. Wasn't I beautiful? Wasn't I fragrant and young? Look at me now.	<i>Single line emphasises the paradoxical final request both a plea and a threat</i>

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Duffy uses the Medusa paradox as a metaphor for the pain and passion of relationships, the danger and violence of love gone wrong. Medusa has become a major feminist symbol: punished by Athena for her beauty (or for her natural libido) according to Greek myth, stories of her 'guilt' continue to be open to interpretation. In this poem, 'Medusa' is a woman turned ugly and undesirable by jealousy and possessiveness. Her passion turns into a dangerous obsession, until she is prepared to possess at all costs – even if it means causing the death of her 'Greek God'. However, there is a strong sense of self-loathing underlying the threats of violence: she sees herself as 'filthy' with 'grey bags' for lungs and 'foul mouthed / foul tongued'.

Duffy suggests that it is the woman's relationship with her man that has caused this drastic change from being 'fragrant and young' – as if the man with his 'girls' has turned her into a monster of jealousy. There is pathos in the speaker's description of turning everything she looks at into dust. Pathos could also be seen in her recognition in the last stanza that the man she loves is 'armed' against her and will inevitably cause her destruction with his 'shield' and 'sword'.

However, her last line, given great structural emphasis, is hugely ambiguous. It could be a heart-felt plea for attention as well as, of course, a heavily ironic threat and reminder of her capabilities. The paradox for Medusa is that she has become trapped by her own power. Duffy may be suggesting that the negative and destructive qualities of revenge will eventually undo their perpetrator.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Rhyme and half-rhyme* are used to stress ideas and build crescendos of emphasis – in particular the stress on 'stone' is foreshadowed by 'own/go/home' in the third stanza, just as 'housebrick/milk/pig/' are used to strengthen the impact of 'shit'. As well as referring to the pig's bed, the expletive could also possibly refer to Medusa's attitude towards the destroyed relationship – or even the situation she finds herself in.
- *Present participle adjectives* stress the constant destruction of innocent life, possibly implying Medusa's regret at the mindless, arbitrary way she can destroy: 'buzzing bee', 'singing bird' and 'snuffling pig'. Her apparently innocent looks and 'glances' cause instant petrification.
- *Negative language* reinforces the pathos of Medusa's self-image – she refers to herself with loathing ('filthy', 'soured', 'stank', 'foul'). However, this obsession with her own victimisation eventually turns hearts to stone. The verbs 'shattered', 'spattered' and 'spewed' all intensify the sense that her life is out of control.

Targeting C

How does the poet demonstrate Medusa's conflicting attitudes towards her lover? Students could find evidence for the conflicting emotions she demonstrates.

Targeting A/A*

How is Duffy using Medusa to examine attitudes towards women and relationships? Ask students to consider the use of dramatic monologue as metaphorical 'voice' for other modern 'voices'. Why might Duffy have revisited this myth from a different perspective?

Compares with...

'The River God' and 'My Last Duchess' – obsession and jealousy
'Ozymandias' – power and tyranny

Singh Song!

Daljit Nagra

Background and Context

Daljit Nagra (1966–) is a poet and English teacher. His poetry focuses on the experiences of British-born Indians, especially those of Punjabi origin. He uses a particular dialect of ‘Punglish’ in ‘Singh Song!’, which is the name given to the form of English spoken by Punjabi immigrants to Britain in the 1960s and 70s. His father, like many Punjabi parents who settled in Britain at this time, strove for years in a range of menial jobs in order to save enough money to buy a local shop. This poem is from *Look We Have Coming to Dover* (2007), a collection about the tensions between races and generations, assimilation and cultural identity.

Exploring the Poem

The title is a light-hearted play on words, setting the tone for the whole poem. Punctuation is used to emphasise the mood and attitude of the speaker.

GLOSSARY

brightey – suggestion of ‘Blighty’, which was a Punjabi word for Britain originating from the British occupation of India during the Raj

Stanza 1

- 1 ‘just one’ of ‘daddy’s’ shops – he only has limited accountability; perhaps this is the first time he has been entrusted with responsibility
- 3 ‘he vunt me not to hav a break’ highlights the father’s need for the son to take this hard-earned responsibility seriously

Stanza 2

- 6–7 repetition of ‘share’ suggests that the couple have an equal partnership
- 9 play on words: ‘Putney’ is Punjabi for ‘wife’, and also an area of south-west London

Stanza 3 (and 8)

italicised refrain to present the perspective of other shoppers, who act like a chorus commentary in classical Greek theatre

Stanza 4

- 19–21 imagery to suggest the wife is dangerous and powerful (‘on di web’, ‘netting’ and ‘playing vid di mouse’); the customers are her ‘meat’ and she tempts them with ‘cheese’ – this could also hint at the dynamic in their relationship

Stanza 6

- 28–29 contrast of ‘gun’ and ‘teddy’ suggests conflicting feelings towards her; she is both comforting and dangerous

Stanza 9

- 43 change of voice to second person, speaking directly to shoppers
- 43–50 ‘midnight’ gives suggestion of magic; extended metaphor of moon (‘cool’, ‘whispering’ and ‘silver’); moon imagery links to the idea of honeymoon
- 50 ‘brightey moon’ – suggestion of ‘Blighty’

Stanza 10

- 51–58 series of couplets with repeated refrains, giving the impression that the couple are ‘in tune’ with each other
- 58 their love is ‘priceless’, contrasting directly with the ‘priced’ items in the shop

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Nagra uses a light-hearted lyrical style to present the voice of his persona: an inexperienced, newly-married shopkeeper who is far more interested in his young bride than his responsibilities to his father. His wife appears to have modern attitudes towards her role: she wears modern clothes, is disrespectful to her in-laws and has set up her own business, an internet dating site for Sikhs. She appears to be adopting a pragmatic attitude to life as a modern Sikh woman, modernising the age-old family tradition of families helping to arrange marriages. Rather than rejecting her cultural role, she shows the ability to adapt.

The young shopkeeper is repeatedly criticised for having ‘the worst Indian shop on the whole Indian road’. The voices of his customers contrast with his own breezy self-assurance and refusal to be distracted from his honeymoon by the mundane practicalities of stale bread and opening times. Intoxicated by his love for his wife, he spends his nights in a ‘cool/ whispering/silver’ version of his daytime ‘concrete/precinct’ world, staring at the ‘brightey moon’. His ‘midnight’ world of dreams, where the young couple ignore their immediate surroundings, is far more important.

Although surrounded by ‘concrete cool’, the couple ‘stare past’ the world of the ‘precinct’ to a much more romantic, idealised future. The last line suggests that the young man’s relationship with his wife is ‘priceless’ and far more important than his role as dutiful son.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- The *voice* is a second-generation Punjabi speaker. Nagra uses a *strong dialect* to enable the voice in the poem to be clearly heard.
- The ‘shoppers’ provide an *italicised commentary* on the son’s abilities as shopkeeper. Structurally, this creates a gap between their view and his self-perception, suggesting that the opinions of the wider community do not affect or influence him.
- *Nagra plays with language* in a light-hearted way – the puns in the title and the references to ‘Putney’ and ‘brightey’ overlay English with Punjabi in order to highlight cultural differences as well as similarities.

Targeting C

What do we find out about the characters of the speaker and his wife in this poem? Ask students to consider how the poet demonstrates what they are both like from the descriptions of their attitude and behaviour.

Targeting A/A*

The persona’s lack of respect for his father’s legacy is juxtaposed with his preoccupation with passion and romance. Could Nagra be suggesting that the second generation may have a different perspective from that of first-generation immigrants?

Compares with...

‘Checking Out Me History’ – cultural heritage, cultural conflict, language and voice

‘Horse Whisperer’ – cultural change, progress

‘The River God’, ‘Medusa’ and ‘My Last Duchess’ – dramatic monologues and voice

‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ and ‘Brendon Gallacher’ – dream worlds and romance

Brendon Gallacher

Jackie Kay

GLOSSARY

burn – Scottish dialect word for stream

Background and Context

Jackie Kay, (1961-) is a Scottish-born poet who often writes about cultural identity, the power of language and the power of the imagination to comfort and console. 'Brendon Gallacher' comes from *Two's Company*, a collection of poems for children published in 1992. Like many of her poems it contains strongly autobiographical elements. The voice in this poem looks back to her younger self, reminiscing wistfully about the character she created in the form of an imaginary friend.

Possessive pronouns reinforce the importance of the friendship and perhaps the fact that he really does belong to her, and is the product of her imagination

Brendon Gallacher

He was seven and I was six, **my** Brendon Gallacher.

He was Irish and I was Scottish, my Brendon Gallacher.

Exotic, dangerous ideas **His father was in prison; he was a cat burglar.**

My father was a Communist Party full-time worker.

He had six brothers and I had one, my Brendon Gallacher.

Offers the protection and leadership of an older brother

He would hold my hand and take me by the river

where we'd talk all about his family being poor.

He'd get his mum out of Glasgow when he got older.

Use of dialect adds to informal tone

A **wee** holiday some place nice. **Some place far.**

I'd tell my mum about my Brendon Gallacher.

Suggestion of displacement – perhaps the persona wants to escape to another place herself

Childlike language suggests the 'voice' of a child recounting the narrative

How his mum drank and his **daddy** was a cat burglar.

And she'd say, **'Why not have him round to dinner?'**

Use of direct speech adds to natural, informal style

Does Brendon represent freedom from restrictions, perhaps?

No, no, I'd say, he's got big holes in his trousers.

I like meeting him **by the burn** in the open air.

Repetition highlights the enormity of this day – the day that Brendon 'dies'

Enjambment draws reader towards the dramatic conclusion

Then one day after we'd been friends for two years,

one day when it was pouring and I was indoors,

Pathetic fallacy foreshadows the ending

my mum **says** to me, 'I was talking to Mrs Moir

Colloquialism also marks the move to present tense, creating immediacy

who lives next door to your Brendon Gallacher.

Didn't you say his address was 24 Novar?

She says there are no Gallachers at 24 Novar.

There never have been any Gallachers next door.'

Most clear suggestion of myth/fairytale

And he died then, my Brendon Gallacher,

flat out on my bedroom floor, his spiky hair,

his **impish** grin, his **funny**, flapping ear.

Alliteration and use of present participle suggests the life and fun Brendon represented

Repeated refrain – gives a song-like quality to the elegy

Oh Brendon. **Oh my Brendon Gallacher.**

Themes and Ideas (A01)

'Brendon Gallacher' is an elegy for an imaginary friend who, to the narrator of the poem, represents freedom, excitement and the world of the imagination. Far from being a fairytale figure, however, Brendon leads a harsh life, with a mum who 'drank' and a daddy 'in prison'. He has 'holes in his trousers' and 'six brothers'. Yet despite these bleak realities, he has an exotic, attractive quality to him: his daddy is a 'cat burglar'. They meet 'in the open air', as if Brendon represents freedom and exploration; he talks of 'Some place far', new horizons offering excitement.

The sense of coming back to reality and the 'death' of Brendon is initially foreshadowed on a day when 'it was pouring'. This immediately reminds the reader of those days when we, as children, were trapped in the house and longed to be outside. When Brendon 'dies', so does the young child's ability to escape into a world of the imagination. Brendon's death therefore signifies the start of 'growing up' and the incursion of the adult world which defines what is and isn't real: 'never have been any Gallachers'.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- There is a childlike quality to this elegy for the death of an imaginary friend. The persona (presumably the young Kay) uses *simple, childish language* and a range of techniques such as *direct speech and colloquialisms* to create a natural, informal style which adds to the pathos and mournful tone.
- Brendon is portrayed through a mixture of the prosaic and exotic: his life seems very hard but this appears attractive to the young Kay. Could Brendon be a manifestation of the families her father works hard to support? The *use of adjectives* in the final stanza is a striking contrast to this: 'spiky' and 'impish' turn Brendon into a figure of the imagination.
- *The use of a repeated refrain* gives a song-like quality to the elegy, reinforced with the repeated expression of wordless grief in the last line's interjections: 'Oh Brendon. Oh my Brendon Gallacher.'

Targeting C

How is Brendon initially presented as real? Students could examine the range of descriptions to identify which ones signal his imaginary status and which ground him in the real world.

Targeting A/A*

Possibly Brendon's family are similar to those whom Kay's 'Communist Party worker' father supports. Therefore her friendship with Brendon would seem to suggest that she is sub-consciously seeking her father's approval.

Is there a suggestion that Brendon is used as a means of escape? Does he represent another type of world for Kay? Students might want to consider the effect of lines 9 and 11 in particular.

Compares with...

'On a Portrait of a Deaf Man' and 'Casehistory: Alison' – elegy, loss

'Les Grands Seigneurs' and 'The Hunchback in the Park' – power of the imagination

Give

Simon Armitage

Background and Context

See page 267 for information about the Dead Sea Scrolls

Simon Armitage (1963–) was born in Huddersfield and lives in Marsden, West Yorkshire. Before becoming a full-time poet, playwright and novelist, he worked as a probation officer. 'Give' comes from Armitage's collection *The Dead Sea Poems* (1995); the title is an allusion to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Some of the poems in this collection deal with issues of belief and human identity. Although not a religious poem, 'Give' does allude to Christian ideas and possibly suggests that modern society has abandoned any thought for the less fortunate and become overtaken by selfish desires for economic gain and trivial entertainment. The 'voice' in this poem is a homeless person who speaks directly to the reader, appealing to be noticed and not ignored.

Direct request – for attention/notice rather than money

Give

Challenges public sense of embarrassment at being directly asked for help from the homeless

Of all the public places, **dear,**
to make a scene, I've chosen here.

Mode of address links with the romantic clichés used throughout – 'make a scene', 'I'm on my knees' – possibly for satirical effect

Repetition of 'choose/chosen' – ironic contrast with reality of homeless person's situation, suggesting a control they don't actually have

Of all the doorways in the world
to choose to sleep, I've **chosen yours.**
I'm on the street, under the stars.

Second person address, direct and personal

Change in rhythmic pattern creates a pause to highlight the different interpretations of his situation

Contrast of negative and positive perceptions of the state of homelessness – which could also be ironic/satirical

For coppers I can **dance or sing.**
For silver – swallow swords, eat fire.
For gold – escape from locks and chains.

Attention-grabbing, dangerous forms of entertainment. He is desperate to be noticed. Is there a link to circus performance here? Perhaps also a suggestion that being asked to 'perform' is demeaning/degrading?

Ambiguity – 'waiting for' or holding out his hand

It's not as if I'm holding out
for frankincense or myrrh, just **change.**

Allusion to Christ figure, links to 'gold' in previous stanza

Irony – indictment of the tendency to try and assuage guilt with small tokens of help

You give me tea. **That's big of you.**
I'm on my knees. I beg of you.

Ambiguity – 'small change' or change of circumstance

Ambiguity – exhausted/defeated or, literally, begging

Consonance of big/beg stresses his need to 'beg' as well as highlighting his need

Final emphatic point, again ambiguous – he is literally 'begging' but also this suggests a stress on the final word 'you'. The repetition of 'you' reinforces this idea. The romantic cliché here is made literal in this suddenly plaintive, sincere appeal to the reader

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The persona in 'Give' is a homeless person who speaks directly to an unnamed 'you'. This use of second person immediately creates a very personal tone, as if the poem is directly aimed at the reader.

The poem appears ambiguous at first, appearing to accede to the automatic assumption that this persona, being homeless, will be begging for money – and thus making us feel guilty and uncomfortable. However, it soon becomes apparent that the speaker is less interested in money than in being noticed. In fact, he challenges the way the homeless are ignored by 'choosing to sleep' in the doorway of his listener – possibly a metaphor for drawing attention to himself. The allusion to the Nativity story, with 'gold', 'frankincense or myrrh', suggests a parallel to Christ's parents finding themselves homeless and vulnerable, as well as possibly reminding the reader of the Christian message to offer help to those less fortunate than ourselves, rather than finding ways to ignore them.

In the third stanza the persona suggests the range of activities he would do for money – all noticeable, attention-grabbing entertainments which correspond to some people's view of the homeless as having no self-respect. This suggests he is forced to demean himself because of our lack of charity. Rather than doing 'anything' for money, this stanza uses irony to suggest the exact opposite. He wants the public to 'give' their time and attention, not just their 'change'.

The last line contains a direct, personal statement: 'I beg of you.' This is impossible to ignore, and ends the poem as it started – with a direct request.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Simple, direct language and clear rhythm* creates a direct and purposeful tone. This could suggest the persona's desire for contact and empathy, for connection.
- *The use of the second person* also demonstrates a strong desire to connect and be heard. Possibly Armitage wants the reader to consider their attitude towards the homeless, particularly the way in which we tend to ignore those asking us directly for help as we walk past them on the street.
- There are several examples of *ambiguity* in this poem. Armitage uses *colloquialisms* to suggest deeper ideas, in particular the line 'it's not as if I'm holding out' which has two distinct meanings. He is 'holding out' for 'change' – in this sense a change in perception, not coppers.

Targeting C

Comment on the purpose and effect of the second person address in the poem.

Explain the effects of imperatives, particularly in the title and last line.

Targeting A/A*

Analyse and evaluate the use of ambiguity, particularly with regard to attitudes towards the homeless.

Explore the effects of Christian imagery in the poem.

Compares with...

'Medusa', 'The Hunchback in the Park' and 'Horse Whisperer' – isolation and loneliness, rejection

'The Clown Punk' and 'Singh Song!' – outsiders

Les Grands Seigneurs

Dorothy Molloy

Background and Context

Dorothy Molloy (1942–2004) is a British poet whose work has been described as dark and disturbing as well as comic. ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ is from the collection *Hare Soup* (2004). The phrase is French for ‘the great lords’ – although ‘seigneurs’ in the plural can also refer to ‘warlord’. Molloy often used French language and settings in her poetry. The ‘voice’ in this poem muses wistfully on the stylised, non-physical nature of courtly love, as well as reflecting bitterly on the contrast between this and the mundane realities of marriage.

See pages 267–268 for more on courtly love

Les Grands Seigneurs

Possessive pronouns highlight sense of power

Men were **my** buttresses, **my** castellated towers, the bowers where I took my rest. **The best and worst** of times were men: the peacocks and the cockatoos, the nightingales, the strutting pink flamingos.

Implies her complex attitude towards men

Exotic, beautiful and proud – four examples where the male of the species is very demonstrative in courtship

Repetition of phrase using personal pronouns intensifies sense of control and ownership

Men were my dolphins, my performing seals; my sailing-ships, the ballast in my hold. They were the rocking-horses prancing down the promenade, the bandstand where the music played. My hurdy-gurdy monkey-men.

Suggests innocence, unreality

Connective used to signify change of tone

Parenthesis highlights the shock when the consummation of the wedding night takes away the mystery

She is reduced to derogatory colloquialism, a flimsy object – her husband is listing / defining her whereas before she was defining others

I was their queen. I sat enthroned before them, out of reach. **We played at** courtly love: the troubadour, the damsel and the peach.

Caesura emphasises her imaginary power

But after I was wedded, bedded, I became (yes, overnight) a toy, a plaything, little woman, wife, a bit of fluff. **My husband** clicked his fingers, called my bluff.

Passive tense, suggests her husband has taken her power

Contrasts with ‘played’ of previous stanza

Ambiguity – a command or the gesture of a hypnotist

A harsher form of ‘playing’, referring to the unreality of what went before

GLOSSARY

buttresses – architectural structure used for reinforcement

castellated – decorative stonework on the top of a castle turret

bowers – woman’s bedroom in a medieval castle

ballast – weight used to stabilise a ship

hurdy-gurdy – barrel organ used by street musicians, often with a performing monkey

troubadour – writer of courtly love poetry from 11th to 13th century, mainly

in Southern France and Northern Italy. They were travelling poets and musicians who wooed ladies of the court with their music and verse.

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Molloy's first person persona is a woman reflecting on her changing attitude towards, and relationship with, men. In the first three stanzas she presents a variety of images of men: they are the romantic heroes of medieval courtly love, the stable influence and grounding security of 'ballast', the arrogant and 'strutting' flamingos, the ridiculous 'monkey men', and the beautiful 'peacocks'. These conflicting images suggest an innocence and ignorance of men, as well as implying that this world of the imagination provides an exciting, dramatic and beautiful mirage – one that is at the same time rather immature and childish. The first three stanzas also suggest her ability to control and 'sport' with men in this context – because they desire her, she has power over them.

Molloy suggests that the anticipation and expectation of marriage is often better than the reality; in her naivety, the woman imagines herself in control, indomitable, and – most importantly – untouchable. She is their 'queen', but 'out of reach'. Her romantic idealism is not yet sullied by the reality of married life.

In the final stanza, after her marriage – and, more significantly, her wedding night – she awakens to the reality of a relationship which proves a striking contrast. She is no longer the one in control, and has instead become her husband's 'plaything', dominated by his 'click' of a finger. This stanza demonstrates the role reversal as the woman finds her own imagery of 'play' used against her, this time in a demeaning way. She is now the 'toy, a plaything'.

Although Molloy can be seen as presenting a negative portrayal of the role of women in married life, another interpretation could be that this poem is a critique of the tendency to foster an idealised, romanticised view of marriage.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *The semantic fields* – courtly love, exotic birds, seafaring and seaside/fairgrounds – suggest an idealised, innocent, fairytale world.
- *Imagery and the language of playing* are used to suggest that in the idealised world, men were her 'toys', there for fun and enjoyment ('we played', 'the music played', 'performing seals'). However, when married, she becomes 'a toy, a plaything'. Her own imagery, when used against her, becomes derogatory and controlling.
- *Language is used to create a fairytale fantastical tone* in the first three stanzas, contrasting shockingly with the short phrases and simple language of the final stanza.
- *Form* is used to stress the way her life is diminished after marriage – the line length is contracted in the final stanza, in contrast with the way the longer lines exemplify her extravagant imagination in the previous stanza.

Targeting C

What is the effect of the lines 'the best and worst / of times were men'? Ask students to find conflicting presentations of men in the first three stanzas.

Targeting A/A*

Is there a darker, more subtle implication to the final stanza? Students could consider the effect of the use of a list in this stanza. What might be being suggested about control and dominance from 'my husband clicked / his fingers'?

Compares with...

'Medusa' and 'My Last Duchess' – relationships
 'The Ruined Maid' – change, identity
 'Brendon Gallacher' – power of the imagination

Ozymandias

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Background and Context

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was a Romantic poet known for his radical views, most notably his atheism and condemnation of tyranny, including – in his view – monarchical rule. He was a fierce advocate of the French Revolution. Shelley's willingness to challenge the accepted order of things and ally himself with those who questioned the inviolability of inherited power, meant that he was often used as a symbol of radical rebellion. As a member of the Romantic movement, a common theme in his work is the tendency for art and literature to outlast – and therefore conquer – transitory power; a proponent perhaps of 'the pen is mightier than the sword'.

Ozymandias is the ancient Greek name for Rameses II, probably the best known and most powerful of the Egyptian pharaohs, who was responsible for an enormous amount of building works, including temples, monuments and cities. Shelley's 'Ozymandias', published in 1818, is thought to have been inspired by the 1816 British Museum exhibition of Egyptian artefacts, which included the enormous statue of the head of Rameses II.

See pages 267–268 for more about the Romantics and Ozymandias

Ozymandias

Size of statue linked to size of his ambition for greatness and everlasting glory

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Adjectives set up dichotomy between power and weakness

Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,

Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown

Paradox – stones are lifeless but give life to 'passion' by recreating it

Praises the art of the sculptor

And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command

It is the art that 'yet' survives rather than Ozymandias' 'works'

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

The ability of art to recreate 'passions' from 'lifeless' mediums

Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,

Use of synecdoche to represent the sculptor and possibly all artists who have the power to 'mock' even the most powerful of leaders

The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;

'imitated' but also subtly ironic, meaning 'ridiculed/scorned'

And on the pedestal these words appear:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

Caesura highlights the 'nothing' surrounding the broken statue. Bathos – proud words are undercut by the reality of his legacy: nothing

Dichotomy again between two images – vast but destroyed

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,

Ironic comment – there is nothing there to 'look on'

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Again, emphasising contrast between then and now

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The illusory, temporary nature of power is the main theme of this poem. Shelley uses the 'voice' of the king himself to ironically mock the arrogant character of a man who believed he was closer to a god and therefore had limitless power and permanence. Irony is used throughout the poem to highlight the discrepancy between Ozymandias' assertions and the reality of the picture of ruin and 'decay' we see in front of us: the once-great Rameses is shattered, 'half-sunk' and isolated in the desert that was once the site of a great civilisation of his own creation. The narrator and the traveller remain impartial, allowing the reader to draw their own conclusions from the irony of the image being depicted.

Shelley highlights the words of the king in order to emphasise the main theme of the poem, which is that 'pride comes before a fall'. Ozymandias believes that 'the Mighty' would 'despair' of ever hoping to compete with his glory and success. The irony is that these words only survive because of the skill of a sculptor, suggesting that art, beauty and truth outlast power, arrogance and greed. It is the sculptor's skill which is praised – his statue is the only thing remaining in the 'barren' desert.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Anonymous voices* are used in the poem to create a tone of ironic detachment.
- The use of the plaque is of course hugely *ironic*, in that the message Ozymandias wanted to leave as his legacy to the world is precisely opposite to the message the world receives. The 'despair' may be more as a result of the realisation that power is illusory and temporary, rather than 'despair' that nobody could ever hope to compete with Ozymandias' glory.
- *Alliteration* is used to highlight the barrenness of the landscape which Ozymandias wants us to 'look on' in the phrases 'boundless and bare', 'lone and level' and 'sands stretch'.
- *Form and rhyme scheme*: although the poem is a sonnet with 14 lines of iambic pentameter, it does not stick closely to the form. The rhyme scheme particularly does not follow established patterns, possibly linking with Shelley's nonconformist desire to rebel against perceived restrictions or conventions.

Targeting C

Why do you think Shelley presents a picture without appearing to be making any overt comment? Ask students to consider the effect on the reader of this use of perspective.

Targeting A/A*

How does Shelley make his views on the nature of power apparent?

What does this poem suggest about Shelley's political beliefs?

Compares with...

'Checking Out Me History' – historical figures, learning from history

'Horse Whisperer' – the passing of time and the waning of power

'My Last Duchess' and 'The River God' – arrogance and the corruption of power

My Last Duchess

Robert Browning

Background and Context

See page 6 for a definition of dramatic monologue

Robert Browning (1812–1889) was a master of the dramatic monologue, a form using a persona who speaks directly to an imagined listener, thereby dramatising the speaker's words and allowing us to judge the persona's character. 'My Last Duchess' (1842) is based on real figures: the Duchess is thought to be the first wife of the Duke of Ferrara, who died three years into their marriage. Browning was a great admirer of the works of Shelley, and this poem displays a similar critique of autocratic rule – in this case the nobility of the Italian Renaissance.

Exploring the Poem

'Ferrara' indicates this is a 'dramatic' form – the stage direction shows us who is speaking

GLOSSARY

by design – on purpose

Frà Pandolf – imaginary painter, possibly referring to Titian. 'Frà' means Franciscan friar.

favour – gift, in this case probably a brooch

Stanza 1

- 1 'painted on the wall' – fresco
- 3 'now' – she is now under his control so he is prepared to appreciate her
- 9-10 at last he is in complete control
- 11 'durst' suggests he knows he is feared by many
- 13-15 intimates that she was unfaithful
- 21 repetition of 'joy', as if the expression on her face angers him
- 25-29 she is shown to be carefree and joyful, taking delight in simple pleasures
- 33 power and status are an all-consuming passion for him
- 35-40 implies his inability (or reluctance) to communicate his concern to his wife
- 39 'the mark' suggests he has a benchmark against which to measure her
- 43-44 he believes expression of feeling to be a sign of weakness
- 43 third repetition of 'stoop' suggests that the idea is clearly very distasteful to him
- 46 macabre euphemism for murder, marked with a caesura to indicate the end of The Duchess' life
- 47-48 prefers to admire her as a work of art, completely lifeless and, therefore, under his total control

- 49-51 it becomes apparent that the Duke is speaking directly to another character and we find out he plans to marry again, probably for money
- 53 'my object' an ironic and sinister suggestion that he wants to turn his next wife into an artefact just like the last one
- 55-56 metaphor for his own attitudes towards relationships – suggesting his admiration for the ability to dominate and control, as well as his supreme arrogance
- 57 final word 'me' draws attention once again to his total self-obsession

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The poem is heavily ironic. The Duke expects his listener to condone his treatment of his first wife, whereas instead we see a cold-hearted, controlling monster. Although the poem appears to be about the literal portrait of the Duchess, what emerges is a dark portrait of her husband.

His description of his wife presents a completely different woman from the one he intends us to see – in reality, she is clearly gentle, full of 'joy' and alive to the beauty of the natural world. (The real Duchess, Lucrezia, was a great patron of the arts during her marriage, which may explain Browning's desire to portray her with such sympathy.)

The corruption and abuse of power is directly criticised through this portrayal of a self-aggrandising and virtually omnipotent member of the nobility. A common view of the Renaissance in Victorian times was that it was an era of great corruption, particularly amongst the nobility.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *The dramatic monologue form* allows Browning to use the Duke's words to paint a portrait of a jealous, arrogant and selfish man. The clinical, dispassionate manner with which the Duke recounts his story creates a chilling tone.
- *Browning uses heroic couplets* (rhyming pairs of iambic pentameter lines used particularly in epic or narrative poetry). Even though the Duke claims with false modesty that he has no 'skill in speech', he delivers a fluent, articulate account of himself. The lines have no end-stops, therefore pauses are created mid-line, drawing attention to particular ideas and phrases, such as 'then all smiles stopped altogether'.
- The sculpture of Neptune is a *metaphor* for the Duke's arrogant self-perception; the sea horse is the wife he wishes to be 'tamed'.

Targeting C

What is the effect of using a dramatic monologue to present the character of the Duke? Ask students to consider the effect of only having one point of view on our perception of this character.

Targeting A/A*

Consider the use of irony, oblique references and ambiguity in the Duke's speech, and how they impact on our perception of his character.

Compares with...

'Ozymandias' and 'The River God' – power and corruption

'The River God', 'Medusa' and 'Horse Whisperer' – dramatic monologues

The River God

Stevie Smith

Background and Context

Stevie Smith (1902–1971) was born in Hull but moved to London as a young child. Her poetry often deals with issues of religion, war, loneliness and death. Mythology is often referred to in her poems, as is the relationship between humans and the natural world.

River gods abound in the mythology of a variety of cultures, including ancient Greece and China. 'The River God' is based on the River Mimram in Herefordshire.

The River God

<i>Personal pronoun to introduce theme of self-absorption</i>	I may be smelly and I may be old,	<i>Argumentative / defensive tone. Self-deprecation suggests false humility</i>
<i>Shows control and ownership of his world</i>	Rough in my pebbles, reedy in my pools, But where my fish float by I bless their swimming	<i>Light-hearted rhyme contrasts with a sinister, seedy undertone</i>
<i>Lack of empathy and respect for human life</i>	And I like the people to bathe in me, especially women. But I can drown the fools	<i>Whose rules? Has he created his own set of rules and laws which allow him to abuse his power?</i>
<i>Does this display a completely amoral stance?</i>	Who bathe too close to the weir, contrary to rules. And they take a long time drowning	<i>Sinister juxtaposition of ideas: 'drowning'/'clowning'</i>
<i>Complete contrast of tone with previous couplet emphasises his lack of empathy</i>	As I throw them up now and then in the spirit of clowning. Hi yih, yippity-yap, merrily I flow, O I may be an old foul river but I have plenty of go. Once there was a lady who was too bold	<i>Light-hearted colloquialisms contrast with sinister actions</i>
<i>Sense of cause and effect, as if to justify his actions by blaming the woman for not following his 'rules'</i>	She bathed in me by the tall black cliff where the water runs cold, So I brought her down here To be my beautiful dear. Oh will she stay with me will she stay This beautiful lady, or will she go away?	<i>Introduces note of insecurity</i>
<i>Sinister suggestion that her face is being eroded</i>	She lies in my beautiful deep river bed with many a weed To hold her, and many a waving reed. Oh who would guess what a beautiful white face lies there Waiting for me to smooth and wash away the fear	
<i>Shortened form of previous chant – is his power failing? Is he less enthusiastic?</i>	She looks at me with. Hi yih, do not let her Go. There is no one on earth who does not forget her	<i>Use of full rhyme suggests his obsession</i>
<i>Enjambment places stress on the word 'go' to emphasise his fear and insecurity</i>	Now. They say I am a foolish old smelly river But they do not know of my wide original bed Where the lady waits, with her golden sleepy head.	
<i>Rhyme scheme here encircles the captured woman</i>	If she wishes to go I will not forgive her.	<i>This line emphasises ruthless lack of empathy and equates him with the gods of Greek mythology: remorseless, selfish and vengeful.</i>

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Smith uses a free verse dramatic monologue to explore the 'voice' of a river – a natural force – given emotional resonance by displaying human feelings of love, possessiveness, insecurity, jealousy and revenge. Perhaps there is a suggestion that the natural world has a darker, more mysterious side that must not be underestimated. Or maybe Smith is using some of the characteristics of the vengeful gods of ancient mythology to explore some negative human characteristics. Ancient gods often interfered with human affairs and emotions – and some stories recount tales of Greek male gods seducing, raping and carrying off human women, for example Poseidon and Tyro, or Hades and Persephone. The character of the River God is displayed, as often in dramatic monologues, far more prominently than the persona perhaps realises.

Initially the River God is portrayed as an isolated, lonely figure who inhabits his own world with its own 'rules'. These rules seem to have no resemblance to those of the human world – he punishes at will those who 'bathe too close to the weir', for instance. We are unsettled by his evident enjoyment of this punishment as well as by his complete lack of remorse. He appears to need to display his power and ownership of his domain as well as a rather seedy, disreputable attitude towards women. This is where his weakness is betrayed: when he punishes a 'lady' for reckless swimming by drowning her and taking her body to be his companion, his evident need to maintain hold of her highlights his insecurity and loneliness. His possessive love for her creates the sinister undertone of malice that ends the poem. Perhaps Smith suggests that even a 'god' can be made weak and foolish by love.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Structure – the unmetrical form* uses enjambment throughout to emphasise key ideas. The form could represent the uninterrupted 'flow' and natural shape of a river.
- The *rhyme scheme* appears to be rhyming couplets although this is deceptive, possibly like the surface appearance of the river.
- *Dramatic monologue form* relies heavily on the use of personal pronouns to suggest the self-obsession – or possibly isolation and loneliness – of the River God. No other perspective is allowed.
- *Contrast* is used with both language and content to create an uneasy, unsettled mood. Negative, sinister language such as 'dark', 'black' and 'drowning' contrasts with 'merrily' and 'clowning'. A description of drowning 'the fools' contrasts with the deeply insecure and heartfelt interjection, 'Oh will she stay?' Contrasting words often rhyme: for instance the rhyme of 'clowning' and 'drowning' is particularly jarring and suggests the River God's warped perspective and humour.

Targeting C

How does the poet use form and structure to express some of the key ideas in the poem?

Targeting A/A*

Is the *tone* of the poem significant? Notice how the opening lines appear to take some sort of defensive position, repeated again in line 10. Are there other places where the persona appears to be justifying/defending his actions?

How detached is he from others?

Compares with...

'Ozymandias' – arrogance, power and isolation

'Medusa' – revenge, power and isolation

The Hunchback in the Park

Dylan Thomas

Background and Context

Dylan Thomas (1914–1953) was born in Swansea, South Wales. 'The Hunchback in the Park' is set in a small park near his home there, where he has spoken about the many hours he spent playing as a child, creating fantasy worlds and existing, like many other children, in that world of the imagination. 'The Hunchback in the Park' was first published in *Collected Poems* 1934–52.

Exploring the Poem

Stanza 1

- 2 shortest line highlights the isolation of the hunchback; 'mister' identifies the young boy narrator as the voice of the poem
- 5 suggests that the park only exists when it is open
- 6 first mention of 'bell' links to idea of Quasimodo

Stanza 2

- 12 use of one of only three full stops, highlighting the idea that the hunchback is only restricted physically, not mentally

Stanza 3

- 13 similes ('like the park birds' and 'like the water') highlight the strength of the man's connection with the park and the natural world
- 16 'truant boys' implies that the narrator is made uneasy by these boys – they are dangerous, threatening, different

Stanza 5

- 25 metaphor compares the hunchback to a dog, linking with 'chains' and 'kennel'
- 28 metaphorical description of the strength of the children's imagination
- 29 'roar' gives a hint of the potential threat/danger posed by the 'truant boys'

Stanza 6

- 31–36 the hunchback is similarly able to enter an imaginary world
- 33–34 repetition of 'straight' contrasts with his 'hunchback', symbolising the power of the imagination to create an alternative, better reality

Stanza 7

- 37 'unmade' returns to the idea that the park is non-existent when unpopulated
- 40 contrasts the boys' threat with their ultimate innocence

Themes and Ideas (A01)

The theme of isolation is explored in this portrayal of an outsider to society, who is viewed with a mixture of 'mockery' and pathos. Thomas presents three points of view: the narrator (presumably the young Thomas), the 'truant boys' who taunt the hunchback, and the hunchback himself. The 'voice' is the voice of the young Thomas, the 'character' – on one level – the hunchback. However, this may be an over-simplification of such a complex poem; the narrator demonstrates his own character through his observations of both the hunchback and the 'truant boys'.

The park is a place where the world of the imagination is allowed to run free, in direct contrast with the repeated images of 'locks', 'chains' and 'sticks'. There is a recurring concept of contrasts and opposites: the boys are at once 'wild' and 'innocent'; the hunchback creates a perfect image of a woman 'straight as a young elm'; the park may be controlled to a certain extent by 'locks and chains' but is ultimately as free as 'the birds the grass the trees the lake'. In spite of the vast differences between the hunchback and the boys, there is a suggestion that the park offers them all the same opportunity to use their imaginations to create a world more exciting and more fitting to their inner desires. The boys crave escape with their truancy as much as the hunchback craves freedom from the 'chains' of his physical disability and loveless life.

The young boy narrator comments both as omniscient narrator and as participant. However, he appears unable to join in fully: he 'sail[s] his ship' alone, rather than entering his own imaginary world or playing with the other boys. Possibly the narrator is as isolated as the hunchback – by youth or social class. He appears vaguely disconcerted by these boys, referring to them as 'truant boys from the town' who can 'roar' and act like 'tigers'. They are rebellious, dangerous figures, unfettered and unpredictable. Thomas has in fact spoken of lying in bed as a young child listening to the older boys still playing in the park, and perhaps the young figure in the poem is a manifestation of that remembered sense of exclusion from these games.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Imagery*, is used to connect the boys and the hunchback to the natural landscape. Metaphor in particular plays a key role, strengthening and populating the imaginary world of both the boys with their 'loud zoo' of 'tigers' and the hunchback's 'woman figure without fault'.
- *Punctuation* – the poem uses three full stops, all of which link to the idea of rules, chains and endings. The *lack of punctuation* in line 39 suggests the power of the imagination running free.
- *A tone of melancholy* is created through the use of bells which not only link to the idea of Quasimodo but also the end of play ('until bell time') and church bells ('Sunday sombre bell at dark').

Targeting C

Comment on the use of simile and metaphor to portray the boys and the hunchback. What do these similes and metaphors add to our understanding of both?

Targeting A/A*

How are the senses used in the poem to draw the reader into the world being described? Students may find it useful to analyse the effects of sounds in the poem, in particular the noises made by the children and the 'bells'.

Compares with...

'The Clown Punk' and 'Give' – outsiders

'Brendon Gallacher' and 'Les Grands Seigneurs' – the world of the imagination

The Ruined Maid

Thomas Hardy

Background and Context

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) often focused in his poetry on themes familiar in his novels, using the imagined landscape of rural ‘Wessex’ (based on his home county of Dorset) as his setting. ‘The Ruined Maid’, although first published ten years after first publication of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, demonstrates a similar concern with the difficulties faced by young rural women who seek to better themselves in a strictly hierarchical, male-dominated society.

As a staunch social reformer and advocate of the rural working class, Hardy reveals in this poem a concern about the often unjust constraints of Victorian morality, a common thematic thread in his work. Written in 1866 and published in 1901 in the collection *Poems of the Past and Present*, the poem is a dramatic duologue which reveals ‘Melia’s story through a conversation between two characters – ‘Melia and her former friend. This poem is an ironic commentary on the limited opportunities for country girls to improve their circumstances in the nineteenth century.

The Ruined Maid

“O ‘Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!

Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?

And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?” –

Matter-of-fact tone “O didn’t you know I’d been ruined?” said she.

Tone of surprise suggests ‘Melia’s ‘ruin’ is common knowledge

– “You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,

Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;

Friend notices trivial, surface appearances And now you’ve gay bracelets and bright feathers three!” –

“Yes: that’s how we dress when we’re ruined,” said she.

Friend uses lots of dialect and colloquialisms

Use of inclusive pronoun – perhaps she wishes to identify with a bigger group

– “At home in the barton you said ‘thee’ and ‘thou’,

And ‘thik oon’, and ‘theas oon’, and ‘t’other’; but now

Your talking quite fits ‘ee for high compa-ny!” –

Speaks in a more formal way – use of impersonal pronoun “Some polish is gained with one’s ruin,” said she.

– “Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak

But now I’m bewitched by your delicate cheek,

And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!” –

“We never do work when we’re ruined,” said she.

Contrast with ‘paws’ to highlight her refinement

– “You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,

And you’d sigh, and you’d sock; but at present you seem

To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!” –

“True. One’s pretty lively when ruined,” said she.

GLOSSARY

barton – barn/farmyard

megrims – migraines or headaches

spudding up docks – digging up weeds

Suggests friend thinks 'Melia is arrogant – “I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!” –

Caesura breaks the expected flow of a final couplet, suggesting a lack of self-assurance underneath the facade “My dear – a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined,” said she.

Full stop creates caesura, emphasising the final point

Ironically suggests connection whilst attempting to highlight the distance between them

Use of dialect displays her roots as well as breaking the strict rhythm to stress 'ain't'

Repetition of phrase creates an emphatic tone to highlight 'Melia's consistent lack of remorse

Themes and Ideas (A01)

There are two ‘voices’ at work here – that of ‘Melia and her friend. Although one appears to have more ‘voice’ than the other, it is ‘Melia’s presence which is felt more strongly throughout the poem, and ‘Melia who is the character focus. This poem is a dramatic duologue – a conversation between two imaginary characters, often heavily ironic.

Hardy reveals what has happened to ‘Melia through a conversation between her and an erstwhile fellow farm-girl. The friend has the majority of the lines in the exchange, and it is through her observations of ‘Melia’s changed appearance and demeanour that the reality of her ‘ruin’ becomes apparent. She has perhaps chosen to use her sexuality as a means of climbing a very flimsy social ladder – one which allows her to appear a ‘lady’, although the change is eventually shown to be a facade.

While the friend seems very taken with the surface prosperity exhibited by ‘Melia’s ‘bright feathers’, refined speech and cheerful demeanour, there is a possible undercurrent of envy or even censure to her observation, particularly evident in the insulting observations she makes about ‘Melia’s past appearance and behaviour. She compares this ‘Melia to the girl she knew as a farm-girl, with obvious disbelief. The poem is heavily ironic: ‘Melia’s ‘ruin’ has clearly – at least on the surface – been the making of her. However, her roots are still strongly held by the Dorset earth she came from, exhibited by her apparent ‘slip’ into dialect in her final line.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Rhythm and rhyme*: the satirical tone is reinforced through a strong rhythm and strict AABB rhyme scheme. Repetition of ‘Melia’s refrain adds to the sing-song tone, although the constant reinforcement of ‘ruin’ becomes ironic quite quickly, undercutting each of her friend’s naïve observations.
- *Line length*: the relative brevity of ‘Melia’s lines compared with the friend’s suggests an indifference or tone of laconic detachment from the conversation, possibly allowing her appearance to do most of the talking. At the end of the poem ‘Melia speaks out more emphatically with her only couplet.
- *Dialect*: the friend speaks in Dorset dialect throughout, compared with ‘Melia’s formal standard English, broken significantly at the end with the words ‘ain’t’ and ‘you be’. This may suggest a ‘slip of the tongue’ betraying original roots, or possibly a deliberate reclamation of her true self and refusal to be ashamed.

Targeting C

How does Hardy present the reader with two distinct pictures of ‘Melia – before and after her ruin?

How does Hardy highlight the differences between the two women? Students might consider the use of dialect as well as their behaviour towards each other.

Targeting A/A*

How does Hardy’s portrayal of these women reflect the social position or status of women at that time, especially those living in rural communities?

Explore how Hardy creates a satirical tone through implied criticism on both sides of this dramatic duologue.

Compares with...

‘Medusa’, ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ and ‘My Last Duchess’ – role and treatment of women, strong female voices

Casehistory: Alison (head injury)

U. A. Fanthorpe

Background and Context

U. A. Fanthorpe (1929–2009) was an English teacher for many years before changing her career to work in a neuropsychiatric ward of a hospital in Bristol. It was here that she also began to write the poetry for which she achieved huge critical acclaim. 'Casehistory: Alison (head injury)' is from *Side Effects*, her first poetry collection published in 1978, and is part of a pair – the other part being 'Casehistory: Julie (encephalitis)'.

The voice in this poem is that of a patient who is struggling to come to terms with her loss of memory and reconcile herself with the 'other', younger self portrayed in a photograph.

Exploring the Poem

GLOSSARY

Degas – a French Impressionist artist, who often painted ballet dancers

Stanza 1

- 2 plays with her sense of identity, as if presenting a riddle
- 3 refers to herself in the third person, introducing a distinction between 'I' and 'she'

Stanza 2

- 4 'comforting' suggests emotional/physical pain
- 6 'autocratic' suggests power, and contrasts with 'lugs' in the next stanza

Stanza 3

- 7 use of enjambment highlights grace and fluidity of the remembered movement
- 9 enjambment between lines 9 and 10 creates the opposite effect, highlighting the difference between then and now, foreshadowing in the first line what will happen in the next

Stanza 5

- 11 third repetition of 'smiles' – as if fascinated by the expression
- 14–15 sense of envy perhaps – due to her injury she lives with the pain of mourning constantly, never being able to complete the grieving process

Stanza 6

- 17 links with the homophone 'mourning' suggesting a connection as well as a separateness – and perhaps her difficulty in processing language
- 18 terrible dichotomy presented here, adding to the pathos of her situation

Stanza 9

- 25 oxymoron intensifies the pathos of her former self's ignorance of what the future has in store
- 28 repetition of past tense line intensifies the sense of loss

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Fanthorpe uses a dramatic monologue to explore the effects of memory loss and how it affects our sense of personal identity. There is a tone of regret and pathos as Alison mixes personal pronouns (I/she), demonstrating her confusion and sense of loss at the growing 'separateness' of her two selves. The title of the poem symbolises how humans can be reduced to a series of facts and statistics in medical treatment; Fanthorpe delves beyond the cursory 'head injury' to attempt to give a 'voice' to the woman behind this 'case history'.

The sense of pathos and loss comes not only from Alison's struggle with her identity but also the picture painted of the girl before her accident. Without sentimentality, 'Alison' reveals that her younger self had enormous potential – a 'future' – which has been lost alongside her holistic sense of who she is. The penultimate line draws attention to this change in fortune: 'I am her future'. The final line is strongly foregrounded, drawing ironic attention to the contrast between the promise of a 'bright' future and the reality.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Balanced and regular structure* – the poem is organised into tercets, creating a tone of quiet consideration as well as gentle mourning and regret. The second line in each stanza is lengthened, which draws the eye, highlighting the focus on the past life of Alison and suggesting that the pre-accident self was far more interesting and worthy of notice. The final line stands alone as a repeated reminder of what has been lost.
- *Enjambment* is used throughout the poem to link past to present, often presenting a jarring contrast and highlighting the struggle to hold on to memory.
- *Contrasts and contradictions* highlight the difference between past and present, then and now – 'fat / delicate', 'airy / lugs', 'knows / do not remember' – and creates a subtle sense of irony and loss.

Targeting C

What is the difference between the speaker of the poem and the person she describes looking at in the photograph? Ask students to compare the two different 'versions' of Alison presented in the poem.

Targeting A/A*

How does the writer create a sense of pathos as well as possibly envy in the poem? Students could consider the different moods and tones being suggested.

Compares with...

'Medusa' – dramatic monologues, change
 'The Clown Punk' and 'Checking Out me History' – sense of personal identity
 'Brendon Gallacher' – loss

On a Portrait of a Deaf Man

John Betjeman

Background and Context

John Betjeman (1906–1984) was born and raised near Highgate in London, a place mentioned in this poem. A prolific writer, he became Poet Laureate in 1974. The recurrent themes of his work are nature, death and religion. As an agnostic, he became increasingly disaffected with the idea of organised religion and often explored this in his poetry. 'On a Portrait of a Deaf Man' (1940) was published shortly after the death of Betjeman's father, so is often assumed to be an elegy, although it has been suggested that the poem might in fact be a third person self-portrait.

On a Portrait of a Deaf Man

<p><i>Oxymoron introduces the idea of contrast and contradictions</i></p>	<p>The kind old face, the egg-shaped head, The tie, discreetly loud,</p>	
<p><i>Undercuts / contrasts with previous line, intensifying the division between 'then' and 'now'. This pattern is repeated in subsequent stanzas</i></p>	<p>The loosely fitting shooting clothes, A closely fitting shroud.</p>	<p><i>Introduces the idea of death</i></p>
<p><i>Signifies change to present tense</i></p>	<p>He liked old City dining-rooms, Potatoes in their skin, But now his mouth is wide to let The London clay come in.</p>	<p><i>Unassuming, unpretentious</i></p> <p><i>Grotesque image comes as a shock after nostalgic, fond memories of his father</i></p>
<p><i>Reminder that he is deaf</i></p>	<p>He took me on long silent walks In country lanes when young, He knew the names of ev'ry bird But not the song it sung.</p>	
	<p>And when he could not hear me speak He smiled and looked so wise That now I do not like to think Of maggots in his eyes.</p>	<p><i>Understatement; links himself to his father through the word 'like'</i></p>
<p>GLOSSARY</p> <p>Carrara – a type of Italian marble, used in this context to refer to gravestones</p>	<p>He liked the rain-washed Cornish air And smell of ploughed-up soil, He liked a landscape big and bare And painted it in oil.</p>	
<p><i>Change of tense to past conditional contrasts with matter-of-fact tone used elsewhere</i></p>	<p>But least of all he liked that place Which hangs on Highgate Hill Of soaked Carrara-covered earth For Londoners to fill.</p>	
<p><i>Harsh, gruesome image presents the finality of death</i></p>	<p>He would have liked to say good-bye, Shake hands with many friends, In Highgate now his finger-bones Stick through his finger-ends.</p>	<p><i>Repetition of 'liked' increases the sense of this man as kind and gentle</i></p>

Audience made specific in the final stanza, which is directed at the 'God' with whom he is so disillusioned

You, God, who treat him thus and thus,
Say 'Save his soul and pray.'
You ask me to believe You and
I only see decay.

The arbitrary nature of death

Last word highlights main theme of the poem

Themes and Ideas (A01)

Betjeman uses a ballad metre in this elegy, lending the 'portrait' a narrative quality. The jaunty metre and rhyme scheme jars somewhat with the content and theme, which is a bitterly ironic commentary on the arbitrary, careless way in which the 'God' of this poem has reduced the man to 'decay'. The contrast between tone and content provides one of many contrasts and contradictions that link to the main theme – the bleak contrast between life and death.

Betjeman paints a past tense picture of the uncomplicated, unpretentious life of this man: his love of simple pleasures, his creative abilities and his passion for the natural world. Throughout the poem these are contrasted sharply with present tense reminders of his body decaying in 'London clay'. These images speak for themselves, allowing the poet's disillusionment to surface obliquely. The final stanza is a harsh rejection of the Christian message: Betjeman expresses his lack of credulity with the idea of life after death, ending his poem with the finality of 'decay'.

Key Points about Language, Structure and Form (A02)

- *Matter-of-fact tone created through ballad metre and repeated structure of then/now.* The contrast between tone and theme creates a striking contradiction, reinforcing the harsh juxtapositions of life and grotesque decay in the content of the poem: the 'smell of ploughed-up soil' is contrasted with 'Carrara-covered earth', 'Potatoes' with 'London clay', 'shaking hands' with 'finger bones'. These contrasting images consistently remind the reader that this body is now decaying under the ground.
- *The repeated juxtaposition of past and present* further reinforces the conflict being explored, as the poet attempts to come to terms with the finality of death.
- *The straightforward use of full rhyme* throughout the poem enables the poet to contrast surface tone with content/meaning. On another level the rhymes themselves sometimes undercut their predecessor, creating a jarring effect: 'loud/shroud', 'pray/decay'.
- *Uncomplicated, straightforward language* is used to create a picture of gentle benevolence: 'kind', 'smiled', 'wise' and 'friends'. The repetition of 'liked' also suggests that the man in the poem was a simple man, inoffensive and undeserving of the indignity of his end.

Targeting C

How does Browning use descriptive detail and images to present a 'portrait' of this man? Students could examine what is demonstrated about his character from the descriptions of what he 'liked' and how he behaved.

Targeting A/A*

Examine the ways in which irony is used, in particular the contrast between form and meaning.

Compares with...

'The Clown Punk' and 'Casehistory: Alison' – perceptions of others

Character and Voice

Comparison Grid

	Dramatic monologues	Change/the passing of time	Sense of identity	Loss	Imagination and dream worlds	Isolation and loneliness	Power, obsession and jealousy	Women	Prejudice	Relationships
'Brendon Gallacher'		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓
'Casehistory: Alison'	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		
'Checking Out Me History (head injury)'	✓		✓				✓		✓	
'The Clown Punk'		✓	✓						✓	
'Give'	✓					✓				
'Les Grands Seigneurs'	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
'Horse Whisperer'	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	
'The Hunchback in the Park'					✓	✓			✓	
'Medusa'	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
'My Last Duchess'	✓						✓	✓		✓
'On a Portrait of a Deaf Man'		✓	✓	✓						✓
'Ozymandias'		✓	✓				✓			
'The River God'	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
'The Ruined Maid'		✓	✓					✓	✓	
'Sing Song!'	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	