



# ***Feminine Gospels***

Activity Pack for A Level AQA A  
English Literature

[zigzageducation.co.uk](http://zigzageducation.co.uk)

POD  
11490

Publish your own work... Write to a brief...  
Register at [publishmenow.co.uk](http://publishmenow.co.uk)

Follow us on Twitter [@ZigZagEnglish](https://twitter.com/ZigZagEnglish)

# Contents

<b>Product Support from ZigZag Education</b> .....	<b>ii</b>	<b>Motherhood and Children</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>Terms and Conditions of Use</b> .....	<b>ii</b>	Teacher's Introduction .....	59
<b>Teacher's Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>	Debate: Motherhood and Children .....	59
Specification Information .....	2	Teacher's Notes: 'The Light Gatherer' .....	60
Before We Begin: The Exam Essay .....	3	Teacher's Notes: 'The Cord' .....	60
Using <i>Feminine Gospels</i> as a Comparative (Secondary) Text .....	5	Teacher's Notes: 'Work' .....	61
<b>Duffy and <i>Feminine Gospels</i>: An Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>	Form, Structure and Language in 'The Light Gatherer' .....	62
<b>Background Activities</b> .....	<b>9</b>	Form, Structure and Language in 'The Cord' .....	63
'Feminine' .....	9	Form, Structure and Language in 'Work' .....	64
'Gospels' .....	10	Worksheet 1: How Motherhood Is Presented .....	65
Context: First- and Second-wave Feminism .....	11	Practice Essay Questions .....	66
<b>Women's Bodies and the World</b> .....	<b>13</b>	<b>The 'Herstory' of Feminism</b> .....	<b>67</b>
Teacher's Introduction .....	13	Teacher's Introduction .....	67
Debate .....	14	Debate and Independent Research Handout .....	67
Teacher's Notes: 'The Diet' .....	15	Teacher's Notes: 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' .....	68
Teacher's Notes: 'The Woman Who Shopped' .....	16	The Setting and Genre of the Poem: 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' .....	70
Teacher's Notes: 'The Map-Woman' .....	17	Worksheet 1: Things that Get Disrupted in the Poem .....	71
Form, Structure and Language in 'The Diet' .....	18	Worksheet 2: Intertextuality: 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' .....	72
Form, Structure and Language in 'The Woman Who Shopped' .....	19	Worksheet 3: Teachers Transforming! .....	77
Form, Structure and Language in 'The Map-Woman' .....	20	Practice Essay Questions .....	78
Worksheet 1: Finding Evidence .....	21	<b>Poems about Writing Poetry</b> .....	<b>79</b>
Worksheet 2: Change and Transformation .....	22	Teacher's Introduction .....	79
Practice Essay Questions .....	23	Debate: What Makes Good Poetry? .....	79
<b>Exploitation, Degradation and Mistreatment</b> .....	<b>24</b>	Teacher's Notes: 'Gambler' .....	80
Teacher's Introduction .....	24	Form, Structure and Language in 'Gambler' .....	81
Debate: How Women Respond to World Events .....	25	Worksheet 1: Poetic Theories .....	82
Teacher's Notes: 'Loud' .....	26	Practice Essay Questions .....	83
Teacher's Notes: 'Tall' .....	27	<b>Elegies</b> .....	<b>84</b>
Teacher's Notes: 'History' .....	28	Teacher's Introduction .....	84
Form, Structure and Language in 'Tall' .....	29	Notes on Elegies .....	85
Form, Structure and Language in 'Loud' .....	30	Teacher's Notes: 'North-West' .....	85
Form, Structure and Language in 'History' .....	31	Teacher's Notes: 'Death and the Moon' .....	86
Worksheet 1: Planning Your Response .....	32	Form, Structure and Language in 'Death and the Moon' .....	86
Worksheet 2: Planning Your Response .....	33	Teacher's Notes: 'Wish' .....	87
Practice Essay Questions .....	34	Form, Structure and Language questions on 'Wish', 'Death and the Moon' and 'North-West' .....	88
<b>The Non-Existent Voice</b> .....	<b>35</b>	Worksheet 1: 'Wish': Different Ways to Read: Biographical Reading .....	89
Teacher's Introduction .....	35	Non-biographical Reading of 'Wish' .....	89
Debate: Are Women's Voices Heard? .....	35	<b>Whole-text Activities</b> .....	<b>90</b>
Teacher's Notes: 'Anon' .....	36	Context: Historical Events .....	90
Teacher's Notes: 'The Virgin's Memo' .....	37	1. Characterisation and Themes .....	91
Teacher's Notes: 'White Writing' .....	38	2. Themes: Connections between Poems: Finding and Using Evidence .....	92
Teacher's Notes: 'A Dreaming Week' .....	39	3. Themes: Structure of the Collection – First Nine Poems .....	93
Form, Structure and Language in 'Anon' .....	40	4. Attitudes and Values: In Context .....	94
Form, Structure and Language in 'The Virgin's Memo' .....	41	5. Attitudes and Values: Issues in Duffy's Poetry .....	95
Form, Structure and Language in 'White Writing' .....	42	6. The Writer's Use of Language: Imagery .....	96
Form, Structure and Language in 'A Dreaming Week' .....	43	7. The Writer's Use of Language: Techniques Used in the Poems .....	97
Form, Structure and Language in 'Loud' .....	44	8. The Writer's Use of Language: Techniques Used in the Poems .....	98
Worksheet 1: Comparison Exercises .....	45	9. The Writer's Use of Language: Tone and Style .....	100
Practice Essay Questions .....	46	10. Structure .....	103
<b>Women and History</b> .....	<b>47</b>	11. Form .....	104
Teacher's Introduction .....	47	12. Critical Reception .....	105
Debate: Women and History .....	48	13. Essay Practice .....	106
Teacher's Notes: 'The Long Queen' .....	49	14. Essay Practice Tasks .....	107
Teacher's Notes: 'Beautiful' .....	50	<b>Glossary</b> .....	<b>111</b>
Teacher's Notes: 'Sub' .....	51	Glossary of Poetic Metre .....	112
Form, Structure and Language in 'The Long Queen' .....	52	<b>Suggested Answers</b> .....	<b>113</b>
Form, Structure and Language in 'Beautiful' .....	53	Background Activities .....	113
Form, Structure and Language in 'Sub' .....	54	Whole-text Activities .....	115
Form, Structure and Language in 'History': Comparison .....	55		
Worksheet 1: 'Beautiful' .....	56		
Worksheet 2: Planning an Essay: Comparison (AO4) .....	57		
Practice Essay Questions .....	58		

# Teacher's Introduction

## Using the Resource

This Activity Pack is written for A Level AQA A English Literature, for which *Feminine Gospels* is a set text. However, it is also useful as a pack for other specifications or uses, particularly as AQA A has a very holistic approach to the assessment objectives, assessing all of them in the question. It is such a rewarding text to use for so many purposes, and the pack addresses assessment objectives through a thematic teaching approach.

### Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

The resource supports students in producing detailed analytical responses which are alive to the forms, techniques and structures Duffy uses, and it tries to situate these poems in their biographical and ideological contexts.

The structure of the whole collection is also addressed separately. Model answers are provided, and all sections conclude with exam questions presented in the format of AQA A. (NB only the poems covered so far by that stage are addressed, enabling students to deploy their knowledge incrementally.)

The activities are organised into the following sections:

Section 1: Pre-teaching and context material. This helps students to consider the poet's purpose and politics. Here there are pre-reading exercises, and the poems are grouped thematically to assist the process of getting students to write comparatively before they have finished the collection. Most sections are, therefore, preceded by debate prompts intended to evoke some of the political ideas the poems examine.

Section 2: Thematic groupings with teacher's notes and sections on form, language and structure. This is detailed AO2 – close reading and analysis. Questions are intended to be flexible, in that they should provide excellent guidance for lessons but also detailed insights into the crafting that has gone into each poem. They are followed by tasks and worksheets to get the students pulling the poems apart for analysis. They can be used as homework tasks (useful to have something to hand out and easier to chase work!) and for students to generate notes for their folders. These do not take the form of write-on worksheets as students fare better with challenging poetry when they are given comprehension questions that push them towards more extended explanations. The following write-on worksheets are intended for use where a record needs to be kept for purposes of planning comparison, or where a record of references and allusions is useful to help structure understanding of the poems.

Section 3: Resources focused on the whole text, specific assessment objectives, and aspects of analysis. These are useful for the stage where students have an overview of the collection and need to strengthen their comparative skills.

Section 4: A glossary of key terms used in the resource.

Section 5: Suggested answers to relevant activities.

The edition of the text used to create this guide is Duffy, Carol Ann, *Feminine Gospels*, 2002, Picador 9780330486439.

*B Coulthard, April 2022*

## Specification Information

### A Level AQA A English Literature: Section A of Paper 2

*Feminine Gospels* is a set text for Section A of Paper 2. The full list of texts is: *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Waterland*, *Top Girls*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Feminine Gospels* (post-2000) – candidates choose one text (in this case poetry) and then write in Section B in two genres (in this case drama and prose). It is possible to use *Feminine Gospels* as a core text or prose for the 'core' text. Guidance about that is present in 'Using *Feminine Gospels* as a Core Text'. For the time being, let's assume *Feminine Gospels* is being used as a 'core' text.

Let's just remind ourselves of the format of the AQA exam. Assuming *Feminine Gospels* would be like this:

#### Example One

1. A question, assessed for all assessment objectives, on *Feminine Gospels*. This is a 'statement' question asking students to 'examine this idea'.
2. A question on an unseen text, provided in an insert, asking students to 'explore a theme in the extract'.
3. A question asking students to compare the SAME theme from question 2 in the two genres – in this case, as *Feminine Gospels* is the core text and the poetry text, drama and prose.

#### Example Two

As you can see from above, *Feminine Gospels* is relevant to Section A of this paper. It can also be used as a comparative text for Section B if the pupil intends to use poetry. That would look like this:

1. A question, assessed for all assessment objectives, on a **prose or drama** text. This is a 'statement' question asking students to 'examine this idea'.
2. A question on an unseen text, provided in an insert, asking students to 'explore a theme in the extract'.
3. A question asking students to compare the SAME theme from question 2 in the two genres – in this case, *Feminine Gospels* and either prose or drama (whichever is chosen in question 1).

This resource assumes for the most part that *Feminine Gospels* is being used as the core text and therefore, be used in the contextual linking question.

However, in recognition that some teachers might not do this, and some may give *Feminine Gospels* as a core and comparative (second) text. After teaching them, we do provide some questions which are useful if you propose to use *Feminine Gospels* as a comparative text. This is provided in the 'Comparative Text for AQA A'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Before We Begin: The Exam Essay

The exam will ask you to answer a question about the text presenting a view, and in which you agree. It asks you to demonstrate all of the assessment objectives because in order to access them. The task requires you to 'refer to at least two poems' in your answer to make sure you cover detailed close analysis, especially of language, form and structure quite widely across a number of poems.

Weightings for each question are as follows:

AO5: 3 marks; AO4: 3 marks; AO3: 6 marks; AO2: 6 marks; AO1: 7 marks

### Two Types of Question

There are broadly two styles of question that can come up in the exam. BOTH types offer you a choice.

- **Type 1 – Structural**

This type of question will ask you to consider the structure of the collection. Often it will be between two parts of the collection – for example, the early part to the later part – or the more public and public focus of the first half to the more personal poems of the second half. You will not to focus on a specific poem any longer, but offer you the decision as to which part you prefer.

- **Example 1:** Examine the view that the final poems of the collection are just as good as the first half.
- **Example 2:** Examine the view that there are three different sections to the collection. Examine the three broad types of poem within these sections.

- **Type 2 – Debate a statement**

This type of question will ask you to debate a statement about the collection, or a statement. Your job is to answer referring to 'at least two' poems. Here it is expected that you will read the poems carefully. There is no named poem in the question. Sometimes a statement is made by a poet themselves, and the question asks you to consider it.

- **Example 1:** 'In each poem, I'm trying to reveal a truth, so it can't have a false view that Duffy in *Feminine Gospels* presents real women and real women.
- **Example 2:** '*Feminine Gospels* runs miles with myths that don't exist but Duffy is trying to present new images of femininity to put right old ones.
- **Example 3:** Examine the view that Duffy's poetry in *Feminine Gospels* presents women responsible for their own problems.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Assessment Objectives

AO	What this means
AO1: Articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression.	<p>Explain clearly and using the right literary terms – see the glossary. Use formal standard English with good grammar and punctuation. Refer to the text relevant <i>to the question</i>, not just the text. This is what they mean: they want you to present an ‘informed interpretation’ of the text, using any background to the texts and any references the poems make to historical events.</p> <p>AO1 also assesses your ability to make and sustain an argument. Your judgements that are balanced and reasonable in your response. It is about how much you stick to answering the question. If you go off (like the one you did for the mock exam) brilliantly, you’ll lose marks.</p>
AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.	<p>This means explaining how meaning is created by the text in language. ‘Form’ means the shape of the text, the metre, rhyme, rhythm, and strength of the language. ‘Form’ also means the traditional form of the poem, which the poet can either obey or break. If a poet deviates from the form, this can be considered a non-traditional attitude.</p> <p>‘Structure’ means how the text is put together. Where are the links? Is there something in the last stanza that links back to something in the first? Do the words that conclude or begin sentences the way they are? Does a particular point in the text change the way we understand the text at that point; for example, if Duffy reveals something that explains what we understand before that point, or if Duffy makes a statement that only really makes sense when you read further. Structure can include enjambment, caesura and the way punctuation affects meaning.</p> <p>‘Language’ tends to mean devices, figures of speech and techniques that create meaning. This could include metaphor, simile, rhyme, etc. You’ll find some really unusual ones to impress your teacher.</p>
AO3: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.	<p>This means being aware that the world the book was composed in is different from today. It is the context of the 1990s and 2000s. However, it is also the context of the 1940s and 1950s. Duffy seeks in a great many poems to assert the ever-present contexts. These are often merged in the form of one individual, the Long Queen herself. Hence Duffy seeks a global relevance and draws upon. This often leads to a message suggesting the same for women over time, and the same frenzied, intrusive and paranoid world of fame and public attention for Helen of Troy, Marilyn Monroe, and the notorious law that limited freedom of expression for LGBT people from 1953 to 2003, exactly the period this book hails from.</p>
AO4: Explore connections across literary texts.	<p>Exploring connections means explaining what the poems share with each other. For example, the way several poems in the collection explore the body, motherhood, and the relationship to world events.</p> <p>Comparing means comparing the poems to each other. This is to see if something is true of the whole collection, because the poems are connected to each other. Many people compare themes and language; if you want to also compare <i>techniques and purposes</i>.</p>
AO5: Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.	<p>Interpretations of other readers – don’t be fooled by this one. It is a survey of what lots of other people think of the poems. You can use it to understand the different ways in which the same poem can be interpreted; reactions people might have to Duffy’s verse; how the very act of reading a collection can cast different lights on how to view it as a whole. It marries itself to AO3 because very often different contexts of readings and attitudes to a text. Here, it is wise to consider the text as it is now as opposed to when it was first published.</p>

## Using *Feminine Gospels* as a Comparative (Seconda

It can be potentially challenging to find the right focus when using *Feminine Gospel*. A minority of you might be doing this. Here is a simple set of examples to help.

### Example 1

Compare the significance of different cultures and traditions in **two** other texts you

- Remember to include in your answer reference to how meanings are shaped
- You must use **one** prose text and **one** poetry text in your response, at least **one** post-2000.
- You must write about **at least two** poems as well as your prose or drama text

### Indicative content / Approaches that will help:

**THESIS:** *Duffy's examination of the suffering of women due to patriarchy crosses cultural boundaries and makes the same accusations regardless of cultural differences.*

The student could focus on the synthesis Duffy offers between religious, cultural and *Gospels*. 'The Queen's Question' might be a good starting point here, as it presents an argument that represents, protects and advocates for women across all di

Students could comment then on the different types of women, often suffering in such as 'The Woman Who Shopped', 'Work' and 'The Diet', and explain the way the representatives of women from different walks of life.

Students could focus on the way Princess Diana and other figures are amalgamated and image in 'Beautiful'. Here, the Trojan War is evoked through the figure of Helen, gently suggests towards the end that leaving heterosexual dynamics altogether be. Students might also note in this poem and others the way Duffy allows her protagonists to represent a variety of heroines, femmes fatale, and historical figures as a means of across all cultures and boundaries. Here, the ultimate thesis is that the male gaze ultimately destroy women, and the tragic figure of Marilyn Monroe is used.

Lastly, 'Sub' provides an excellent poem to examine, as the female protagonist has parts of history but overlooked or undervalued. This is also true of the profound argument which provides perhaps the best means of exploring how Duffy's accusations against across cultural boundaries, time periods and differences: the same suffering is occurring of Mary observes her son on the cross as it is when she witnesses Nazi atrocities.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Example 2

Compare the significance of conflict in **two** other texts you have studied.

- Remember to include in your answer reference to how meanings are shaped in your texts.
- You must use **one** prose text and **one** poetry text in your response, at least one post-2000.
- You must write about **at least two** poems as well as your prose or drama text.

### Indicative content / Approaches that will help:

*THESIS: Duffy's poetry explores different types of conflict, both external and internal. Internal conflicts are perhaps more striking and complex than the broader political or military conflicts.*

Candidates here could break down their answers into types of conflict. This could be political or military conflict, as it is seen in poems such as 'The Map' and the conflict over the years; it could then move on to examine the personal dimension in terms of love, including in terms of mental health difficulties, in poems such as 'The Woman Who Shopped'.

Candidates can then move on to examine destructive abuse of individual women and the media and 'Sub' or 'Sub' and 'Beautiful' – another type of conflict.

Lastly, there is the productive topic area in 'Tail' and also 'Sub' of Duffy's complicated conflict with public life.

Students may want to connect the laughter of the girls in 'Stafford High' to the threat of force for good, but also to the question of how the feminist movement is progressively dilapidated.

## Example 3

'In modern literature instability is shown to be a condition that profoundly affects...

- Remember to include in your answer reference to how meanings are shaped in your texts.
- You must use **one** prose text and **one** poetry text in your response, at least one post-2000.
- You must write about **at least two** poems in addition to your prose or drama text.

### Indicative content / Approaches that will help:

*THESIS: Instability in Duffy's poetry is often focused on precarity and survival, but in the male gaze, especially as presented through the media.*

Candidates here can examine the insecurity of women's lives as members of the 'poor' and how the constant struggle goes unvalued to raise children.

Instability can be found in many forms elsewhere in the collection, including in moments of lacunae and gaps in texts such as 'The Virgin's Memory' or the joke behind the lost 'The Map'.

Students could examine the theme of 'The Map' and the desperation to heal conflict in 'Beautiful'. They could compare the strength on the way Duffy connects the various protagonists to the lives of ordinary people.

Candidates should consider causes of instability and types of it – including psychological ('The Map-Woman', for example) and those poems that seem to present a mental health issue ('The Woman Who Shopped' and 'The Diet').

Candidates can examine how different characters respond to instability in different ways. 'The Queen', for example, Duffy seems to want to create a sort of patron saint for women in the face of instability or danger.

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## INSPECTION COPY



sonnets which might seek to resolve their earlier tensions in their concluding structure. 'wondering what we lost', personal and moving poetry that continues to connect to the cosmos ('Unseeable in the air, even if poems are stars'). And yet we can view a progression, to the more global or political poems from the first two-thirds of the book (initiated by 'White Writing') from the political to the personal, rather than the other tendency to consider developments and consequences, as if perhaps the child in 'The Light Gatherer'. It is as if Duffy has got the major political ideas out of her system by the rise of feminism in 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High', and what remains is more

'Gambler' and 'A Dreaming Week' explore the nature of poetic creativity and technique, how this should be approached. 'Anon' and 'The Virgin's Memo' both provide overviews of women by history, the keynote of the majority of the collection. And this is overshadowed reassuringly and magically by 'The Long Song' in which the poems themselves are women being 'all her possessions'.

It is worth noting the number of poems that present a sustained concept applied to what we see in much 'metaphysical' poetry. Duffy's poems do this particularly brilliantly. A poem such as 'The Map-Woman' will use its conceit in a comic way to demonstrate wit and provide examples using this method to present the extremes of how women are seen and experienced.

These poems are 'The Map-Woman', 'Beautiful', 'The Diet', 'The Woman Who Shops', 'History' and 'Sub'. It is worth considering how each conceit is motivated by a different background behind it: 'The Map-Woman' – the way the search for identity and belonging is always elusive; 'Beautiful' – the way patriarchy demands ownership of the selfhood as well as the body; 'The Diet' – anger with the expectations of female body image; 'The Woman Who Shops' – commercialisation; 'Work' – anger at the lack of value given to the contribution made by women reproductively; 'Tall' – frustration with the way women and their concerns, especially in the environment, are not listened to, even though they are able to tell 'what kind of way'; 'Loud' – disgust at the atrocities caused by men in the name of war; and 'History' – repeating atrocities caused by patriarchy over the years. You could imagine an exacting list of 'conceit' poems contrast significantly with poems from elsewhere in the collection.

As context marks are available within the scheme of assessment, it can be worth highlighting Duffy's intentions and of the context of writing and reception. Hence introductory knowledge of feminism and to notice the ideas in Duffy's poetry that relate to different

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Background Activities

### 'Feminine'

It is very helpful to be able to use the abstract term 'the feminine' when considering *Gospels*. This is because the poems sometimes personify femininity or provide an insight into their stories.

The idea that the feminine is left out of a culture or attitude can lead people to say that masculinity, and, of course, that men have more power than women. This is called patriarchy.

One sustained idea in the collection is the notion that the 'voice' of public opinion, male-dominated cultural attitudes usurp and distort the true identity of many female figures. This is true of Helen of Troy, whose authentic voice is not presented, but has been considered legitimately hers. The individual themselves is erased in favour of the image of her. Readers today might see this as an aspect of patriarchy operating, and also how it is determined by personality cults, or the ease with which someone can lay legal claim to the freedoms of a famous female pop star. In this way patriarchal forces can dominate and control the lives of women.

It is also useful to consider different cultural attitudes to 'the feminine' when we are considering how 'included' it is in our culture, and also how rigid or varied our cultural views of femaleness are.



### Tasks

1. Discuss what 'feminine' means to you. Discuss whether it means the same things to different people. Why might it mean different things to different people?
2. Look up and examine images of the following examples of femininity:

Kali, the Hindu goddess	The Virgin Mary
Frida Kahlo	Boudica
Joan of Arc	Pope Joan
Marilyn Monroe	Helen of Troy
Cleopatra	Rabia Basri
Elizabeth I	An important woman in your culture
3. Write three adjectives next to each of the figures from task 2. What can you learn about how different cultures view 'the feminine', and femininity?
4. Consider what the characters in this list have in common.
5. In pairs, try to consider examples of how the media has treated famous women. What is the fate of each of the women in the list you have discussed. Then, try to bring in an example of an important female figure in your own culture who might be comparable.



INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## 'Gospels'



### Task 1

Read the text below to learn about the meaning of the term 'gospel'.

#### The etymology of 'gospel'

Originally 'gospel' meant 'good story' with the 'spel' part of the word coming from the same idea as 'good news', meaning the news of the teachings of Jesus. This is the history in English because it has become the victim of a false etymology; this is the sense on it over the years that it might mean something to do with 'God' – of the word might have meant 'God'. So people have for a long time imagined 'God's story'. By 1650 the word 'gospel' could be used to mean 'any doctrine of importance'. The more modern we get, the more general the word can be – it means 'reliable truthfulness'.

#### What is a gospel?

It is generally thought that a gospel can be considered a key part of the New Testament. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell the story of Jesus' life and resurrection, and only define a gospel. There are gospels and holy texts that did not make it into the Bible. The Gospel of Mary. You could look this up.

#### What is a non-canonical gospel?

The gospels within the Bible were selected and approved by the proto-orthodox church around the year 150. This means that the texts that are in the Bible were chosen, and a number were discounted. There is discussion about whether this process was fair, and some of the texts that are not in the Bible do still exist (sometimes all, sometimes parts, sometimes just the titles). These are called the 'Apocrypha', which literally means 'hidden away'.

#### What did the early Church not want to include? What was in the gospels that they did?

There are some interesting ideas in these texts which might not have appealed to the early Church, which didn't 'get in' to the Bible. Here are some things stated or suggested in the gospels:

1. That the women around Jesus were of considerable importance to him, and that Jesus was towards the end of his life that Jesus did want women to lead worship, or to be his disciples.
2. That Jesus had brothers.
3. The Kingdom of God is already present.
4. Jesus ridiculed people who thought of the Kingdom of God as a specific place.
5. The Kingdom of God is not a final destination but a state of self-discovery.
6. Secret knowledge, which cannot really be put into words, is vital to salvation.
7. That Jesus said women could become as important or holy as men and be his disciples.



### Task 2

If these things seem unexpected to you, you might be able to see why a writer might have written an idea of an alternative, feminine 'gospel'. Discuss this and make a list of definitions for a 'feminine gospel'. What might a 'feminine gospel' be?

Share your definitions, then see whether these fit:

1. A gospel written by a woman.
2. A gospel about either a woman or women.
3. A gospel that is feminine.
4. A gospel that lacks or avoids masculine shortcomings.
5. A gospel that asserts a truth that is uniquely feminine.
6. A story with a kind of authenticity a 'male' gospel cannot access.
7. A story of fundamental truths that only women would recognise or know.
8. A feminine story that asserts an undeniable truth.



### Task 3

Why might Duffy write a 'feminine gospel'?

Discuss this together reflecting on what we have talked about above. Create a list of reasons that make sense for why Carol Ann Duffy wanted there to be a book of 'feminine' gospels.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Context: First- and Second-wave Feminism

Duffy's collection often reflects on aspects of the history of feminism. This is sometimes referred to as 'waves'. Here we can consider these and explore the different stages.

### First-wave feminism (nineteenth century to early twentieth century)

Starting in the nineteenth century, the first generation of feminism concerned itself with the rights of women to engage with democracy. Mary Wollstonecraft, the writer of the *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), also argued that women should be educated, as they might not know why they ought to cooperate with men or why they ought to be virtuous. That as mothers are a part of how children learn, they also ought to be educated, or properly. This movement also tried to deal with the right for women to have possession of property, a legal existence separate or independent from their husbands or male relatives.

### Second-wave feminism (1960s to 1980s)

Second-wave feminism focused on *de facto* inequalities and more on situations of discrimination due to unfair conduct or laws, use of authority or judgements. This is also the period of women's liberation – including the right to end a pregnancy. Here, also, are the spaces and institutions that concern themselves with women; an example might be the Women's Centre in Cambridge which came about as a result of first-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism is now that women have a legal existence. Second-wave feminists are keen to insist on the basis for discrimination. At this stage, also, we see a concern about male attitudes towards women which women are valued – including for their appearance.



### Task 1

Categorise the statements below as first-wave feminism or second-wave feminism.

Women should not be declined job offers on the grounds of sex, or that they are likely to get pregnant
Women should not suffer rape in marriage – rape in marriage is still rape
Women should have the right to vote in elections
Women should not have to accept the existence of a glass ceiling
Women should have access to places which concern themselves with women's needs: women's refuges, rape crisis centres, safe spaces for women
Women should be allowed to participate in conversations about politics
Women should be allowed to work
Gay women (and men) should be allowed to have families
Women who are married or have children should be allowed to work
Women should be allowed to have access to their children if they get divorced
Women should be allowed to inherit property if their husbands die
Women shouldn't be subjected to 'beauty' standards as these objectify women
Women who get jobs should have the same employment rights as men
Women should be paid the same as men for doing the same job
Women should have the right to choose whether to become pregnant
Women should have the right to attend school or university
Women should call out 'de facto' inequality – where laws are not unequal but numbers or practices are
Equal rights under the law must not be denied due to sex
Decent childcare is necessary to ensure women can work effectively
Women who get married should be considered the co-owners of their house

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



### Radical feminism (1960s onwards)

Radical feminism worked to achieve the elimination of all forms of male domination. They felt that society was fundamentally a patriarchy in which men dominate and subject women. They were very concerned about, and even disapproving of, all male-dominated movements for other kinds of equality. They were critical of social norms that limited women's lives to the expectation to be in the domestic sphere. Radical feminists rejected the idea of equality of principle, emphasising instead that women are also different: they didn't want to emulate men. They rejected measuring freedom in comparison to male freedom, valuing determination more than equality with men because, in a male-dominated society, being like men as desirable, as it is aping or emulating their behaviour, which is often what they wanted the 'liberation of women, as women'. There were some radical feminists who lived in communities with men as long as a male-dominated world persisted. Radical feminism was generally an appalling result of coercion and poverty, and women, such as those in the 'Feminist Manifesto', were also quite good representations of women, regarding these as objectification.

### Third-wave feminism (1990s – 2010s)

Third-wave feminism involved a redefining of types of feminism, especially into strands with different views on gender issues. One key notion was 'intersectionality', which refers to the experience of oppression or discrimination on different levels; for example, in terms of race and sex. It embraced different cultural identities and worked to abolish gender-role stereotypes on individual identity and diversity. There is a consciousness that some of the progress made was worked mainly for middle-class white women, while working-class women and ethnic minorities experienced significant problems. Many third-wave feminists felt that women were given the 'waves' for granted, 'like fluoride in water'. Third-wave feminism challenged some of the assumptions made about what women wanted or needed from the second wave; it has far more individual stories (as this is the first fully 'online' generation of feminists) and perspectives, is, therefore, more fragmented, but also more diverse. This is the first 'wave' to challenge the rights of trans as an important issue, and it is influenced by queer theory, which examines the relationship between gender and sexuality. Third-wave feminists sometimes approved of expressions of femininity or female sexuality, but rejected objectification; they rejected any attempt to define how women should present themselves, as this could come into conflict with the anti-pornography aspects of the feminist movement.



### Task 2

Categorise the statements below as radical feminist or third-wave feminist.

It is OK for women to engage in marriage as long as they have been able to agree the terms independently
Different women can define feminism differently
Women are essentially seen as animals by men
Childbearing is the most important work there is – and should accordingly be the most highly paid
In a patriarchy, all sex is rape
The nuclear family oppresses women
Transgender rights are important because there are diverse types of women
Lesbianism is a viable political response to male domination in society and relationships
All heterosexual sex in a patriarchy is rape
Working-class women often experience oppression in ways middle-class women won't
Marriage, prostitution and heterosexuality are all patriarchal institutions
Patriarchy is not only the oldest and most universal form of oppression, but also the primary form
Women can express their sexuality very openly in a way that attracts attention, and this is empowering

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



# Women's Bodies and the W

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poems

- 'The Diet'
- 'The Woman Who Shopped'
- 'The Map-Woman'

### Debate

The opening debate is intended to help students discuss the political ideas that surround the important truths that are, perhaps, 'beyond' political. The key here is to steer students towards identity as it is presented in these texts.

- 'The Diet' presents the idea of a woman trying to escape her problems only to find that, indeed, consuming them.
- 'The Woman Who Shopped' presents a horrific addiction to shopping, leading the protagonist to find her body into a department store.
- 'The Map-Woman' describes the life of a character trying to escape or understand her body. powerfully, there is a sense of the body's identity having more control, because the 'map' reasserts itself.

### Teacher's Notes

These can be shared with students to gain more insight into the poems, but perhaps some questions have been attempted.

### Comprehension Questions

These are suitable to enrich responses in the lessons, to get students writing clearly, and give out for homework tasks once some encounter with the poem is established.

### Worksheet 1: Finding Evidence

This worksheet is intended to get students comparing poems and making an argument from their own perspective. For this reason they should, in discussion with each other, work on the argument on the left as well as locate evidence to support it.

### Worksheet 2: Change and Transformation

This worksheet presents the students with a chance to consider how change takes place and connect with the writer's purpose. This should then be used to generate critical writing and concentrate on the effect of the devices they have chosen.

### Essay Questions

Once you are used to the format and students know the three poems – perhaps an excellent task to invite students to make up their own questions. The ensuing debate, in which of their peers' questions most closely resemble the style of the exam board. Asking questions and asking their peers to work with them in planning responses is also well attempted even when they 'only know' three poems.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Debate

### Women's Bodies

This is intended to get students discussing political and feminist issues concerning

1. A woman's body makes a lot of the decisions in her life for her.
2. All the products that exist for women to use on their bodies are just a form of
3. If you're a woman, you just can't get away from the fact that nature wants you
4. Women who want to lose weight ought to stick to a diet with discipline.
5. Women's bodies are displayed in the media as if they are commodities or poss
6. Because they are women, and their bodies change over time, women have mo
7. Women who choose not to have children are missing out on what it really me
8. Women shouldn't want to change the way their bodies are. Men don't make n

### Dieting

1. It's up to me whether I go on a diet. I can look the way I want to look, that's m
2. The pressure put on women to conform to a male-defined ideal body image is
3. Diets never work because they don't address the root problem of self-image o
4. Men rarely go on diets.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Diet'

This poem ironically explores the maxim 'inside every fat woman there is a thin one out', and works in the manner of a fairy tale to make this literal. However, there is a parasitic, even, perhaps, horrific behaviour of the character who becomes an inhabitant of the body. Duffy, perhaps moralistically, may be arguing that obsessively thin women are, in fact, still controlled by the idea of being fat through their aversion to it. This is the 'avalanche' of food towards the end.

### Form and Structure

Enjambment (necessary as opposed to revelatory) is used skilfully to connote aspects of self-esteem: 'half a stone / shy' or to connote the universality of concern over body image: 'tiny others / joined in'. This quality often occurs in Duffy's short, aphoristic poems as these problems are a 'given' or generally understood.

'The Diet' also follows the style of the poems in the first half of the collection that use metaphysical poetry in the specific use of microcosm and macrocosm. If the woman's proportions, as in 'The Diet', becomes the opposite, but still personifies the body, the poem obediently personifies the conceit by applying it literally and following its logic – and reaching a conclusion. A difference in Duffy's use of this technique is its purpose: in metaphysical poetry, it is rhetorical, but for Duffy the added sense of irony creates a result we do not wish to see.

### Language

Internal rhyme often occurs to strengthen the aphoristic tone, among metaphors that are being extremely profound and thought-provoking, yet brief and apparently terse ('she lived in a tear'). The repetitive and formulaic rhymes create an urgent and, perhaps, obsessive tone. They combine also to develop a sense of fairy-tale logic, and the poet also 'fakes' a daughter ('true daughter') to foreground the pointlessness of the activity of the protagonist. The poem relies on the physical drama of her minute size – 'she floated into / the bar' – allusion to *Alice in Wonderland*, or even *Gulliver's Travels*. It may be a Freudian idea of appetite and it has manifested, as Jung would say, 'in terms of fate'. Her appetite, of karma and becomes the determining factor in her identity.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Woman Who Shopped'

This poem may be viewed as a more intense version of the logic espoused in the poem 'Beautiful'.

### Form and Structure

The use of short clauses and listing can be compared to the last poem, as can the theme of an emotionally rooted addiction in the style of a hyperbolic folk or fairy tale. However, the poem is in very controlled shapes, suggesting the rigidity of the compulsive attitude. The poem is marked by enjambement and caesurae (that is to say punctuation), making the entire first half of the poem a single sentence. The poem presents the protagonist becoming a retail outlet and ceasing to be human, turning a person into a being composed of the matter of her addiction. The response of the poet is, because, initially, she welcomes it, and this is associated with her femininity: 'She is a Chanel'. She never abandons her new identity, but instead becomes a hideous, vulgar, and grotesque version of capitalism Duffy abhors demonstrated by Duffy's use of the 'C' word. Duffy postpones her transfiguration until the last stanza, playing the satirical trope of becoming a person for humorous reasons.

### Traditions

There is a sense in which the ultimate change into a negative version of her addiction is a fairy tale (in which there must be redemption) but that of Greek myth, particularly *Metamorphoses*. It is fair to say that her ultimate fate recalls that heaped upon many aspiring mortals by the gods. Transformations in Duffy's poetry are often just as ironic as in mythology, even when they are positive, as they are with the change of Daphne into a tree by Apollo. Ovid and Duffy's transformations are very physical and precise, and each poem transformation is described in detail – as Daphne's feet become roots, for example, or the speaker become 'revolving doors'. The irony is comparable to Narcissus falling into the lake and drowning. The image of birds voiding themselves 'in her stone hair' recalls such Ovidian myths. Firstly, the transformation into stone recalls many fates of human victims of the gods, such as the punishment with the murder of her 14 children. Secondly, the defecation presents another kind of transformation that wreaked in classical literature by harpies – who also 'shriek' as Duffy's birds do. Finally, the background into Duffy's poem, it is possible to consider that she presents the modern 'sin' to that of offending the gods in classical antiquity.

### Comparisons

The poem also bears comparison to 'Beautiful' in that it concerns itself with the commodification of the female body under capitalism. It bears comparison to 'The Long Queen' because, while not presenting a deity, it does immortalise its horrifying protagonist as a kind of modern church. Unlike 'The Long Queen', it is prostitution – because the protagonist welcomes and anticipates being the vehicle for a ceremony, which involves the desecration of her own body: 'She would have a sale overnight at her cunt'.

### Language and Imagery

Duffy's metaphor can be read backwards: while the female character becomes a commodity, she sacrifices her identity and subject to commerce, the grotesque building her body into a commodified version of femininity in a way that clearly disgusts the poet.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Map-Woman'

This poem provides a perspective on the position of a woman in the world, and her relationship with her own sense of identity. Its title and treatment perhaps recall a feminist novel, *On the Body*, which contains the lines:

*Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights: the codes of the lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the Braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes, never to tell the whole story.*

Duffy's poem also uses the simile 'like Braille'.

### Language

The poem explores the connection between a homeless woman and her environment. The curiously Hardy-esque question arises: whether the landscape is inscribed upon her, or whether she is inscribed upon the landscape. If we are to read the latter, then we can view her initially as having an identity. However, she doesn't want this identity; she cannot bear it, and later tries to disguise her skin. The poem presents the idea of being female, but has to come to terms with what it means. Duffy exposes the notion of different ideas to her mind, and that trying to escape this reality is ultimately futile 'to the mile'.

The Map-Woman needs to evolve and change her life, which is why she sheds her identity altogether successfully, because her original identity reasserts itself in the conclusion of the blueprint. She is, however, pictured trying to escape ('she ate up the miles') the town to take up residence somewhere new or 'off the map'; however, it is the map of her life that is tugging her back to her original experience and identity. Unlike the Long Queen, she does not need to; however, she is still representative of a totality of female experience.

### Form and Structure

Free verse with many internal rhythms and discrete units connected by rhyme – but with a controlled shape – intensify the sense of restriction and order experienced by the Map-Woman. It shares many aspects with the idea of an audacious conceit in metaphysical poetry, but it develops and augments this, an extended metaphor running throughout the poem, but it develops and augments it over time, its appropriateness and eloquence. Additionally, the map presents a kind of blueprint of thought that would, in fact, interest the metaphysical poets, representing, as it does, enlightenment and the achievements of science in assisting understanding of the world. If possible symbols of patriarchal understanding or attitudes, then one could strengthen the metaphor by portraying a woman imprinted or etched with the expectations of men. Maps feature in many poems and are used as parts of conceits intended to seduce or, perhaps, overpower, his poem presented the conceit that each human being is a microcosm of the external world. Duffy, in 'The Map-Woman', plays with this idea to suggest that such an analogy may not be able to live with for a modern woman.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Diet'

<p><b>Stanza 1</b></p> <p>How do the first two lines differ from the rest of the poem? Does the opening seem prosaic to you?</p> <p>What effect does the list have?</p> <p>Are the rhymes positioned terminally here (at the end of the line)?</p> <p>Is there any major food type not included in the list of things not to eat?</p> <p>Which word appears at the end of line 3 going into line 4? What's the effect of this?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 2</b></p> <p>What impression is created by the words <i>soured</i>, <i>aged</i> and <i>preened</i> by prefixes?</p> <p>What is personified in this stanza? How does it come to personify?</p> <p>What two ideas about dieting are connected by the word 'and'?</p> <p>Which word in this stanza opens up the opening of the next, and why?</p>
<p><b>Stanza 3</b></p> <p>What technique does the writer use to create the tone of a fairy tale in this stanza?</p> <p>What is ironic about the phrase 'Anorexia's true daughter'? Does it sound like an allusion? To what? Is it really an allusion?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 4</b></p> <p>What do you think the poet is saying to the reader that she meets?</p> <p>Who might these 'other women' be?</p>
<p><b>Stanza 5</b></p> <p>What is the expected meaning of 'floated into the barman's eye'? Can you explain the joke here? What has it got to do with the theme of women's bodies?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 6</b></p> <p>Explain fully what the poet is saying for the poet's message about attitudes to their bodies.</p>
<p><b>Stanza 7</b></p> <p>What do you make of the metaphor that the dieting woman (or perhaps all women who diet) end up in a 'stomach'?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 8</b></p> <p>How does the listing help to create the image of the woman who diets? What does she emerge from the final stanza?</p> <p>What is ironic about her?</p>

<p><b>Form</b></p> <p>Most stanzas have a list with very short and fast syllabic emphasis, for example 'I can locate most of these and then explain the purpose of presenting these rapid'. Which line in each stanza is always end-stopped? End-stopping and enjambment ending is employed most in the poem? Do thoughts or units of sense ever conclude an impression do you get of the emotions of the woman who diets from the way Duffy writes her sentences?</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p><b>Developing a response</b></p> <p>Does Duffy express anything in this poem about the desire to be considered attractive of the woman who diets?</p> <p>What questions would you ask the character in the poem if you could meet her?</p> <p>Reflect on the debate you had to begin with. What is this poem saying about how we see dieting?</p> <p>Is dieting a metaphor for something else in this poem?</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Woman Who Shopped'

<b>Stanza 1</b> What is the symbolic meaning of the 'apple' in the first stanza? What does this tell us about how Duffy views the actions and aspirations of the Woman Who Shopped? <b>TIP: Think of the Bible!</b>	<b>Stanza 1</b> Which common phrase is used in the first stanza ('You can't be...')? How does the theme of the poem develop in the first stanza and the whole poem?
<b>Stanza 1</b> What does the word 'shilling' make you think about Duffy's message? Does she feel that addiction to shopping is only a modern problem? Why is it rhymed with 'willing'?	<b>Stanza 3</b> What do you make of the 'wedding dress, groom' which to prepare for? What is the Woman Who Shopped's view of her honeymoon?
<b>Stanza 6</b> What is the significance of the relative 'where the lights from the shops ran like rain in the rain' used to convey? What does it tell us about the emotions of the protagonist?	<b>Stanza 7</b> How does your sympathy for the protagonist alter between the beginning and the conclusion?

<b>Technique and Structure</b> What is the poetic conceit used in the second half of this poem?	<b>Interpretation</b> Bearing in mind that the poem is about an ordinary woman with a shopping addiction, what do you feel has happened to her?
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Techniques Used</b> <b>Poetic conceit:</b> An extended metaphor with complex or audacious logic that runs through an entire poem, or a large section of one. Conceits are normally <i>unusual</i> or <i>unexpected</i> metaphors. You can get to understand this by making short conceit poems of your own. Example: <b>The conceit of comparing someone crying to a motorway:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>His tears scream past, cars pushing the speed limit</li> <li>Running down his face made of tarmac and the scene of crashes</li> <li>His moans and groans noxious gases and their</li> <li>Sound continuous, motors moving through the night.</li> </ul> <b>The conceit of comparing the woman's body to a car engine:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fire moving my millions per minute</li> <li>Vibrating heart, under my bonnet</li> <li>Give me a test drive, charge my spark plugs</li> </ul>	<b>Final Stanza</b> Which lines in the final stanza are in opposition to the car department store? What do you think of the imagery of the final stanza? Has she really turned away from shopping? Could Duffy be pressing her fate? Which other poems use a conceit that runs through the poem? In what way does the poem share a similar fate?
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What argument do both 'The Diet' and 'The Woman Who Shopped' present about weight? Is there a different type of consumption in both poems? <b>TIP: Look up the alternative</b>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Map-Woman'

INSPECTION COPY

### Stanza 1

Rhyme only occurs late in this stanza. Why do you think this is, and what is the effect? What do they emphasise?

What allegorical message does Duffy seem to be presenting about the connection between her destiny in the last four lines of stanza 1?

### Stanza 2

The poet uses the simile 'her veins / like shadows below the lines of the map'. Can you see her separated from her body?

What attitude to tradition can we gain from the line referring to graves?

### Stanza 3

If the bodies of the female characters ('mothers and wives') are 'folded into the earth', does this connect them directly with the Map-Woman's identity? What about any other characters in other poems?

### Stanza 4

How does the poem suggest a connection in this stanza? What ideas does the writing in the line 'blue-lipped' suggest?

### Stanza 5

How does the Map-Woman feel about her identity in this stanza? Do you think her attitude to her body is something a lot of women feel?

### Stanza 6

What do you make of the phrase 'indelibly printed on the map'? How does this connect with the attitude in stanza 2? Does the Map-Woman seem to 'belong'?

### Stanza 7

What comments can be made about the line 'her father's house pressing into the bone', bearing in mind the people mentioned in stanza 6? Does the Map-Woman seem to 'belong' in her town?

### Stanza 8

Has the Map-Woman given up? What options does she consider?

### Stanza 9

Reading this stanza, is it possible to argue that a woman might feel that her body is capable of taking over her life? Do you think her life would be easier if she followed her body's certainty and gave in to it?

### Stanza 10

Can the Map-Woman escape? What does she want? Look at all the positive things we have seen in the last stanza, and at the end of Duffy saying about identity.

### Stanza 11

Survey the poem for images that could represent tradition. What is Duffy's attitude to it? Can we explain why the Map-Woman feels out of place?

### Stanza 12

Do you think women often feel like this? Why? To please whom?

### Stanza 13

What suggestion is made by the line 'as though / it belonged to somebody else'? What does this suggest about the idea of ownership of beauty in 'Beautiful'?

What message is finally presented about how a woman can escape her identity?

### Research

The title and content perhaps recall a feminist novel by Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body*. What does it contain the lines:

*Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights: the lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that it like Braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes, not to show much, or tell the whole story.*

Duffy's poem also uses the simile 'like Braille'. What does this tell you about how female identity, and how the body features in women's lives and experience?

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 1: Finding Evidence

Fill in the blanks (don't forget the left-hand column). Find evidence from at least two of the poems that doesn't fit with the theory on the left, write 'different' in the box for it.

	'The Diet'	'The Map-Woman'
Duffy considers women's attitudes to their own bodies to be...		
These three poems present the idea that women are trapped by...		'the prison and hospital stamped on her back'
These poems view the way capitalism and the media influence women as...		
The transformation that takes place in this 'body' poem may make the reader feel...		
Duffy presents the body as a source of identity for women, even if...		
Duffy explores the way capitalism uses ..... to make men feel...		
	'lunch, dinner, thinner'	'down south, abroad, en route, up north'

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 2: Change and Transformation

AO2: Commenting on language, form and structure

How does the poet present **change and transformation** in these poems?

	Language	Form
	How do the poetic techniques change from beginning to end? <i>What is the effect?</i> (Consider: listing, conceits, imagery, enjambment, and alliteration. Notice types of words – do they occur regularly to structure the poem? Nouns, adjectives, adverbs)?	How are the stanzas shaped? Do stanzas occur at similar points? Is the poem the style of a particular type of speech? any evidence of poetic conceits? How do line length affect the experience of the poem?
'The Diet'		
'The Woman Who Shopped'		
'The Map-Woman'		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Practice Essay Questions

In your answers you should **either** refer to **two** or **three** poems in detail or range over the whole collection. Here you should use *the ones you know so far*.

In your answers you should **either** refer to **two** or **three** poems in detail or range over the whole collection. Here you should use *the ones you know so far*.

1. Examine the idea that Duffy, in *Feminine Gospels*, feels women are frequently oppressed. You must refer to at least two poems in your answer.
2. Examine the view that Duffy regards the body as a key aspect of female gender. Refer to at least two poems in your answer.
3. A critic has stated that the 'real world' is the focus of this collection. Examine this view. Refer to at least two poems in your answer.
4. Duffy presents women's lives as bound up with capitalism. Examine this idea. Refer to at least two poems in your answer.
5. Examine the idea that Duffy's characters are always searching for something. Refer to at least two poems in your answer.
6. Examine the idea that Duffy feels nothing has been achieved to improve the lives of women. Refer to at least two poems in your answer.
7. Examine the idea that Duffy presents all of her important female characters as flawed. Refer to at least two poems in your answer.
8. 'The personal poems in the collection pay far less attention to political concerns than the historical poems.' Discuss.

### Practice Essay Questions (Other Formats)

9. 'The Map-Woman is typical of most of the collection because she is constantly searching for a sense of self and identity.' Discuss.
10. 'The Woman Who Shopped' is the key to the collection because it suggests that women are to blame for their problems as society.' Discuss the fairness of this view.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Exploitation, Degradation and Mis

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poems

- 'Loud'
- 'Tall'
- 'History'

These three poems explore the attitude of female characters to suffering and the concern – presenting a sense of powerlessness, frustration and isolation. The frustration in 'Tall', which also presents a sort of allegory of Duffy's poetic career, which makes her separate from the world and increasingly lonely as her fame (and height) grows. The mind the tone of a fable, presenting the very female objections to suffering in the world. There is, therefore, a particular emphasis in the title of the collection emerging, being taken to indicate Duffy's despair at the impossibility of change for the better. All the narratives could be considered 'gospel' in the sense of necessary for the awareness of the world.

It is well worth making sure students gain an appreciation of what is presented as 'gospels'. That to be 'loud' is to break a traditional taboo attitude towards women. Duffy, perhaps, deplores. The feminine is similarly strong in 'Tall', where the final poem is maternal (in a cosmic and symbolic way). Equally maternal is the presence of Mary, the idea of a shrewd but beleaguered goddess as a guardian of historical events, at the notion that she is also completely ignored and unvalued by the world at large. Later will come across the apocryphal voice of the Virgin Mary making her second appearance.

### Debate

This is intended to get students discussing political and feminist issues concerning especially tragic events. Begin by inviting students to comment on these statements and then discuss in order of how much they feel they ring true.

### Teacher's Notes

These can be shared with students to gain more insight into the poems but, perhaps, questions have been attempted.

### Comprehension Questions

These are suitable to enrich responses in the lessons, to get students writing clearly and to give out for homework tasks once some encounter with the poem is established.

### Worksheet 1: Planning Your Response

This can be used to begin to get students used to planning and writing responses. It is for poems in this subgroup.

### Worksheet 2: Planning Your Response

This can be used to get students to use all six of the poems covered so far in planning and writing great homework tasks after doing Worksheet 1.

### Essay Questions

These practice questions relate to this cluster and should be attempted after studying the poems.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Debate: How Women Respond to World Events

1. Women are much more affected by suffering in the news.
2. Most of the women I know are apathetic and think politics is just for men.
3. If women care about how much suffering there is in the world, why don't we hear more often?
4. If a woman was president of the United States, there would be less war in the world.
5. Women don't want to join the army as much as men do because they are inherently weaker.
6. The reason women are not always keen to discuss what they hear in the news is because they are afraid of words.
7. Women might feel isolated from the political sphere because they see old men arguing all the time.
8. Many women are very busy caring for children. Perhaps it's too painful if you think about children might be suffering or dying elsewhere in the world.



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'Loud'

The quotation that prefaces this poem comes from a report in *The Guardian* news on Saturday 27 October 2001, about the US bombing of Afghanistan. Roy Carroll, the reporter, catalogues a great many appalling privations and circumstances of death. The report begins: 'Civilians wounded in allied bombing raids are fleeing into Pakistan. The system in southern Afghanistan has effectively collapsed, refugees said yesterday. The circumstances of an 11-year-old boy wounded in the bombing:

*In another bed at Ward B Abdul Wasaj, 10, lay absolutely still, trying to hold his body in a frame lest it inflame the broken hip that encased his left leg in plaster. He was lying on his back, his head in front of his Kandahar home at 10am nine days ago when a plane dropped a bomb several feet in the air, he said. 'I heard a boom and then I went unconscious.'*

The poem opens with a description of someone 'finding their voice' – another example of the theme that lie behind the poems in general. Duffy appears to be considering the idea of a woman taking on a military starting with an ordinary, everyday individual. Duffy's displeasure with the world is evident here as she is in 'Tall'. Because the main character learns to 'roar', the poem is a kind of triumph in which a goal is achieved through her newfound militancy. Duffy places the poem on the shoulders of a civilised religion:

*She switched to the news. It was all about Muslims, Christians, Jews.*

It is at this point that the elemental forces of the feminine explored in 'Tall' and 'W' are brought to the fore. The language that describes her cry is studded with classical allusion and her 'shriek' becomes a shout that flies up into the air, recalling the earlier theme of needing distance in order to gain perspective. In these lines recalls Homeric dactylic hexameter, with its mixture of triple beats and the sickening hiss of a thrown spear', as does the 'spear' which recalls the war. The 'shriek' in this poem is righteous, in contrast to that of the birds at the end of 'The Fish'. This perhaps recalls the wailing for the dead that we find in classical literature. This spirit is, unlike those in the other poems hitherto, vengeful. Her response is to stomp 'the aspects of the society that disgusts her: 'She bit radios' to stifle their sound. Duffy understands to be tangible, real and possible to unleash, and the poem is a feminine world. The vengeful colossus is a metaphor for Duffy's own response to the news of the world, but it may also be a kind of prediction or omen. Some scholars (including Jung) have emphasised what Jung would call 'the dark side of the feminine', pointing to the feminine wisdom in the logic of fate. If the ecology of the world visits tsunami upon the hubris of the environment, it is 'their own fault' and a kind of balancing effect.

The poem presents the argument that the righteous rage of an individual woman is justified. Her rampage involves 'swelling the rivers, felling the woods'. It seems that nature has every right to extinguish or punish the civilisations that commit sins. Her shriek becomes a shout through creation, and this sound is symbolically nothing other than the poem itself. This moment of Duffy's own outrage. Duffy has manifested her 'shriek' of outrage in the poem, is strong enough to make the moon, in a way, but the poem itself.

This poem presents yet another magnification or extension of a metaphor seen in 'Tall', louder, and more endless, or dieting into near non-existence. This presence of the feminine is its capacity for infinite focus or utterness; not all of the elements of the principle (although many do), but they do all follow their vocation, instincts, or the

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Teacher's Notes: 'Tall'

In this poem the feminine is isolated, transcendent and ultimately eternal. Through a familiar, idea of taking a transformation to an extreme, Duffy explores a typical turn in her poetry. 'The Woman Who Shopped' ('shop yourself to death') and 'The Diet' (a thin woman who has been suggested that the phrase 'growing as a woman' might be the root of the condition) continues to grow to gigantic, even cosmic proportions. Crucially, she outgrows her environment; she is corrupt and limited; at the conclusion of the poem the society she leaves may be corrupt, but it conveys this with the image of the twin towers and people falling from the windows. The poem is a catharsis because the (now astral, cosmic) protagonist catches 'them' (the people falling). Here, as in 'The Map-Woman', the protagonist seems to remain connected to the world, despite her powerful feeling of disconnection from it. This final gesture has an almost religious quality. As has argued that her 'tall' woman has evolved beyond the normal concerns of plane identity in the heavens, and yet she still seems to care enough about humanity enough to

A number of metaphysical suggestions arise from this complex final image. One might suggest forgiveness or deliverance, which would need to be ultimately feminine. Another might be that she regrets her distance from her subjects. Another might be that the poet, whose role is to explore the condition of humanity from a distance, has to adopt a cathartic role of the woman as an avatar of the poet.

'Tall' certainly can be read, to an extent, as a reflection on a poetic career, and also the poem might suggest that Duffy's rise to fame has made her increasingly isolated from the world. The final image might be a wish for reconnection through a gesture of love or faith. 'She' is at a stage in her career where she sought a more private abode and, perhaps, a more private way to write about the world. The question of whether poetry can serve to benefit the world is a line 'She cured no-one', reflecting perhaps Auden's humanistic pathos and insistence on the transcendental. What is paradoxical about the poem is the fact that the conclusion of the poem is a spirituality through the protagonist's gesture of rescue for the souls of those dying in the towers. It further considers what might be said to be the role of the poet in accessing the modern world, even the collective unconscious, through the line 'She told them what kind of weather it was'.

There are many indications in the poem that this challenging experience of becoming tall, evolved, endlessly wise, isolated, distant, however you want to read it, is natural for a tall woman. The opening presents this tallness as a 'wish', indeed something to be wished for. 'Christening gift' suggests the vocation of tallness is commensurate with her identity. 'Personal birds sang' is comfortable with her experience earlier on, and the idea that 'personal birds sang' is the biographical fallacy of a time in Duffy's career when her success as a poet was clouded as the poem nears a conclusion and, if anything, the response to the poets are the 'unacknowledged legislators of mankind' is treated with bitter irony. 'Wiser.' When she reaches cosmic proportions, outgrowing planets, there is 'nothing'.

The poem is very concerned with the idea of the poet's perspective, and how to gain a vantage point for the tall woman. She works from, a turret, a bar, but then she is leaving her environment and moving to distance herself yet further. This persists throughout the poem. This endless distance is the attempt to discuss the teleology of the tall woman. The poem is a homecoming, the image of deliverance. Here, as in 'The Map-Woman', the protagonist's complete evolution away from the norm, is met with the importance of a return to the origin. The difference is that, in 'Tall', there is also the implication that the woman must make this return and they have to be willing to save the world.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Teacher's Notes: 'History'

The rhythm in this poem fluctuates between iambic and dactylic, often reaching a spondee which are used to emphasise a short phrase. The impression, therefore, is of a life. The opening lines lead us to 'half dead', perhaps a description of a character who is dead in the later poem 'Wish'. She can also be characterised as a goddess, related to the (also) very historical goddess of the opening poem – perhaps they should, in fact, however, we have the shadow side of the private, secretive and feminine celebrant 'Queen'. Both characters are chroniclers of history, but this one looks outwards at the world, acting as the custodian of private, individual feminine histories.

At the opening of the poem the protagonist seems to be a naturalistically portrayed woman, but the image of her is a message and an agenda: Duffy is effectively asking us to meet daily. This leads to the ironic statement 'she was history', suggesting that her story is allowed to rest in the reader's mind only as a relic to the tremendously shocking and beleaguered and moribund human being we are witnessing is, in fact, history personified. This is unexpected. It is introduced in the second line of the third stanza, a stanza conditioned through the two previous stanzas to understand simply as a means of the poem allows us to assert the notion that modern people have a poor grasp of history and the pathos of the Virgin Mary's pitiful grief to illustrate this. It is at this point that the work of T S Eliot, through a reversal of the language of his poem 'Journey of the Magi' has complicated the agenda of Eliot's poem – the first was in 'Queen Herod' who transfigured the three wise kings into the three wise queens. Here, the allusion serves the agenda. In Eliot's poem, one of the Three Wise Men (the 'Magi') is talking about the Christ Child, but with disillusionment and confusion. The revelation was not blissful; it brought home to him the fact of his own mortality and his sinfulness as a human being. His salvation. His world has been turned upside down by the arrival of the Messiah, and the future. Duffy reverses his meditation on birth and death and presents something from a different perspective – her poem looks at the moment of Christ's death on the cross rather than the birth. The confused wise man speaks thus:

*...were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.*

Through the discovery of the new religion, his old religion has to be abandoned and he is therefore in flux and he wishes he had not gained such a shocking and harsh revelation. This is an expression of Eliot's own confusion about religion and spirituality.

Duffy's perspective on the same theme is different because of a number of important differences. She looks at the proceedings with an eye for Christ's mother, and from the point of view of 'History' rather than 'Religion'. This is made particularly acute through the harsh irony that she is 'sneaking for breath' as if from 'hard and bitter agony' from Eliot's poem, but there can be no doubt that the suffering she describes is infinitely worse than that of the speaker in 'Journey of the Magi'. In comparison to Eliot's poem, his complaints seem childish and irrelevant.

So, it is that, at this point in the poem, two profoundly important feminine qualities are highlighted: the tortured. First, the protagonist, who is both female and the personification of history, is the idea that the history is 'dead', following the arguments of feminist historians that women's versions of events simply did not get recorded. The poem seeks to right this wrong. The quality we see in torment, namely the Virgin Mary. The only company she has in the world is that of the 'soldiers spitting', and the phrase 'spears in the earth' subtly brings to mind 'tears', which would fall on the earth. The poem has made a strong symbolic connection between the woman of its first two stanzas and the Virgin Mary, as if to say that in a sense we are all women. This is something the poem enacts by allowing us to see it through the eyes of Herod. The poem is to define and explain precisely the way Duffy interprets the 'hard and bitter' of the birth of Christ as something fundamentally feminine.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Tall'

### Structure and language

What poetic conceit is employed in this poem? As it grows more audacious and more daring, what do we notice in the speaker?

### Interpretation

Does the speaker's sense of connectedness to people grow or diminish as the poem progresses?

### Different interpretations

How could being 'tall' represent a stage in the poet's career – or be a biographical reference?

### Interpreting allegorically

In what ways do you think this poem presents the poet, and how she feels about her popularity might have a negative effect on how she is viewed? Look through the poem for clues about the poet's relationship with the public.

### Religious imagery

Find quotations that connect the protagonist to religion. Include in your list a quotation that makes her seem like a saint, a quotation that makes her seem like Eve from the Garden of Eden, and a quotation that makes her seem like a religious celebrity.

### Anti-religious imagery

Find quotations that suggest the protagonist is emphatically NOT associated with religion. Include in your list a statement that rejects the idea of a miracle, a quotation that shows she has no wisdom we might associate with a religious figure, and a statement that suggests she cannot yield spiritual information, no matter how big you are.

### Religious or anti-religious?

The term 'prophet' can mean two things. Firstly, it can denote a person who speaks in the name of divine inspiration and secondly, a person who can predict the future (or practise divination).

1. Can you find one image in the poem that could present the tall woman as both a prophet (or someone who makes predictions) and, at the same time, absolutely not a prophet in the religious sense?
2. Looking at the conclusion, on which side of this debate does the final stanza fall?



### Tasks

1. Using some of the following vocabulary/phrases, write a short analytical paragraph about the final image in the poem, 'She stooped low/and caught their souls in her hand'. Consider Duffy's purpose and the scene the poem paints as well as the choice of language. (You may use a biographical interpretation | deliverance | magical | poetic | redemption | prophet | religious | anti-religious)
2. Write a paragraph explaining why it is possible to read this poem as a religious or anti-religious text.
3. Write a paragraph explaining why Duffy might have changed her view of herself as a poet. Do you believe it can change the world?

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Loud'

<b>Epigraph</b> This quotation comes from a news report in <i>The Guardian</i> newspaper of Saturday 27 October 2001. See if you can look up the report online and read the rest of it.	<b>Epigraph: Connecting</b> What do you think Duff Can you connect the po by reading the epigraph of the poem?
<b>Stanza 1</b> Consider the phrase 'the female voice'. This is something feminists sometimes discuss. What kind of voice should women adopt in literature?	<b>Stanza 1</b> What kind of voice is a 1 and consider what D esponse of women to
<b>Stanzas 1–4</b> List all the images in these stanzas that have to do with using the voice. What is d in stanza 4? Internal rhyme which words are rhymed inside as well as at the end of the line each stanza. Explain the journey that has taken place – where has she been 'flown away' to at What do the words 'uttering lightning' say to you about female anger at injustice with the ideas in stanza 1?	
<b>Stanza 5</b> The pattern of using internal rhyme is interrupted in this stanza. What by? What's the effect of interrupting the pattern of the poem in this way?	<b>Stanza 6</b> Reading only the verbs about the potential Duff of women to affect the
<b>Stanzas 7–8</b> These are the only stanzas in the poem where the sentence continues from the end of one stanza into the beginning of another. What's the effect of this? Does the line form a list? Does it move calmly from the end of stanza 7 into stanza 8, or does it overflow?	<b>Stanza 7</b> This stanza brings toget poem. What technique to our ears in this stan
<b>Stanza 8</b> There are far fewer verbs in this stanza. What are they?	<b>Comparing stanza 8 w</b> Compare the 'Loud' ch how she is presented i to think about how inv world events? Does she of important news from
<b>Imagery</b> Reread the poem. How many images can be said to be concerned with elements, especially the violent or violent forces of nature?	<b>Purpose</b> The metaphors in the p even the universe com

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'History'

<b>Stanza 1</b> How do you respond to the rhymes in the first stanza? Why might this character have been asleep? What is the message of her description as 'half dead'? If she's a symbolic character, what might she represent?	<b>Research</b> Research the term first word of the poem
<b>Stanza 3</b> What conceit is begun in stanza 3? Which character's emotions are emphasised in the first historical event explored here and not on Jesus? What evidence is there in stanza 3 that Duffy is presenting an especially female view of history? With which emotions does History view the past?	
<b>Stanza 4</b> Looking at stanza 4, what view of religion is presented? What tone is associated with the words 'been there'? 'The air of Rome / turned into stone' This may refer to the Vatican City being built in Rome. What impression does the phrase 'a hundred years' give you about how important history is? Is religion one of the main causes of change in history?	
<b>Stanzas 3-6</b> Does Duffy view religion as the only cause of suffering in history? Research the following lines and try to establish the cause of persecution and suffering. 'How the saint whistled and spat' – Which saints were burned at the stake? 'The dictator... blew out his brains' – Which dictator might this refer to? For the reference to the children waving their 'little hands from the trains', research out what it was for.	
<b>Structure</b> Do you think this poem is two poems placed inside one another? Look at the stanzas depicting the old lady, and the stanzas taking a view of history. Are these two separate poems? What do we know in the final stanza that we didn't know in the first two? What is Duffy's message about the female part of history? How much respect does the poem suggest we should give for women's view of world events? What about the final few lines suggests that we have arrived at the 'modern day'?	
<b>Allegory/Interpretation</b> Why does the poem suggest 'history' is dying? Is the main character really 'history'?	

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**

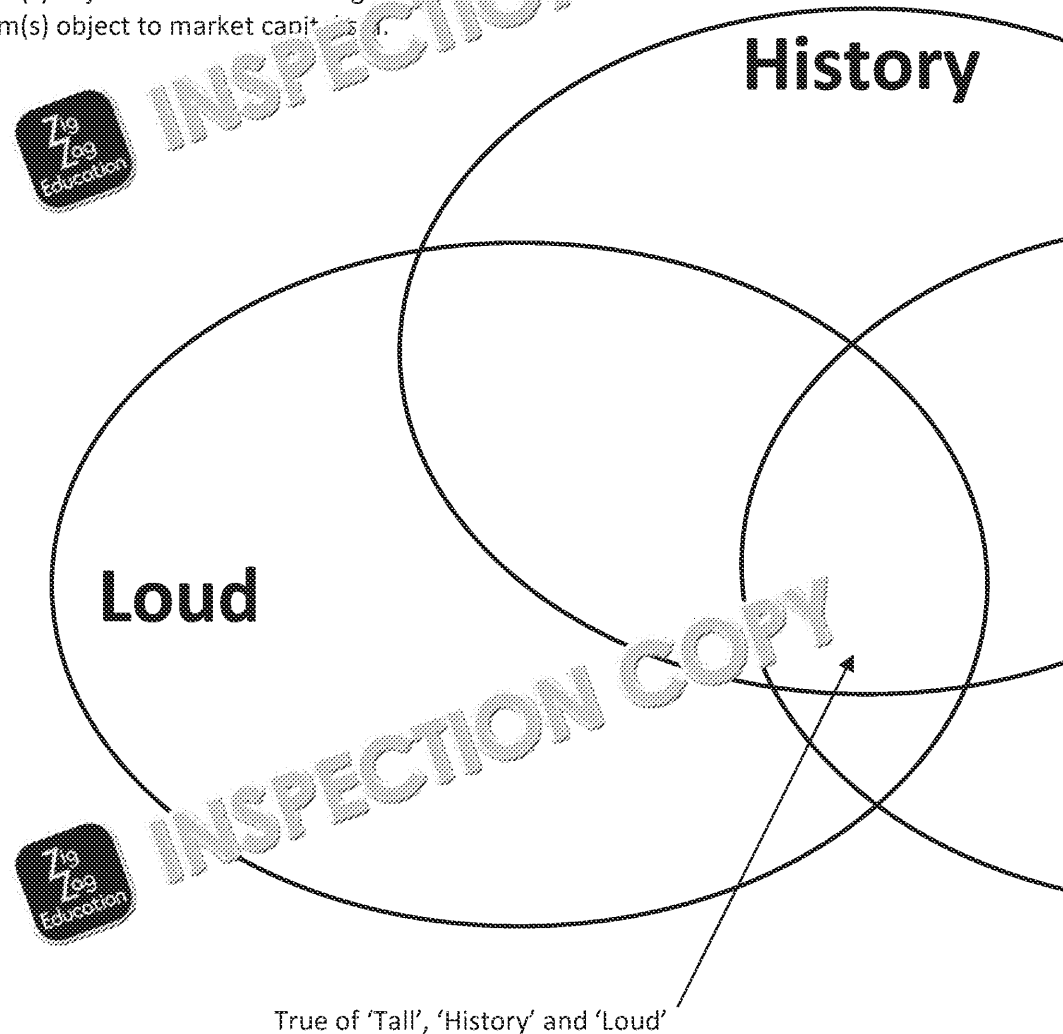


## Worksheet 1: Planning Your Response

'In *Feminine Gospels*, Duffy's main purpose is to protest.' Discuss.

Make a Venn diagram like the one below and try to fill in the overlapping sections with your own comments. You're only placing statements that apply to two or three poems. Then, try to write some statements of your own.

1. The poem(s) present a character who is magnified or intensified to be huge greater.
2. The poem(s) present a character who is ignored and can't be heard.
3. The poem(s) object to human suffering in the world.
4. The poem(s) object to market capitalism.



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 2: Planning Your Response

'In *Feminine Gospels*, Duffy seeks to present characters who reflect the inner experience and outer reality of their lives.'

Discuss this statement with reference to three poems in detail, or range across the poems (at least six poems!).

	Inner reality How is it presented?	Outer reality What is the relationship of the character(s) in the poems to the world?
'The Diet'		
'The Woman Who Shopped'		
'The Map-Woman'		
'Tall'		
'Loud'		
'History'		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Practice Essay Questions

If you are doing AQA A, you must refer to at least two poems in your answer. For other exam boards, if you have different views can be taken of the statement, you might want to aim for one poem that seems to agree and one that seems to disagree.

1. 'Duffy's female characters are newly invented or perhaps recently rediscovered.' Examine this idea.
2. 'The biggest inspiration for the poems in this collection has come from Duffy's own world events. They are essentially public poems with little insight into the private lives of the characters.' Examine this idea.
3. 'When assessing the state of the world and looking for someone to lay blame, Duffy's poems point to women as the main culprit.' Examine this idea.
4. 'Duffy presents the idea in her poems that although patriarchy has been unchangingly dominant, some real change has occurred.' Examine this idea.
5. 'Duffy's poems show the effects of male dominance and the suffering of women by one who herself is a woman who flourishes.' Examine this idea.
6. 'All the poems in *Feminine Gospels* are a cry of rage and frustration.' Examine this idea.
7. Examine the idea that Duffy in *Feminine Gospels* presents women who break the mould. You must refer to at least two poems in your answer.
8. 'All of Duffy's characters are to some extent self-destructive.' Examine this idea. You must refer to at least two poems in your answer.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





# The Non-Existent Voice

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poems

- 'Anon'
- 'The Virgin's Memo'
- 'Loud' (please note the Teacher's Notes for this poem appear in the 'Exploitation' section)
- 'White Writing'
- 'A Dreaming Week'

Many of the poems in the collection deal with the voicelessness of women, notably character so unheard as to be almost invisible. However, all of these poems present a concept, sometimes ironic and sometimes playful. In the case of 'Loud' the opposite is true, the rise to the same frustration of not being heard. Some of the poems encode political ideas in their fabric, and 'White Writing' presents an empty page for us to peruse, with the irony that it is nevertheless a poem on it. Duffy is also in a sense describing the voice of women that has been kept outside of the canon, and for this reason the Virgin's memo presents itself as an apocrypha.

### Debate

The opening debate is intended to help students discuss the political ideas that surround women throughout history.

### Teacher's Notes

These can be shared with students to gain more insight into the poems, but perhaps some questions have been attempted.

### Comprehension Questions

These are suitable to enrich responses in the lessons, to get students writing clearly and to give out for homework tasks once some encounter with the poem is established.

### Worksheet 1: Comparison Exercises

Intended to get students comparing the poems they know so far.

### Essay Questions

These practice questions relate to this cluster and should be attempted after studying the poems.

## Debate: Are Women's Voices Heard?

1. Women talk too much.
2. Whenever a woman puts forward an opinion, she's accused of being too assertive.
3. They didn't teach women to read or write much in the past because they were doing housework - they didn't WANT educated women, they wanted a slave.
4. Most of the writing women have done in the past is probably just lost to us now, or didn't value it.
5. It is not necessary for women to put forward their views much now because equality has been achieved.
6. If women cared about having their voices heard, they'd write books more and more.
7. Feminists are often very public and dynamic people in the media's gaze. They're not ordinary women.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'Anon'

This poem uses decreasing line length to imitate the diminution in the definability while constantly enacting playful tricks on the sounds of words. It takes the form of an informal style, in order to present an unexpectedly striking image of the resentful overlooked or unnamed in history: 'Anon' had 'something to get off its chest' in the end. And yet this poem is connected deeply to other ideas in the collection – like the Long Queen present forever, and is shrouded in ambiguity and hearsay. The unattributed texts are 'true or false' stories that were the Long Queen's 'pleasure'. She is also another reference to 'History' because she is quintessentially absent. The poem resembles 'The Long Queen' as the protagonist is associated with an inheritance of a kind that is not recorded but lives on at a cultural or spiritual level. If one reads widely in the collection, we see other kinds of inheritance – such as the maternal experience in 'The Light Gatherer' which also moves down in tone and deliberately simplistic word play belie the seriousness of the subject, and the inquiry is sustained light-heartedly through puns, metaphors and short, aphoristic lines. In 'History', using a symbolic personification for an abstract concept to bring home the experience of the unidentified female writer at the same time as the impossibility of reaching them.

It could be remembered that the moribund, decrepit character in 'History' could live on in this poem, as both share the quality of having been ever-present. Secondly, then, whether the character 'lives on' in both poems - in 'History' she seems all but deceased with the suggestion that she 'lives on'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Virgin's Memo'

'The Virgin's Memo' is the poem that most lives up to the title of 'Feminine Gospel' presents itself as an esoteric biblical text that didn't make it into the Bible due to the orthodox church. Indeed, there actually is a 'Gospel of Mary' in the apocrypha, but not Mary Magdalene. 'The Virgin's Memo' presents textual features that distinguish it as a form of Gnostic Gospels; however, there are layers of irony here. It focuses on the voice of an illiterate; the term 'memo' indicates a coherent and efficient context for her that she is writing, with its effaced and 'unreadable' sections brings to mind the apocryphal term – the writing of the women referred to in 'Anon'. The theme of women's writing is suggested by the fact it's a 'memo' rather than a gospel, epistle, or Book of Acts. The text is a remembrance and also a minor or easily overlooked text.

More disturbingly, however, her 'memo' to the young Jesus refers to something outside the world, indicating that he is one with the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Ghost) – otherwise how could he be over all of creation? The poem is intended to bear both the context of Jesus and Mary in the context of Noah or an Old Testament figure who might either be God creating the world or protecting the world from this world.

Only one comment is positive: 'The unicorn's lovely', suggesting a possible backstory of influences that were brought to bear on creation. Because this animal never 'made it' into events pertained to the 'normalisation' of the animal kingdom today. Even more interesting is to compare this process of selection to the process of selection of biblical texts: the canon of the proto-orthodox church means some holy books are 'in' the Bible and some are 'out'. In this sense, Duffy is interrogating the notion of what is 'gospel' in the more common sense, gesturing towards the lack of women's voices.

The Jesus we see here is a worry. His creative work appears to focus on the negative aspects of the world, reflect his anxiety about the presence of sin in the world and his desire to cleanse it. He may be a very naughty little boy. This gives rise to another 'backstory' argument, that perhaps he is the product of maternal care rather than divine provenance. Equally, it is possible that he is from Mary to her son hoping that he will make the world a better place. The alphabet and the missing parts of the alphabet give the impression of a nursery setting, and the missing parts of the alphabet give the impression of the words that might have been untranslatable or illegible.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'White Writing'

*White Ink* is the title of an important feminist text by Helene Cixous. The title refers to 'women write in white ink', which she characterises as a force of love or 'breast milk' (which may be taken to be a reference to the poems never written by women, due to their exclusion from the past (and, of course, the present in some societies). This poem presents a paradox: how can we read it? The fact that Duffy insists she can 'write it white' and yet persists in writing it is ironic. Duffy may also be pointing the reader towards what is not written, or the silence of the text. It is also a loving gesture because the reference it makes to Cixous brings to mind her most famous element is the song; first music from the first voice of love that is alive in every word.

The answer may also be in the first line, which points out that there are 'no vows' (which brings to mind the feminist point that the traditional wedding vows are written by men, and the word 'obey'!) and possibly also the idea that there are no traditional wedding vows. The poem has to create a new ceremony of marriage for the lovers, which is, in fact, a new ceremony.

The poet insists on marriage as a concept in the final line of the first stanza, approving the idea that because lesbian couples cannot marry, they have to retain their 'maiden name' (which brings to mind the phrase 'maiden name' because it also retains a quality of non-dependence). The 'maiden name' may mean an insight into the lover's true character, because it is the suggestion that language is inadequate for performing the task of expression in the 'maiden name' is not stated.

The repeated line persistently performs an impossible task, making it perhaps a kind of 'white writing' because the writing itself is, of course, black. The white writing can also be seen as a kind of 'white writing', literally unreadable to ordinary readers. The poet's repetition allows the reader to see the variation in emphasis, like a sort of refrain: if we place the emphasis on 'I write it', it becomes a sense of 'putting the world to rights' which, of course, rhymes with 'white'; also if we place the emphasis on 'I write it right' or even 'I right it', which would indeed be a kind of 'putting right' or perhaps 'putting white' the involvement of a female voice.

### Imagery

Duffy's imagery is almost entirely transitory. The poem evokes several types of 'white writing' of the title. 'Words on the wind' are as brief as writing on the sand, and 'words on the wind' where both the ink and the moonlight are transient. These images seem to be compelling precisely because they are ephemeral. It is possible that, because a lesbian relationship in a heteronormative society, it leaves less of a trace behind it, will not be written in marriage registers, or will be written in marriage written in black ink. These images are indeed simply 'traces', and the line 'I write it right' indicates very much the lack of recognition given by society to same-sex relationships.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'A Dreaming Week'

This poem eschews direct political or social comment on the position of the female something the other poems can be said to present. However, its rhetorical refrain images that are, in principle, refuted in what might be called an enormous example rhetorical denial of something that, in fact, invokes its reality. In this sense only it is 'non-existent voice'; however, crucially, it declares its non-existence through a rhetoric begins to operate a double-negative process which actually refutes it and means to

These rhetorical denials are often very subtle, because they sometimes occupy more something which is itself impossible. 'Not tomorrow I'm dreaming' has many levels present tense cannot be used to talk about the future. Here the negative statement of a reality because it denies something impossible.

These fantastical impossibilities are always built up through imagery to the theme composing it, forming an argument that could suggest that the world provides an observer is there to syntactically in this sense its rightful partner is 'Gambler'. A 're The suggestion that these things already are poetry, and simply need to make the they have already done. The poem plays with paradox in something not unlike poet, each paradox giving rise to a flurry of different poetic devices.

Another literary perspective embodied by the poem is an appeal to the power of in the language that gets bound up with the theme of writing advocates this.

And yet, in keeping with the idea of refutation, the 'week' is also a lifetime. The first with 'the dark' could be seen to represent the journey to meet with the afterlife and by the sound of a 'stuttering clock'.

Finally, the poem locates itself next to 'White Writing' perhaps because this poem we take literally its argument that it is 'not' doing what it is doing and, therefore, not at all. These poems form a pair in their use of the negative, but have different purposes sensuality is present in 'White Writing'.

All of the poems in this grouping present themselves in some sense as 'not' written or be the apocryphal and, therefore, non-canonical (ironically indicating the absence of literary *canon*) 'The Virgin's Memo', the absent and anonymous eponymous subject of a white page of 'White Writing' or the negative statements that argue ironically the 'Week'. All of the poems do this to uncover a truth that lies beneath, which has to do with 'White Writing' and, perhaps, the recognition or otherwise of gay marriage, the fact that directly to Jesus when he was a child, or the fact that the anonymous women writers

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Anon'

<b>Stanza 1</b> What do you notice about the sounds that begin the words in the second half of the first stanza? What is Duffy saying about anonymous writers – does she believe they are more often male or female?	<b>Stanza 2</b> What do you make of the rhythm and language of stanza 2? What gender in stanza 2?
<b>Stanza 3</b> What do you think the 'skull' in stanza 3 wanted to 'get off its chest'?  How does the word 'chest' serve to connect the penultimate stanza to the final stanza?	<b>Stanza 4</b> Duffy's speaker reveals a paragraph analysing the poem's themes: inheritance   tradition  Make sure you explain who might use a baton.

<b>Comparison</b> Which poem in the collection contains a line similar to 'down through the years'? Does that connect the character in that poem to the character in this poem?	<b>Technique</b> Look through the poem and consider it as a joke. Why is the tone in this poem? Is this a list of all the sounds in the poem with the word 'anon'.
<b>Interpretation</b> There have been many anonymous writers throughout history. What is Duffy saying about them when she says 'she passed on her pen'?	<b>Comparison</b> Which other characters remind you of the most?
<b>Interpretation</b> What is the poem saying about female writers from the past?  What (humorous) assertion is the poem making about anonymous writers?	<b>Research</b> Female writers from the past, nuns, or religious figures who received enough education to write. Find out about Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, or others.

<b>Connecting Poems</b> (for those who have read the whole collection) In what ways is the character in 'Anon' like the Long Queen? How is she like the Long Queen? Duffy's female protagonists in these poems have not been given a name?  This poem is light and humorous in tone, and it plays on words and jokes. How is it different from 'Loud'?
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Virgin's Memo'

Duffy has stated that this poem is closely related to the idea of the 'gospel'; she writes 'this is the thing in'. Consisting of notes written 'to God', she also suggests that it's about 'the things that we do for their children regardless, and there's your son inventing something as useless as the giraffe'.

<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>Read this prayer by Pope Benedict XVI (Encyclical Letter 'God is Love' # 42, December 25, 2005):</p> <p><i>Holy Mary, Mother of God, you have given the world its true light, Jesus, your Son – the Son of God. You abandoned yourself completely to God's call and thus became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from his heart.</i></p>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Mary is talked about a lot in the Bible – here she says a few things – here she is talking from the King James Bible. The speaker in the poem, of course, is the Virgin Mary.</p> <p><i>Then said Mary unto the angels, Behold I know not a man. And Mary said, My spirit is in the hands of the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in thy word.</i></p>
<p><b>Structure</b></p> <p>What do you notice about the alphabetical structure of the poem?</p> <p>What is the effect of the (untranslatable) or (illegible) lines? What do they make the reader do?</p> <p>What is the effect of the text being considered only a 'memo'?</p>	<p><b>The speaking voice</b></p> <p>Who do you think the speaker is? We think it's the Virgin Mary. What does she say about the way Duffy presents the poem compared to the quotation?</p> <p>What do we learn about the speaker from the things she says?</p> <p>What is the poem saying about the Virgin Mary? Does he turn out to be who we think he is?</p>
<p><b>Mary and Jesus?</b></p> <p>The 'Holy Trinity' in Catholicism is the doctrine that there are three aspects to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They represent a divine mystery through which all three things are one.</p> <p>Is it possible then that, by addressing Jesus, the Virgin in the poem is also addressing God about creation? What are her views?</p> <p>Are they like the views we see her express in the Bible?</p>	<p><b>Mary and the Bible</b></p> <p>Is the poem implying that the Virgin Mary is likely to be a true reflection of the Bible?</p> <p>Look up the term 'baptism' in the Bible. What does this poem say about this?</p> <p>How would we expect the Virgin Mary to read?</p>
<p><b>Questions and implications</b></p> <p>What questions does this poem raise about the way God made the world? What would be different if the world had been made by a woman? Does the poem have anything to say about this?</p>	<p><b>Feminine wisdom</b></p> <p>How is feminine wisdom represented in the poem?</p> <p>What do you make of the poem's title 'The Virgin's Memo'?</p>
<p><b>Interpretation</b></p> <p>How is this text pretending to be a historical artefact?</p> <p>There is one positive line in the poem – see if you can find out what it is. What is ironic about this particular line and the poem's title mentioned in it?</p>	<p><b>Interpretation</b></p> <p>The poem consists of a series of questions. Can you justify the view that the poem is an unpleasant little boy's question?</p> <p>Jesus doesn't turn out to be who we think he is. What does this say about motherhood?</p>
<p><b>Interpretation</b></p> <p>What does the fragmentary nature of the text suggest about women's voices and their capacity to be heard by the world at large (or the public)?</p>	<p><b>Interpretation</b></p> <p>What do you make of the poem's title 'The Virgin's Memo'? Does the repetition suggest anything about the view Mary?</p>

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Form, Structure and Language in 'White Writing'

### Stanza 1

Duffy asserts the impossibility of marriage here and then, in the last line, contradicts it. What might the reason be for the lack of 'vows to wed you'?

Research the status of gay marriage in the UK. Can homosexual couples be legally married? Can they be married in church?

### Stanza 2

How do you respond to the phrase 'maiden name' in this stanza? How many different meanings does this word have?

How do the words 'maiden name' relate to the theme of marriage from the first stanza?

### Stanza 3

What is the poem saying about the collection here, and what is the message about history?

Do you think the world was different? Different in what way? How does the poem influence the way we might read 'I write it white'?

### Stanza 4

Look at all the writing that occurs in the poem and describe three references to writing before it.

Try to employ some or all of these words: ephemeral, transient and evanescent, in relation to this poem.

### Stanza 5

This stanza begins to deviate from the very strict structure established so far. Can you explain how it does so?

How else can the word 'write' be perceived if we are hearing the poem read aloud?

### Stanza 6

Why does Duffy use the phrase 'inked water' so close to the words 'no poems written'?

What is the contradiction of the final two lines? Are they true?

### Research

Dramatist Henry de Montherlant stated 'happiness writes in white ink on a white page'. What do you think he meant?

Helene Cixous said 'women write in white ink'. What do you think she meant?

**TIP: Find out who she is and what she is known for.**

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Form, Structure and Language in 'A Dreaming Week'

<b>Language</b> What about the language of this poem can be compared to 'White Writing'?  Many of the sensuous, playful images in this poem might be considered traditional for love poetry. What's not so traditional about the language?	<b>Stanza 2</b> In what ways does this writing poetry and select stanza present poetry images?
<b>Stanza 3</b> Does this stanza also connect experience with the practice of writing?  What argument does this stanza make for poetry? Is it something that brings about from experience?  Which ideas in this stanza connect the poem itself with the process of its writing? stanza – things which are conceptually impossible?	
<b>Stanzas 5-7</b> Are the references to writing and generating a poem still present in the last three stanzas? Evaluate them and try to explain why the imagery changes.	<b>Stanza 6</b> By stanza 6, we have no form. What art form is the way words are chosen?
<b>Stanza 7</b> Does the poem in the last stanza connect poetry with dreaming? Is it arguing that they're somehow the same thing, or connected? Can you explain how this argument comes about?	<b>Interpretation</b> Why does the poem connect poetry with dreaming? Can you think of other examples?  What ideas does the poem present about a poem?  Could it be considered a poem?

<b>Comparison</b> Compare this poem to others in the collection, like 'Loud'. They're very different. 'A Dreaming Week' as a protest poem in any way?  Compare this poem to others in the collection, like 'Anon'. They're very different. 'A Dreaming Week' as a poem about women writers lacking a voice?
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>'A Dreaming Week' – A Poetic Manifesto?</b> A 'poetic manifesto' is a term used to describe a writer's opinions and beliefs about how it should be written, and what it should contain. A good example of this is the Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in which they argued that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>poetry should be accessible to common people</li> <li>poetry should stem from a 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'</li> <li>poetry should use a purified version of the language of common people</li> <li>a poet is a prophet who has privileged knowledge of nature and the universe</li> <li>poetry is more philosophical than other art forms</li> <li>the external world is both perceived by and, to an extent, created by the observer</li> </ul> If we were to view 'A Dreaming Week' as a poetic manifesto, what ideas would it present? Should or could be?
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Loud'

<b>Comparison</b> The previous two poems deal with voices that are not heard, or whimsically with the idea of what would happen if someone we usually don't hear suddenly gets a voice. 'Loud' seems very different because it is about a woman who 'finds her voice'. Do you agree that it is different from 'The Virgin's Memo' or 'Anon'?	<b>Progress for feminism</b> Why would Duffy's use of 'Gibberish, crap'? Is her 'loud' voice heard in the poem?
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Political reading</b> Does the 'loudness' in the poem achieve a transformation for the better in the way we think this through. Read the poem for its formal elements. Do you find that it makes you feel a voice being heard? Do we commonly hear the voices of women loudly objecting to suffering and hardship?	
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

<b>Epigraph and purpose</b> Can you explain in your own words what the connection is between the epigraph quoted from <i>The Guardian</i> on 28 <sup>th</sup> October 2001 and the reasons the poet wrote the poem?	<b>The speaking voice</b> What makes the 'voice' of the speaker whose voice is the 'voice' used in, for example, 'Gibberish, crap'?
<b>Fantasy or reality</b> Are the events of this poem real? Is the story we're hearing real? What's not real about it? What's real about it?	<b>Religion and feminism</b> 'Shaking the bells away' - this line be read bearing comments about religion?
<b>Written or unwritten?</b> 'White Writing' is a poem that presents the idea that it is not written (white ink on white paper). Is there anything about 'Loud' that makes it similar?	<b>Comparing main characters</b> In what way could we compare the character of this poem to 'History'? Hint: How do the main characters feel?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 1: Comparison Exercises

Comparing Poems – Tick List – Compare the two poems and plan your comparison. Then, tick the boxes for the poems underneath. Use your findings to write a short have read so far have in common.

	Contains the idea of a voice we wouldn't normally hear	Questions whether society listens to the views of women	Examines how women from history are viewed	
'White Writing'				
'The Virgin's Memo'				
'Anon'				
'Loud'				
'A Dreaming Week'				

	The main character is horrified by the suffering in the world	The main character's voice is presented as unheeded by others in the poem	Both poems contain a list of unpleasant things which the main character dislikes
'The Virgin's Memo'			
'History'			

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Practice Essay Questions

In your answers you should refer to **at least two poems**. Here you should use *the poems* including from all three sections.

**TIP:** By this point, as we know a number of poems, it is increasingly important to **answer the question**. Remember that two key poems that agree in a similar way to the question, as two different poems that allow contrasting views to be developed.

1. 'In *Feminine Gospels* Duffy seeks justice by giving voiceless women a voice.'  
Examine this idea.
2. 'Duffy's poetic characters are sometimes myths that never existed, but should have.'  
Examine this idea.
3. 'Duffy shows in all her poems in *Feminine Gospels* that she wishes the world of women to be better.'  
Examine this idea.
4. 'The poem *War* sums up the attitude of the collection perfectly.'  
Examine this idea.
5. 'Unlike many tragic characters who gain respect by refusing to adapt, Duffy's characters adapt far too much.'  
Examine this idea.
6. 'Impossibility is the main ingredient of the poems, overall, and this detracts from their empowering.'  
Examine this idea.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Women and History

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poems

- 'The Long Queen'
- 'Beautiful'
- 'History' (please note the Teacher's Notes for this poem appear in the 'Exploited and Mistreated' section)
- 'Sub'

These poems present a perspective on the position of women in history, through connecting the narratives of four historical figures. In 'Beautiful', personifying history as a woman, providing an original figure who changes the lives of women throughout history. History is presented as masculine in some ways and as a cruel cycle of abuse in 'Beautiful'. It is discreetly feminine history, even here it has the quality of myth and fairy tale, a speaker in 'Sub' is effectively pie in the sky. Duffy employs a feminine observer, a 'History', but it is perhaps more powerfully: this proto-goddess is unvalued and ignored, moribund as a result, lacking perhaps in believers or respect. This connects the pitiful Princess Diana at the conclusion of 'Beautiful', who is also suffering from the 'stink'.

### Debate

The opening debate is intended to get students discussing the way history has treated women, the theme of fairness. It also encourages students to consider whether qualities in history are changed by circumstances and context.

### Teacher's Notes

These can be shared with students once they have closely read the poems. You can use them for ideas that might agree or disagree with points made in them.

### Comprehension Questions

These are suitable to enrich responses in the lessons, to get students writing clearly. They can be given out for homework tasks once some encounter with the poem is established. All questions for poems already covered are present in a different section of the resource.

### Worksheet 1: The characters in 'Beautiful'

### Worksheet 2: Planning an Essay

### Essay Questions

These practice questions relate to this cluster and should be attempted after studying the poems.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Debate: Women and History

Choose a statement. Then sit or stand nearest to the person whose statement you agree with most, and then move as far as possible from the one you agree with least.

When you have studied all the poems in this section, return to these statements and choose the statement that seems to belong with the most.

1. Women have achieved less fame throughout history because they are not as brave.
2. What women do when they become mothers is much more important than anything else they do.
3. Real history is the history no one shows us.
4. Most major achievements and discoveries were probably originally made by women.
5. Lack of access to literacy through the ages has prevented women's voices from being heard.
6. Women who are famous for being brave don't deserve the media attention and fame.
7. If women had been in charge for the last two thousand years, we wouldn't have so much inequality.
8. Female figures in history are especially important because they influence future generations more than male figures do.
9. There is an unseen network of female wisdom and knowledge which for centuries has been passed on, perhaps in the form of fairy tales.
10. Famous women manipulate people and their own image just as much as men.
11. A woman could easily have been the first person to set foot on the moon, and do a much better job.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Long Queen'

This poem presents a patron saint of women, or a goddess, through the initial use of Queen Victoria or Queen Elizabeth I. Despite not mentioning it, the eternal nature of the mother goddess of archaeology; she is wonderfully atavistic ('the drums of war') and therefore brings together various archetypes of femininity into a totality. The key is ironic that the avatar of motherhood is presented as a dowager or spinster queen who is not controlled by men but instead owns her maternal qualities, and they are focused on her not the goddess of mothers of sons so much as daughters.

### Search the Internet for:

- Queen Elizabeth I
- Matriarchy

### Form and Structure

The poem begins with short sentences, and then sentence length and line length provide detail and an emotional tone. The stanza uses listing early on to create a feeling of a luxuriant environment and then a sense of closure towards the close. This is magnified in the concluding longest sentence. The central section of the poem is structured around four assertions: *Tears*, *Childbirth* and, as such, the poem presents a life cycle. The final line of each stanza is a comment that brings the content under the Long Queen's jurisdiction, ownership, and control.

### Check the Internet: Mother Goddesses

- [zzed.uk/11490-willendorf](http://zzed.uk/11490-willendorf)
- [zzed.uk/11490-museum](http://zzed.uk/11490-museum)

### Language

The language is summative and syncretic. The experiences described bring together a narrative. The Long Queen is clothed in her imagery and her jewellery consists of 'the poem', suffering is presented as a key element of female identity; and yet this is not celebrated in the persona of the Long Queen who has, as the opening states, *chosen* this quality reflects the idea that the female generative function makes each woman essential and impossible to elicit the idea that women 'could not die' *per se*, because their influence is eternal.

### Research the Book

- Germaine Greer's *The Politics of Human Fertility* (Macmillan, 1985), gives a feminist perspective on control of their ability to reproduce.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'Beautiful'

'Beautiful' connects famous icons of feminine beauty through a single narrative, with the same character and, as such, presenting a discussion of the archetype of the sought-after woman in time. However, not all of the women are sought-after in the sense of desired by men and hounded by the media and popular culture. The structure of this linkage is:

Helen of Troy – Cleopatra (but prior to Mark Anthony) – Marilyn Monroe

It provides the argument that the male fetish for these ideal beauties has led to a shameful situation, where at the conclusion Princess Diana has 'History's stinking blame' firmly at the feet of the male gaze and the media as a focus (or lens) for

### Form and Structure

The poem is written in free verse, but invites the reader to speak the lines in units that suddenly introduce a clear tetrameter, a pentameter in the free verse, and suggesting a link between sections.

Each archetype of female gets a different line length and, to an extent, a different pronunciation:

- Helen of Troy – broadly trimeter with extended lines, recalling the metre used in the *Iliad*
- Cleopatra – broadly pentameter with much variation, recalling Shakespeare's 'burnished throne' that 'burnt on the water' in *Anthony and Cleopatra*
- Marilyn Monroe – again broadly pentameter, perhaps linking her closely to Cleopatra and other metres
- Princess Diana – broadly trimeter, linking her back to Helen

The inscribed (written rather than spoken) line length reduces towards the bleak and the unpleasant scenes that Diana has to tolerate.

### Language

The language uses frequent internal rhymes in close proximity to communicate the photographers and the relentlessness of their attention: 'Cutting-room floor / film' tends to undermine any sense of pentameter or regularity, which creates a mocking effect, far from engaging with any idea of aesthetic perfection, or 'beauty'.

### Traditions

Duffy's punchy masculine epithets and brief, sardonic phrases such as those described above belong to a feminist tradition that seeks to explore the way a patriarchal society constructs female ideology. This has been called a 'tough-guy vernacular' in the work of another feminist, Audre Lorde. This kind of writing, demonstrating the male gaze upon women, originates with Sylvia Plath in modern popular culture.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Teacher's Notes: 'Sub'

The same topics present in many of the other poems recur here but with a very different emphasis. The only unequivocally first-person poem in the collection, it perhaps reminds us of *The World's Wife*, only perhaps turbo-charged and squeezed into one poem. For here Duffy presents us with many female perspectives in a short space, each one pointing out several female issues often kept out of history by male dominance; that the time-consuming work of men is often as great as the speaker's feats are; that women are expected to assume many of the responsibilities of contemporary society with the difficulties of, for example, menstruation on top. The isolation of the activity they would be isolated and alienated by the masculine culture prevalent – the solitary shower.

The virtuosity of the rapid-fire techniques Duffy employs is most eloquent in presenting the speaker or writer as indeed brilliant and talented. It is for this reason that the time it takes to write contains Emily Dickinson's poems – something Duffy feels is worth saving. Emily Dickinson's collection of typically male affections such as malt whiskey and the reader has to wait for a useful for a future race to be over.

The poem plays with gender roles to foreground the fact that many fields of achievement are traditionally male participation – hence the boxes used to protect her breasts while batting for something rhetorically very unusual with the achievements of the protagonist – rather than struggling or attempting to adopt a male role, the quality of her achievements is of her reproductive function rather than her ability to act like a man. Hence she wins rugby she nurses the 'precious egg of the ball' and the reason the speaker gives for that 'grandchildren asked'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Long Queen'

<b>Stanza 1</b> Explain in your own words the choice the Long Queen makes in the first stanza.	<b>Research</b> Research Elizabeth I. The succession (who gets to be queen) 'couldn't' Elizabeth I die.
<b>Stanza 2</b> By presenting the Long Queen as solely queen of females, what kind of picture of England has Duffy created by comparing her to Elizabeth I?	<b>Research</b> What do 'hags, matrons and wives' have in common in terms of their status in England?
<b>Stanza 3</b> Why do you think Duffy presents the Long Queen as elusive and invisible in this stanza? Which words show this? What point is she trying to make? Write a short paragraph analysing this stanza to explain your response.	<b>Research</b> Search the Internet for 'The Long Queen' and see if the top few thoughts.
<b>Stanza 4</b> How does this stanza present the idea of childhood? Does it seem to be an important aspect of female identity?	<b>Research</b> Queen Elizabeth I passed through childhood. Notice how different this is to Elizabeth I's.
<b>Stanza 5</b> What do you make of the Long Queen's 'laws'? What type of laws are they? What do they govern? Why do you think the word that follows the line about middle age is 'Tears'? Do you think that Duffy is presenting the idea here that suffering is an essential part of the experience of women?	<b>Research</b> Search for the term 'matriarchy' and see what you can find out anything about matriarchal prehistoric societies.
<b>Stanza 6</b> The list of roles in this stanza is very different to that of the first stanza. How are they different? What do you make of the half rhyme of 'intent' and 'insignificant'? What kind of encouragement towards the physical changes a woman undergoes in her life?	
<b>Stanza 7</b> What is it about this stanza that seems essential to female identity? Does the final stanza support the reading that the Long Queen is a patron saint of women generally? How does the phrase 'teller of tall tales' connect the Long Queen to the poet?	

- What is the character in this poem different to those in 'History' or 'Beautiful'?
- Do you think that the women in 'Beautiful' would have suffered so much if they were the Long Queen? (Use your imagination!)
- What aspects of women's experience are presented as archetypal or typical in 'History', 'Beautiful' or 'Sub'? Which of the three do you think is most like the Long Queen?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Beautiful'

<b>Helen of Troy</b> What aspects of stanza 4 connect Helen of Troy to Princess Diana? What does the idea that her maid 'loved her the most' say about the love of men for Helen?	<b>Research</b> Try to explore different versions of Helen in <i>Metamorphoses</i> , Greek mythology. Is Helen beautiful and innocent, or do writers portray her as a villain? Is she virtuous. Duffy debates this. What does she suggest?
<b>Cleopatra</b> How responsible do you feel Cleopatra is for the power her beauty has over men? The final words of Cleopatra's section is 'of snakes'. Do you think this is praising her? To what do you feel the line 'she hacked the heart out' refers? What is the effect of this line on our appreciation of Cleopatra?	<b>Research</b> Research Shakespeare's <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> . Consider how Duffy presents Cleopatra. Consider the vocabulary of the portrayal of Cleopatra. Compare other more modern characters from the <i>facts</i> of Shakespeare.
<b>Marilyn Monroe</b> What is it about Duffy's portrayal of Marilyn that connects her with the legendary or archetypal qualities of Helen and Cleopatra?  The subject of the poem is beauty, but in the case of Marilyn, is the beauty real? Duffy describes her as a lookalike for herself – which lines show this? Why do you think this is?	<b>Research</b> Research the death of Marilyn. Did she kill herself?  <b>Structure:</b> The poem is divided into sections of mythological women and modern women. How do you feel Duffy is the second?
<b>Princess Diana</b> The poem uses a trio of asterisks to denote new sections. Sometimes a couplet is divided; sometimes it is quite clear that the new subject cannot be the person we've just read about. Is this the case with Diana? What is the poet arguing about the connection between Marilyn Monroe and Diana?	<b>Interpretation</b> Why do you think Duffy chooses a woman who was killed in the 20th century? In the section where Duffy discusses something about the previous three sections?
<b>Structure</b> 'Beauty is fame' and 'Beauty is fate' occur at different points. Also 'Tough Beauty' and 'Dumb Beauty'. Discuss these lines in order to help you answer these questions: 1. Duffy portrays the dangerous side of how men can put female beauty on a pedestal. Discuss. 2. Duffy, in 'Beautiful', portrays the power and control exercised by the female characters – who are very calculating and manipulative – as something that is responsible for. Discuss.	<b>Structure and language</b> Look for at least three ways in which the poem connects to the themes of the poem.  Look for the impressive enjambment, the use of the imperative and the effect in terms of the deliberateness of the poem.  Does the balance of power between the protagonists and the men?
<b>Summarising the message</b> What do all four women have in common? What do you take the final line to mean? What do you feel Duffy is most critical of in this poem?	<b>Ownership</b> What do women get paid for? Do these women own their own bodies? Do other people take ownership?
<b>Form</b> Locate the lines that use a tetrameter throughout the poem and see if they present a consistent pattern. What is the effect of tetrameter rather than pentameter? In what type of writing is it used?	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Sub'

<b>Stanza 1</b> In stanza 1, what is it about the speaker that sets her apart from 'the lads'?	<b>Stanza 2</b> How many references does the speaker make to her woman's experience of motherhood?
<b>Stanza 3</b> The poet replaces Ringo in this part of the story, performing with The Beatles. Why do you think she chooses Ringo rather than the others?	<b>Stanza 4</b> In what ways does this stanza challenge the idea of male achievement? Which achievement does the speaker refer to in this stanza?
<b>Stanza 5</b> What's ironic about motherhood in this stanza?	<b>Stanza 6</b> Why do you think the poet uses the words 'You cannot be so' in this stanza?

<b>Female achievement</b> Why is her success in 'number 13'? What is more important in your opinion – winning the test match series, or 'feeling the first kick' of a child in the womb?	<b>The speaking voice</b> In what way does the speaker's voice challenge the category of 'voiceless'?
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Feminist reading</b> Why do you think the speaker in the poem often refers to being hindered by things that are female? Can you list them?  What do you feel this poem is saying about women's position in history?
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Double meanings</b> What do you make of the phrase 'I came on' – how can this be interpreted in different ways?	<b>Irony</b> What is ironic about the speaker's claim that 'it could sometimes mean' it means?
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'History': Comparison

### Comparison

What strategies does the poet use to create the impression that her protagonist is also true, or untrue, of 'Sub'?

What does the character in this poem have in common with those of 'Beautiful'?

Can you make the argument that the main character in this poem is the same as in 'Beautiful'?

How are historical events dealt with in this poem and in 'Beautiful'? Is there anything about this treatment?

Could the conclusion of 'Beautiful' connect it to this poem in any way? Could this be a sequel to 'Beautiful'? Why?

'The Long Queen' presents a female character that seems to represent all women, so does this poem?

### Imagery and comparison

Re-read beautiful. Which images or types of language does it share with 'History'?

### Comparison: the theme of death

What about the first line of the poem could perhaps connect it to 'Beautiful' or 'The Long Queen'?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 1: 'Beautiful'

Write ticks in the boxes to show which qualities the four women share – in the poem the points Duffy emphasises, write 'POEM' next to the ticks that you feel are present absolutely true of the biographical facts. Write 'LIFE' next to those qualities present in

	Have power over men – and the men are powerless	Powerless women	A cult of worship for her beauty	A victim of the relentless attention of the media	Describe the poem as 'dumb' or 'stupid'
Helen of Troy					
Cleopatra					
Marilyn Monroe					
Princess Diana					

Now answer the following question using the grid above as a guide:

*What qualities does Duffy connect in the four women's stories present in the poem? What is Duffy saying is 'gospel' about the way women are treated?*

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 2: Planning an Essay: Comparison (AO4)

'Sub' is typical of the collection. Discuss.

Use this grid to plan paragraphs focusing on each topic on the left. One has been done for you.

Features of 'Sub'	Features of 'History'	Features of 'Herstory'
Humour and hyperbole to emphasise the unlikelihood of women being allowed to achieve like men have throughout history	No humour, instead tragic and troubling images. Focuses on suffering rather than achievement.	
An invented female character with magical qualities or abilities		
Examines the presence or absence of women from key moments in history		
Incorporates motherhood into the list of key female qualities		
Explores the theme of tenacious, talented or remarkable women		

Which of the poems in this section do you feel are most connected to the 'Herstory' is a concept coined in the 1960s by feminists, emphasising that history is women. It opposes the usual views of history with a satirical take on the word – his history as experienced by women, and focusing on their role, or perspective. (The Greek 'istoria', meaning 'understanding gained through discussion' – is not actually a word.)

As a result of ideas like 'herstory', there have emerged publishing houses that only publish writers throughout history, such as the Virago Press.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Practice Essay Questions

If you are doing AQA A, you must refer to **at least two** poems in your answer. For different views of the statement can be taken, you might want to aim for one poem that seems to agree and one to disagree. Here you should use *the ones you know so far*.

1. Duffy presents history as always harmful to women. Examine this idea.
2. Examine the idea that Duffy's characters are inhabitants of history, but they are not.
3. Duffy tries to imaginatively solve the problems of the past by imagining a connection with new, female historical figures. Examine this idea.
4. Duffy feels that the presentation of women in history is rather like the way women are presented in the tabloid media. Examine this idea.
5. 'Anon' and 'The Virgin's Memo' present Duffy's view of how history has treated women. Examine this idea.
6. Duffy argues that history has always treated women the same way. Examine this idea.

**Connecting this section to the last: essay questions where you could also use the poems above**

1. Duffy presents the perspective that women's voices are ignored by history. Examine this idea.
2. *Feminine Gospels* views modern women as essentially different from those of the past. Examine this idea.
3. 'Sub' and 'Anon' essentially present the same argument about history. Examine this idea.
4. Examine the idea that Duffy's women in *Feminine Gospels* are all overlooked or forgotten.
5. Duffy is more interested in the private, secret history of women among themselves than in their place in the grand scheme of things. Examine this idea.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





# Motherhood and Children

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poems

- 'The Light Gatherer'
- 'The Cord'
- 'Work'

Motherhood enters into most of the poems in the collection and is seen in a wide sense of the connection between mothers and children, especially daughters, and a cord or bond that runs through time and space. This takes the form of an inherited personal relationship. The 'tunnel of years' at the end of 'The Light Gatherer' may be, but, perhaps, the summation of all female experience up to that point. It is important to study here are not treated as the only location of this theme, because it is just as in 'The Virgin's Memo', for example.

### Debate

This is intended to get students thinking about their potential futures as parents and in society.

### Teacher's Notes

These can be shared with students to gain more insight into the poems, but perhaps questions have been attempted.

### Comprehension Questions

These are suitable to enrich responses in the lessons, to get students writing clearly, give out for homework tasks once some encounter with the poem is established.

### Worksheet 1: How Motherhood Is Presented

This is a good task for some independent work giving you freedom to assist individual

### Essay Questions

These practice questions relate to this cluster and should be attempted after study

## Debate: Motherhood and Children

1. Without women's willingness to care for children there would be no human race. We should worship Jesus when they should really worship Mary.
2. The bond between mother and daughter is different to that between mother and son.
3. Women are the workers of the world.
4. A woman's life is not complete unless she has the experience of being a mother.
5. Motherhood is not what makes you a woman.
6. Your own children are mysteriously more beautiful than other people's.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Light Gatherer'

This poem uses a very sustained conceit (of light) that is present continuously in the argument. This light is kindled to connect the child in the poem to everything around you' and the connotations of light, particularly 'lighting up your life', are evoked to build and develop, reflecting the way the child develops.

However, the poem concludes with a startlingly original association, sensible only in the context that leads up to it. The outdoor environment that the child 'squeals at' is transformed into a symbolic space, 'a jewelled cave', which is then allowed to carry a great many associations, from the yonic or uterine metaphor to Plato's perfect cave of forms. The rhythm of 'turquoise' to mind that of a children's song; the final substance, 'gold', representing alchemical transformation of the soul. 'Opening out' is positioned through enjambment at the end of a line so that it indeed the shape of a cave which also might 'open out'. The atavistic associations of a sense of development and destiny for the young girl, who will carry the torch to the conclusion of the poem, and which also suggests her position at the front of every achievement of it.



## Teacher's Notes: 'The Cord'

The National Childbirth Trust teaches a recommended method for holding a baby. This is actually a one-armed approach, where the arm holding the baby brings its head to the breast rather than using both hands to move the baby into place (it means the whole body is used for feeding, preventing the head from being forced forward which prevents easy feeding). This is the reason for the reference to the mother's 'nursing elbow' in the first stanza and the reason for the reference to the mother's 'nursing elbow' along its length.

The 'Great Forest' Duffy describes is archetypally linked to the forests of Sleeping Beauty. There is danger of a female character being lost (or never found). Hence it can be associated with a spiritual secret of femininity, one that is easy to mislay or obscure in the modern world.

Reading this poem closely in partnership with 'The Light Gatherer' can elicit the rest of the daughter's life in the future – as she grows up. Here the maternal feminine is present ('in the tree above') and something the daughter has set out to recover or regain. It is as preoccupied with female inheritance, especially of esoterically feminine wisdom. The modern world has the dangerous capacity, evoked by the rooks, to obscure and prevent access to the relationship between mother and daughter, and one can perhaps read the 'huge darkness' that pollutes the growing girl's awareness of her bond.



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'Work'

Stanza 7 connects this poem briefly to 'The Woman Who Shopped', underlining the link between market capitalism and its effect on women. By this point in the poem, it is clear that the figure has forged a rhetorical link between two ideological phrases: 'reproduction', suggesting a feminist/Marxist link: that women are the most alienated from ownership. However, the poem is also a salutary reminder that the apparent purpose of globalisation is for the benefit of the human race, and that this is a feminine principle.

Here, as with 'The Woman Who Shopped', women are as much responsible for globalisation as victims of it. Indeed, the poem presents the feminine principle of reproduction as a

If 'The Woman Who Shopped' provided us with a modern version of a Greek transformation idea but this time through a chronological tour of female identity that arrives at a conclusion also generated out of an individual, as 'The Woman Who Shopped' was, and it also brings us to the quality at the poem's close. The difference is that the final images, while disturbing, are not a hopeless vision of the future of women and female identity. The conclusion is by no means this mother goddess is inclusive of both negative and positive aspects of modernity, syncretic, integrative and balanced.

This poem enacts a transition from a hyperbolic fairy tale about an ever-growing female figure into a meditation on a cosmic feminine principle of generation, not unlike the pre-Christian goddess' religion said to pre-date modern cities and writing. However, this development is not motherhood; it is also critical of the mass production and economic problems that have led to the population of the world. This mother goddess is no longer solely a positive force of the *World's Wife* – she is also 'hoovered fish, felled trees'. 'She fed / the world' and became the *Woman Who Shopped* did, in market capitalism ('flogged TVs, designed PCs'). Here the transformation is because her final form, while impressive, encompassing and protean, sacrificial as the teeth in her head for grain'), is a modern take on a Greek goddess, terrible and at the same time, not so much good or evil as representative of the way the feminine is linked to the future of the planet ('wept rain'). Duffy seeks to explore the discrepancy between the feminine as nurturing through the plenty of the harvest, possessing an untainted nature inherent in population growth – she has to 'feed more, more' people to become 'more

Ultimately, this poem surveys the development of populous civilisations from the present to the present day, and then provides a vision of the future. The poem seems to arrive at the 'DVDs', and gives us two further paragraphs in which to visualise the state of the mother and the fate of the feminine that Duffy predicts: it will die because 'worked to the bone, her bones'. Another thesis the poem provides is that mass production, market capitalism and globalisation have damaged the feminine principle much as it did in 'The Woman Who Shopped'.

The use of rhymes in close proximity to each other and the enjambment listing engages the reader and reflects the sense of alacrity in population growth, technological and industrial development. The use of simple past-tense verbs to make it clear that the expansion of population and civilisation is the work of the female character ('For a thousand years, she built streets'), while at the same time women being *obliged* to work in this society, which paradoxically also is the result of it. It is not clear whether there was no stopping her' because of her tenacity and whether she was swept along by the world and had no choice. The form of the poem connects the end of one stanza to the next through rhyme enjambment ('kettle' / 'kettle'), moving at an incremental pace through the use of very short sentences and ellipsis, compressing longer phrases which evoke them: 'Feeding ten was another kettle'. This creates a sense of being in a tremendous hurry. The final death of this female character brings with it the end of the world because the word 'worked' immediately follows 'lay in a grave'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Light Gathers'

<b>Poetic technique</b> This poem is written in the second person, addressing a daughter. It uses a conceit that runs throughout. A conceit is a persistent metaphor that develops and grows as the poem progresses. What is the conceit in this poem?	<b>Rhyme</b> Rhyme connects meaning. What are the rhymes in this poem? How do they connect stanzas together?
<b>Language</b> Duffy's metaphor of light could represent the mother's emotions about her daughter. Which phrases indicate different stages in the child's development?	
<b>Imagery</b> How does time work in this poem? Which words seem to be to do with time? Is time fleeting or permanent? Which word in stanza 5 does this? Duffy connects up very different stages in the daughter's development in the form of the poem. How does the connection between the different ages of the child suggest about her 'light goes out'? By stanza 6, how has the 'light' developed? Has the child got more ownership of it?	
<b>Emotions</b> Adults who have had babies often express regret when they get bigger because they change so fast. Is this feeling present in the poem?	<b>Simile</b> How does Duffy celebrate her daughter's growth of her starting to use words?
<b>Philosophy of poetry?</b> Stanza 5 contains what could be called a poetic manifesto. This means a theory of what poetry is and where inspiration for poetry comes from. For Duffy, how has her child inspired poetry ('light goes out')?	
<b>Structure</b> The title words are only present three-quarters of the way through the poem. This is a structural metaphor. What's the effect of this metaphor? What does it show about how the mother views her daughter? The second to last stanza has a very powerful and satisfying rhyme, 'chin' / 'fly in'. This rhyme is structural, not just because these two words rhyme here. Look at the poem and think about what causes the rhyme to have extra impact.	
<b>Technique</b> How does Duffy use alliteration to embed the imagery in the last two stanzas?	<b>Imagery and interpretation</b> The final image in this poem cannot really be considered as applying to a person. It's connected to the 'wide blue yonder' image?
<b>Language</b> How does the language of 'rose and diamond and gold' in stanza 6 suggest the perfection of a child? How does Duffy view the child as a result of having a daughter?	<b>Interpretation</b> The words 'opening out' refer to the child's growth. How does the 'tunnel of years' relate to this?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'The Cord'

<b>Different meanings</b> How many ways can we interpret the phrase 'the cord she was born with'? There's an obvious meaning to it. What other meanings could there be? What does the poet connect this cord to in the rest of the stanza?	<b>Language</b> What type of bond does any language in the first stanza? How is this bond easily kept?
<b>Interpretation</b> What does the word 'nursing' indicate about the age of the child when they 'cut the cord'? What genre or style of writing are we introduced to by the words 'Great Forest'? What does the forest do to those travelling in it? Is it a good thing? Does it make things easier to see? Do you know of any forests that are present in fairy tales, especially ones with female protagonists?	<b>Interpretation</b> What is an umbilical cord? When the child is born, how do we read the opening? 'She learned to speak' – think 'they' are in this stanza to give reasons for your answer.
<b>Stanza 2 - Interpretation</b> What do you make of Duffy's view of whether we stay in touch with our roots (or childhood) as we grow up, based on your reading of the second stanza? This stanza ends with the child's questions. Why does she ask them?	<b>Locating evidence</b> There are several points in the subtitle 'for Ella', which poem, this one was inspired by? What points are these?
<b>Stanza 3 - Interpretation</b> Stanza 3 suggests that something very important about this 'cord' is, in fact, alive and well, but hidden. What do you feel this quality is?	<b>Stanza 4</b> What do you feel about the end of the poem? It seems to you that it is a 'cord' again?
<b>Genre and style</b> This poem is following a narrative in the third person. What style of story is it? If the poem is a representation of growing up, what does Duffy seem to be suggesting is the purpose of growing up?	<b>Ideas and concepts</b> The last stanza presents a message. What is the message? What does it hold as precious?
<b>Comparison</b> Are the values this poem holds precious comparable to those of 'The Light Gatherer'? How do you think the two poems are connected?	<b>Growing up</b> Is this poem about trying to grow up? Is the daughter in the poem which is frightening. How does the reassurance there – where does it come from?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Work'

<b>Structure</b> How does history work in this poem? What kind of journey do we make in terms of movement through time periods?	<b>Themes: History and class</b> The development of technology, the growth of populations and the idea of progress are central to this poem. Find a quote from the poem to support each theme. Write a short paragraph about each theme.
<b>History</b> How does Duffy feel women have been treated by history? Can we consider this poem a response to the idea of 'herstory'? Can we compare this poem to the poem 'History'?	<b>Male and female</b> Does Duffy present the male as something positive in this poem? Does she view the female altogether positive?
<b>Comparison and connections</b> Which line in stanza 7 connects this poem to another one in the collection? Which poem?	<b>Political/feminist questions</b> Does Duffy believe that men are more responsible for industrialisation and technology than women for their involvement?
<b>Interpretation</b> What term would best suit the woman who is mother to all of humanity in this poem?	<b>Form</b> Does the poem conclude as you'd expect?
<b>Interpretation</b> Is the main character in the poem a symbol for something? Can you put into words what this might be? By the end of the poem, a very worrying suggestion is made that could theoretically lead to the end of the human race. Can you explain it?	<b>Imagery/Structure</b> The imagery at the conclusion of the poem. Write an analysis of the associations you see in the poem. 'scattered the teeth' 'hoovered fish'

<b>Comparison and presentation of themes</b> Which other poems that you've read so far are most like 'Work'? How are they like 'Work'? Which poetic techniques are used to create pace and forward movement in this poem? How does this poem contrast to 'The Light Gatherer' and 'The Cord' in terms of history and technology? Which poem(s) would you compare this poem to if you were discussing Duffy's attitude to history and technology? Can you compare the woman at the end of the poem to other dead women in the collection?
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 1: How Motherhood Is Presented

Essay questions that could relate to this section:

1. Duffy presents motherhood as the most important aspect of female identity.
2. Duffy's view of motherhood is very like her view of how women pass on their 'years'. Discuss.

When asked what inspires her to write poetry, Duffy responded in an interview:

*Childhood. Childhood as a place rather than a time. A lost place – lost touch, sight, hearing, taste, smell – and the body. But not a lost time. My own child – who lives both in her place of childhood and in my time and who reminds me of my own childhood, inspiring her noticing what*

Before we start on our new poems, consider which poems we've already read that statement here. Make some notes on how motherhood is presented in these poems.

	Quotation	How motherhood is presented
'The Long Queen'		
'Work'		
'Sub'		
'The Virgin's Memo'		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Practice Essay Questions

If you are doing AQA A, you must refer to **at least two** poems in your answer. For different views can be taken of the statement, you might want to aim for one poem that supports and one that disagrees. Here you should use *the ones you know so far*.

1. 'Duffy presents motherhood as the key experience of a woman's life.' Examine this idea.
2. 'Every poem in the collection expresses a perspective that is essentially maternal: mother for justice in the world, her love for her child, or her hardship in bringing a child into the world.' Examine this idea.
3. "'The Virgin's Memo' presents a mother's voice talking directly to her child. The collection also presents a mother's voice talking directly to the world.' Examine this idea.
4. "'Work' is the most essential 'feminine poem' because it uses all of Duffy's truth about the experience of women.' Examine this idea.
5. 'Even the elegiac poems towards the end of the collection present the same maternal perspective we find in the earlier poems from earlier on.' Examine this idea.
6. 'Duffy demonstrates that she believes respect for mothers is a key quality lacking in the world.' Examine this idea.

**TIP:** Good poems to choose here might include 'Work', 'History' and 'The Virgin's Memo' that support or refute this statement.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





# The 'Herstory' of Feminism

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poem

- 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'

This long narrative poem tells the story of the rise of feminism through the allegory eventually destroyed by an epidemic of laughter. There are two key routes into it: what their stories tell us, and the intertextual references, which will also serve as research and exposure to other literature that will help prepare students for A2. You 'debate' with a discussion of what would happen if the poem took over the school: if a student was naughty and it was funny.

### Debate and Independent Research Handout

The handout is necessary for students to be able to discuss form and genre. It highlights key points that will help with this.

### Teacher's Notes

These can be shared with students to gain more insight into the poems, but perhaps questions have been attempted.

1. The Setting and Genre Handout
2. Worksheet 1: Things that Get Disrupted in the Poem
3. Worksheet 2: Intertextuality (Fill in the Blanks)
4. Worksheet 3: Teachers Transforming!

The worksheets focus on understanding references in the poem and the overall picture of the women's lives are changed by their experience of the laughter (a metaphor for feminism).

### Essay Questions

These practice questions relate to this cluster and should be attempted after studying the poems.

## Debate and Independent Research Handout

You may want to choose a female teacher to ask these questions. You don't have to.

1. Find out what kind of school three of your favourite teachers went to. Invite them to tell you how they were treated. Were they expected to go on to great things?
2. Was the school your teachers went to a selective school? What values were taught by their school?
3. Ask your teachers what they feel feminism has achieved in *their lifetime*.
4. Find out when Oxford and Cambridge universities started to admit women to study.
5. Note down anything your teachers said which you didn't expect.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



**Teacher's Notes: 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' Hig**

This poem has been described by a reviewer as an ‘allegory of the rise of feminism, dowdy post-war austerity and buttoned-up emotional sterility’. The poem tells the story over a girls’ grammar school. This fit of laughter and irreverence is the extended metaphor associated here with the hilarity and youthfulness of the girls. The grammar school attitude and the poem focuses many times on the contrast between the female teacher/guard, and the girls, whose language (which to an extent *is* laughter) subverts and

The term 'women's liberation' was first used in 1964 and appeared in print in *The New York Times* the time that the poem is set – in a girls' grammar school in the 1960s. For this reason, the poem the allegorical presentation of important women from the history of feminism. However, this is not really going to benefit students so much as to get them to see the poem as a symbol, as something cathartic, and as dissent.

The poem takes a long look at the effect of feminism on different generations. The staff at the school is to repress, to suppress the girls' laughter and control it, and this has been called the 'repressing' effect of the world wars on women in Europe, and limitations that have been about for feminists. It is only with second-wave feminism, who were teenagers in the 1960s and beyond, that these earlier conservative views ultimately, the female teachers are also emancipated by laughter in the poem, but

The keynote text of the 1960s is perhaps *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir is considered by many the starting point of second-wave feminism. Beauvoir's, try to look at the history of women's rights and identity. Friedan states women want 'something more than my husband and my children and my home' – by the enterprising and often heroic escapades the teachers get up to when they go mountaineering.

There is mention in the poem of a girl at the school who is a poet. Fleur could be a reference to E. E. Cummings (possibly U A Fanthorpe or Fleur Adcock), and is also perhaps a kind of parody. The quotations from the character's poetry don't appear to be genuine intertextual references but are rather symbolic and self-referential in the sense that the poem itself mentions these things, at the moment of its own generation.

Much of the message about the breakdown and attack of feminism on traditional values comes through the disruption of lists, particularly those that chart the geography of the US. In the poem this occurs many times, and there is an awareness of the doubtful usefulness of the Beaufort scale. It is not hard to see that Duffy might suggest that feminism leads to more worthwhile or useful knowledge. However, through the way in which crosswords and word games between words are presented we see a transformation. Once we are near the end of the poem, connected in abstract or alphabetical lists, but instead through association, metaphor and simile. She moved from being the assistant to her husband in solving crosswords, to inventing her own 'noctambulates'. This symbolic and creative ownership of language helps her head to break free from the learning typical of the school system of the 1950s. It is disrupted and put to new uses, as in geometry, which becomes the tool of demolishing. Often it is sexuality that causes the disruption, as in musical terms for dynamics (the inherently sensual), making 'everything they knew' into an enormous list. The list-making device is different because it now relates to her own ambition and desire, as with a female student companion, and furthermore this list of her priorities is

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



**The girls' laughter disrupting the school = feminists using *jouissance* to disrupt**

The idea of a disruptive female language has some correlatives in feminist linguistics, particularly among French post-structuralists. Much of this thinking is influenced by Lacan, who theorises feminine '*jouissance*' as a liberating and disruptive force. Feminists like Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous seized upon this concept of '*jouissance*' as a singularly and uniquely feminine form (or style) of writing, if only this feminine *jouissance* could be put to writing itself. 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' may be showing this type of writing in time, telling the story of the rise of feminism.

Thus was borne the literary critical concept of *écriture féminine*.

### **Écriture Féminine – Finding a Female Way of Writing**

*Écriture féminine* concerns itself with the *effet-femme* (female effect) in language, a 'libidinal economy' which might creatively undermine and destabilise such oppositions as starting and ending, linearity and circularity, and present a new and more feminine, positive attitude to accepting ambiguity and uncertainty, avoid preoccupation with authorial self and other.

According to proponents of *écriture féminine*, the feminine has a tendency to disrupt the structures of authority, and invent new techniques to oppose traditional writing practices. What is necessary to undermine this tradition and the forms available to it? What's so wrong with the inherited and the forms they have available to them? The answer is that feminists of language point out the drawbacks it has for women:

1. Language is the product of a patriarchal society and has been so for centuries.
2. Language inscribes male patterns of thought and hierarchy.
3. The grammar and structure of language imposes rules women have not agreed to and observe.

Female writers have to put up with having to use a medium – language – which is made and for men. *Écriture féminine* at least disturbs the tranquil surface of discourse, by writing about other things. Helene Cixous has stated that she considers all masculine writing. *Écriture féminine* is an attempt to put that right.

Helene Cixous famously defined *écriture féminine* as 'white ink' because of the connection to the female body: 'There is always in her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes why Duffy presents a love poem to a woman, 'White Writing', later on in the collection. The nurture and female-to-female connection inherent in this reference to breast milk. 'Queen' occurs at the outset, a character who is as 'unseen' just as 'white writing' is. As are the untranslatable and illegible words in 'The Virgin's Memo'. 'White ink' also presents the notion that the feminine in writing is impossible to see, invisible, or perhaps 'never happened' because of the fact that the language women use has to be masculine.

### **Teaching: Character Profiles**

Asking students to chart the development and transformation of the teachers is a way to encounter the allegory of female and its transformation of women's lives. Studying these initially straightforward teachers in a 'before and after' state! In so doing, it is a way that is used both by the teachers and by these characters to demonstrate the disruption of traditional

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## The Setting and Genre of the Poem: 'The Laughter of the Women of the School'

To research the setting of a traditional girls' grammar school, and grammar schools and white *St. Trinian's* film from 1954, 1957, or 1960. You could look at a boys' grammar school film *History Boys* from 2005. It is interesting to note that many of the top private schools were founded in the 18th century, and then later started to charge fees. A grammar school takes an academic background – so many will be working class as well as middle class. In the poem, the action takes place in the school Carol Ann Duffy attended herself.

**Form:** Mock-Epic Allegory

### What is an allegory?

An **allegory** is a form of extended metaphor, in which the ideas, things, people and meanings that lie outside the work of art itself. Some allegories are representations of a context. Any of you who have studied *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller will understand the view of McCarthyism in the United States, while the story itself is about witch hunting. An allegory is a story with two meanings: a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning.

A **mock-epic** is a form of writing which adopts the form of an epic poem for satirical purposes. One example of this is *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope, a poem in which a petty quarrel is presented in a cosmic and mythic style in order to point out just how petty the argument was. In the poem, the satirical reasons for presenting the rise of feminism and its history as the record of laughter. What do you think they are?

What is the effect of presenting the women who form the key figures in the history of the school? Could this be seen as a rather sexist gesture?

Mock-epics are irreverent. This means that they deliberately do not show the appropriate respect for a person or institution.

Read the first two stanzas and look for examples of ideas that could be considered as liberating. What do you think the poem is looking out for the theme of liberation.

What happens to the teachers in the poem? What might this have to do with feminism?	Laughter is liberating and feminism is 'liberation of women'. But what, in the poem, is it that is holding them back before they are liberated?
Duffy, before writing this book promised never to use the word 'plash' because she considered it too pretentious. Why does she use it in this poem?	Is the school like your school? Has it changed? Which teachers that you remember from those in the poem?

1. What messages are present in the way Duffy uses references in this poem?
2. How does Duffy use references to the past to create a sense of tradition being destabilised?
3. How does Duffy use references and quotations to develop and transform the poem?
4. How do the opinions of the teachers change by the end of the poem?

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Worksheet 1: Things that Get Disrupted in the Poem

Complete the table.

What gets disrupted in the poem	Quotation with stanza and line	What this might mean for feminism
The school curriculum – for example Geography		
The geography of the United Kingdom		
The school rules		
The teacher's lives and their sexuality		
The teaching of the storm warning scale		The tendency for people to categorise and quantify things in a traditional way. Also, the way that the storm warning scale is disrupted by the poem.
The quotation from Shakespeare 'friends, Romans, countrymen'		
Marking of essays about Henry VIII's wives		
The literary canon (traditionally the books you are expected to learn in school which are often by dead, white, male writers)		
	'the clouds were being slowly torn up / like a rule book'	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 2: Intertextuality: 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'

Intertextuality is when a text quotes from or refers to another to create meaning. Some feminist writers look at texts from a different light. To do this, you will need to know something about the texts referred to – so look them up!

Reference/quotation	What it means originally	Question
<b>Stanza 1</b> The King James Bible is the standard text of the Anglican Church in the UK. Also known as the Authorised Version, it was commissioned by King James I in 1604.	So, this text is the standard 'English' Bible that has been used in Anglican Church schools for years.	What does the 'torn page' about the girls' attitude to authority? Whose authority?
<b>Stanza 6</b> The Beaufort scale of wind speed: two, light breeze...	The Beaufort scale is used to measure wind speeds and the danger resulting from these.	What do the wind speeds represent about the rise of feminism?
<b>Stanzas 7–8</b> 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' comes from Act III, Scene II of the play Julius Caesar by Shakespeare. It has long been a traditional favourite in British public schools.	The speech this comes from is by Mark Anthony, and it has a political setting. It shows the interest in power, public speaking and rhetoric that is traditional in some schools.	Research the context of this quotation and read the speech. What is Mark Anthony trying to achieve? What do the girls with the speech in the poem have in common with the speech in the play? How might it be linked to the rise of feminism?
<b>Stanza 9</b> The lists of the poets laureate	This list is, of course, made up of dead, white men, many of which are no longer recognised as great poets. Ann Duffy was crowned Poet Laureate in May 2009. At the time of writing, Duffy is the first female Poet Laureate.	What does the list – remember it's not complete in the poem – say about how feminism has changed the world? Can you do some research out what Duffy's first poem as Poet Laureate was like?
<b>Stanza 13</b> 'Kind of court for a husband' crossword clue with the answer is 'Kangaroo'.	What traditionally does the term 'bounder' mean? Why is it ironic here?	How is the marriage of Mrs Mackay described? What language presented in the episode?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



Reference/quotation	What it means originally	Question
<b>Stanza 14</b> 'Currente calamo; 'fiat lux'; 'stet'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currente calamo – 'with a flowing pen' meaning 'offhand' or 'lightly'</li> <li>• fiat lux meaning 'let there be light' (a quote from the King James Bible)</li> <li>• 'stet' is a publisher's mark which means 'let that be deleted' or 'let that be accepted'</li> </ul>	These three statements among the knowledge the teachers keep safe in the 'books'. What ambitions do you think a person have who dreams of three ideas?
<b>Stanza 14</b> Browning saying 'I am married, my wife'	It is a reference to the famous love affair and happy marriage between Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, both famous poets.	Why is this poem used to show the emotions of a female? What is impossible about this statement? Is it political?
<b>Stanza 15</b> 'Jerusalem hung in the air' – refers to 'Jerusalem' by William Blake, the great Romantic poet and mystic.  This is a famous poem of liberation and revolution, which has been adopted by the British as a sort of anthem.	It's also used as the words to a very famous hymn. The poem is about the mythological idea that Jesus visited Glastonbury. It's interesting that this poem is chosen by the British establishment as a symbol of their strength, when really it is about Blake's intention to cause a revolution which leads to social justice: <i>'I will not cease from Mental Fight,            Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:            Till we have built Jerusalem,            In England's green &amp; pleasant land'</i>	Bearing in mind the theme of the revolution, how does Donne's reference to Jerusalem relate to the idea of the rise of feminism?
<b>Stanza 17</b> Ursula Fleur: 'A good laugh / is feasting on a man'	This could be a reference to the presence of the school which although the name could relate to two well-known poets (Fleur Adcock and Ursula K. Le Guin) – they didn't attend the school however.	What does the fact that the disruption leads to poem written about it say about feminism and its effect on women's creative lives?
<b>Stanza 22</b> George Mallory: 'he'd wanted to reach the summit because it was there'	'She saw herself walking the upper slopes with the Captain of Sports towards the foetal shape of a sleeping man'	What does Miss Dunn achieve?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



Reference/quotation	What it means originally	Question
<b>Stanzas 23–24</b> <i>'I vow to thee my country, all  earthly things above,  Entire and whole and perfect, the  service of my love, the love that  asks no questions, the love that  stands the test...'</i>	This is a traditional hymn of a patriotic type often sung in schools. It explains how a Christian owes loyalty to both their homeland and their religion.	What is the connection between Miss Fife and the theme of the hymn?
<b>Stanza 24</b> <i>'Queen Canute, / Against the  tide of their mirth / ...'</i>	King Canute, in the traditional story, is a powerful ruler revered by his courtiers. He claims to have absolute power, and then orders the ocean to retreat. It doesn't. In some versions this leads to his embarrassment, in others he wisely tells his courtiers that there is clearly a king (God) who has more power than he does over the ocean.	Why does Duffy present Headmistress as a female of King Canute?
<b>Stanzas 26–27</b> <i>'Noctambulist'</i>	Interestingly, the dictionary definition of this word is usually 'one who walks in their sleep'.	Why does Duffy change 'not necessarily in sleep'?
<b>Stanza 27</b> <i>Hast thou no care of me? shall I  abide / In this dull world, which in  thy absence is / No better than a  sty? O, see, my women, / The  crown o' the earth doth melt. My  lord! O, wither'd is the garland of  the war, / The soldier's pole is  fall'n: young boys and girls / Are  level now with men; the odds is  gone, / And there is nothing  remarkable / Except the evening  moon.</i>	Cleopatra is mourning the death of her lover, Mark Anthony, and still addressing him even though he has died. She feels the world is meaningless without him.	Mrs Mackay reads this as her lesson in school 'as if she had shone on her cheeks'. Why is she crying? Why does she change the text? How is she feeling about her marriage?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





Reference/quotation	What it means originally	Question
<b>Stanza 31</b> 'The silver apples of the moon, The golden apples of the sun.' (from The Song of Wandering Aengus by W B Yeats)	A romantic poem in which the writer, even though he is old, wishes to take the hands of a 'glimmering girl' and kiss her.	Why is this poem chosen for a female teacher? Is it a heterosexual love poem? What's on Miss Nadimbaba's mind?
<b>Stanza 33</b> 'Help! Why are you stripping me from myself?'	'Flaying of Marsyas' is a story from Ovid's Metamorphoses which describes how the Satyr Marsyas is flayed alive for challenging Apollo to a competition of playing the pipes.	This would appear to be a need to fear punishment if it is very severe. How does it present it?
<b>Stanza 34</b> 'Diet of worms' (Massive assembly of Church and State presided over by Emperor Charles V, where the Protestant Martin Luther challenged the views of the Catholic Church. It took place from 28 January to 25 May 1521.)	Even though Luther was summoned by the Church, the meeting reflected well on him because he left unharmed (through a promise of safe conduct). They broke their promise of safe conduct and tried to have Luther arrested, but a friendly prince collected him and put him in safety in a castle at Wartburg.	What does Luther represent in terms of attitudes to authority? Can this be related to the poem?  Does it suggest that the rebelliousness is a challenge to history, or the result of it?
<b>Stanza 35</b> <i>The quality of mercy is not strain'd, It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath</i> (Portia, Act 4, Scene 1, line 184, The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare)	Disguised as a lawyer, Portia has come to rescue Antonio, the merchant of Venice, from being required to give a 'pound of flesh' in repayment of a loan. Her argument here is that you cannot require someone to be merry because mercy is voluntary.	What is comic about the teacher is using this line? What words are not working for them? What might be intended?
<b>Stanza 37</b> 'Miss Nadimbaba closed her eyes in her head'	Miss Nadimbaba is frequently portrayed as a keen amateur poet, as is Ursula Fleur, a student. (What kind of poem has a concluding 'couplet'? What do we learn about Miss Nadimbaba from this?)	How different are the teachers and the students in this poem? Does this change as the poem goes on?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



Reference/quotation	What it means originally	Question
<b>Stanza 37</b> 'It was a lover and his lass.' (Act 5, Scene 3 of As You Like It by Shakespeare)	This happy spring-time song is sung by two page boys to Touchstone, the Jester. A crucial character in this play is Rosalind, who is considered by many to be the best part for a woman in Shakespeare's oeuvre. It will be the last lines and many opportunities for improvement.	What is special and unique about the way this song is delivered in Duffy's poem? What is his intention the first time here?
<b>Stanza 43</b> 'Till we have built the scale of grace England's green and pleasant land'	This is the second time we see Blake's revolutionary song – check your notes from the first time.	How is the use of 'Jerusalem' different the second time?
<b>Stanza 45</b> Quotes from King Lear by Shakespeare: 'As mad as the vex'd sea...'  King Lear goes mad on the heath as a result of his own unkindness in rejecting his daughter Cordelia, who later dies. This is Cordelia's description of him in his madness.	Miss Mackay becomes a representation of King Lear in stanza 44. Miss Mackay's apparent suicide at the conclusion of the poem can also be contrasted to Lear's death. Lear dies from grief at the needless death of Cordelia in prison.	Does Miss Mackay die or is her death different? How is she portrayed? Why is it her name 'she writes 'in the
Miss Nadimbaba's poem	As the poem concludes, the fact that Miss Nadimbaba's poem is also finished suggests she has a kind of overview of what has happened.	Can we view Miss Nadimbaba's poem as the whole poem?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 3: Teachers Transforming!

	Before the laughter	How they transform
Miss Nadimbaba		
Miss MacKay		
Miss Dunn		
Miss Batt and Miss Fyfe		
Señora Devizes		
Doctor Bream		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Practice Essay Questions

If you are doing AQA A, you must refer to **at least two** poems in your answer. For different views can be taken of the statement, you might want to aim for one poem that serves to disagree.

1. “‘The Laughter of Stafford Girls’ High’ is the centrepiece of the collection for its themes of history, change and women’s experience.’ Examine the idea that this is the case.”
2. ‘It is unusual in *Feminine Gospels* for Duffy to focus on the relationships of women in society.’ Examine this idea.
3. ‘Duffy’s main focus is the female aspiration to achieve great things – and this is reflected in *Feminine Gospels*.’ Examine this idea. **TIP: Discuss this statement in relation to ‘The Laughter of Stafford Girls’ High’ and two further poems of your choice.**
4. “‘The Laughter of Stafford Girls’ High’ presents the idea that feminism has made progress, but this is the opposite of the theme of many of the other poems in *Feminine Gospels*.’ Examine this idea.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Poems about Writing Poetry

## Teacher's Introduction

### Poems

- 'A Dreaming Week' (please note the Teacher's Notes, and Form, Structure and appear in the 'The Non-existent Voice' section)
- 'Gambler'

As we dealt with 'A Dreaming Week' earlier on, here we consider it not as a poem about creativity, and so it is paired with 'Gambler' because they both concern poetry and present ideas which can be considered a philosophy of poetry, or a playful way how poetry can be conceived.

### Debate: What Makes Good Poetry?

#### Teacher's Notes: 'Gambler'

Teaching ideas for you in thinking of ways to get the students explaining what D here – but remember they are tongue in cheek; 'Gambler' presents the idea of a the poem is in fact highly structured.

### Comprehension Questions

### Worksheet 1: Poetic Theories

### Practice Essay Questions

These practice questions relate to this cluster and should be attempted after study

## Debate: What Makes Good Poetry?

Choose the statements you feel reflect your views the most.

1. Poetry should be about characters.
2. Good poems have lots of rhyme.
3. Poetry should seem as if it's taken no effort to write.
4. A good poem can be interpreted in different ways by different people.
5. Poetry, like music, needs rhythm – 'it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing'.
6. Poetry should try to change the world.
7. Personal poems are more interesting than public poems.
8. Public poems are more interesting than personal poems.
9. A good poem feels as if it's come into being in the present moment.
10. A good poem seems to express somehow a feeling we all recognise.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'Gambler'

'A Dreaming Week' can be compared to 'Gambler' because both poems concern the writing of poetry.

'Hyperion's tips' refers to a mythological Titan celebrated in a long, unfinished narrative. The text associates Hyperion with creativity and poetry (he meets with the Mother of the Muses, who is symbolically the mother of creativity). We can read 'Hyperion's tips' to mean 'good advice on good poetic technique'. In 'Gambler' Duffy merges the semantic field of poetry with gambling and begins the playful conceit that her poetry is actually a series of 'bets'. This is equivalent to suggesting that rather than studying the 'form' of the horses, she is perhaps studying the horses, making a judgement on their prior performance, she is instead choosing them on the basis of their names. This suggests Duffy is arguing that tradition in poetry doesn't matter and she is happy to ignore 'Hyperion's tips'.

There is also a poetic manifesto or philosophy of poetry presented, just as there is a suggestion that poetry can come from a place of randomness. If the bets are essentially random choices, then the poetry can be too.



### Suggested Tasks

Make a list of lines or phrases from these two poems that could be construed as a poetic manifesto.

Compare the list based on 'A Dreaming Week' to 'Gambler'. What contrasts can you identify? Ask students to consider these statements in relation to the two poems, and decide which is best: 'Gambler' or 'A Dreaming Week'? Then move on to the 'Poetic Theories' section.

- Poetry (and the writing of it) is a sensual activity.
- A good poet is willing to ignore the strict rules of poetic form.
- Poems can successfully be made by connecting sounds first, and ideas later.
- Internal rhyme and consonance are very important poetic devices.
- The outer world *is* poetry: all the poet has to do is find a way to write it.
- A good poet must follow their instincts quickly and take a risk.
- Dreams and the unconscious might be a good source for poetic inspiration.
- Poetry can connect you to the natural world and the universe.
- Poetry might have something to do with predicting the future.
- The world will provide you with enough inspiration for your poetry if you just observe.
- Poetry is connected with our knowledge of death, and we are always surrounded by it.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Form, Structure and Language in 'Gambler'

<p><b>Stanza 1</b></p> <p>Who do you think the poet is talking about in this poem?</p> <p>How many examples of alliteration are there in the first stanza alone?</p> <p>In what way do the words after the eighth word prove the first statement (words 1–8)?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 2</b></p> <p>In this stanza the poet refers to horse racing or writing?</p> <p>Does this stanza seem always easy?</p> <p>What sex was Hypocrite? How does the poet reject this?</p> <p>Can we view this as a metaphor?</p>
<p><b>Stanza 3</b></p> <p>What reasoning does the poet use when choosing horses to bet on?</p> <p>Is writing poetry a gamble?</p> <p>Which ideas in this stanza connect the poem itself with the process of its writing?</p> <p>Are the 'bets' the poet makes also the word choices in this poem?</p>	
<p>Do <b>stanzas 1–3</b> make us feel that writing poetry for Duffy is difficult or easy? What impression is she giving of the process of crafting a poem – does it take loads of work, or can we attempt it randomly?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 4</b></p> <p>Which line in this stanza shows the mental process of writing?</p>
<p><b>Stanza 5</b></p> <p>What argument does stanza 5 present about how you should choose words for a poem?</p> <p>Which words rhyme here?</p>	<p><b>Stanza 5</b></p> <p>'her stump of a pen'</p> <p>How can we read this?</p> <p>What ideas are presented here?</p> <p>How long it has been a poet?</p>
<p><b>Interpretation</b></p> <p>What ideas does the poem present about how to write a poem?</p> <p>Could it be considered a toolkit for writing poetry?</p>	<p><b>Comparison</b></p> <p>What makes this poem different from other poems?</p> <p>Can it be read as a statement about being a poet?</p>

### 'Gambler' – 'A Poetic Manifesto'?

A 'poetic manifesto' is a term used to describe a writer's opinions and beliefs about what poetry is, how it should be written, and what it should contain. A good example of this is the *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in which they argued that:

- poetry should be accessible to common people
- poetry should stem from the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'
- poetry should use a purified version of the language of common people
- a poet is a prophet who has privileged knowledge of nature and the universe
- poetry is more philosophical than other art forms
- the external world is both perceived by and, to an extent, *created by* the observer

If we were to view 'A Dreaming Week' as a poetic manifesto, what ideas would it present? What should or could be? Could we make a list like the one above based on our reading?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 1: Poetic Theories

Read 'A Dreaming Week' and 'Gambler' and decide where we can find evidence for statements. Then write a short sentence quoting the evidence and explaining the

Poetic theory	Evidence
Poetry (and the writing of it) is a sensual activity, or poetry should be sensual.	
A good poet is willing to ignore the strict rules of poetic form.	
Poems can successfully be made by connecting sounds first, ideas later.	
Internal rhyme and consonance are very important poetic devices.	
The outer world <i>is</i> poetry: all the poet has to do is find a way to write it down.	
A good poet must follow their instincts quickly and take a risk.	
Dreams and the unconscious might be a good source for poetic inspiration.	
Poetry can connect you to the natural world and the universe.	
Poetry might have something to do with predicting the future.	
The world will provide you with enough inspiration for your poetry if you just sit and wait for it.	
Poetry is connected with our knowledge of death, and we are always subject to this if we write it.	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Practice Essay Questions

If you are doing AQA A, you must refer to **at least two** poems in your answer. For different views can be taken of the statement, you might want to aim for one poem that seems to agree and one to disagree.

### AQA format questions

1. 'Duffy believes that poetry can change the world.' Examine this idea.
2. 'Duffy often draws attention to the idea that women have to write poems using their own experiences, responsible for developing, and in circumstances not of their own choosing.' Examine this idea.
3. 'Hyperion's tips mean nothing to her' ('Gambler'), like many of the poems in the collection, endorses the idea of being rebellious and ignoring the rules. This is essentially a theme of the collection. Examine this idea.

### Additional questions (non-AQA format)

4. 'Gambler' is the only poem to the rule in the collection because it is not about the poet's own writing poetry. Examine this idea.
5. 'A Dreaming Week' could be taken to represent the whole collection best because of its references to writing for the love of nature, and this is more important than anything else elsewhere. Examine this idea.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Elegies

### Teacher's Introduction

#### Poems

- 'Wish'
- 'North-West'
- 'Death and the Moon'

From the perspective of the exam, students may well have focused on a selection (diverse) but they do need to be able to talk about how the collection concludes. To explain what the anthology moves away from and where it moves towards.

*Feminine Gospels* abandons the political and identity-based poems it began with and moves towards poems of remembrance and loss. One might say that this began with 'The Light Gatherer' and 'The Girl' but of course, the strain can also be traced back to 'Stafford Girls' 'High' and 'The Girl' to the more political poems such as 'History'.

It is a feminist narrative that 'the personal is political' and one can argue that this is a collection of poems – we have moved away from the political to the strictly personal. The only poem which can be read as a rejuvenation of some of the suffering feminine characters is 'The Girl'.

#### Notes on Elegies

##### Teacher's Notes on 'North-West', 'Death and the Moon' and 'Wish'

These can be shared with students to gain more insight into the poems, but perhaps questions have been attempted.

#### Comprehension Questions

**Worksheet 1: 'Wish': Different Ways to Read: Biographical and non-biographical**  
*Feminine Gospels*

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Notes on Elegies

An elegy is a sad, mournful poem or piece of writing commemorating or expressing something lost, especially for someone who has died. It is, therefore, connected to get written on a tombstone, which we would call *elegiac*. Elegies often perform an resurrection of the person mourned: at the very least their importance is emphasised.

As you read these, you will discover that they appear to contain undeniably biographical details, particularly the case with 'Death and the Moon', which cites the partner of Duffy's dedicatee of the poem. However, it is important not to fall into the trap of thinking of these as relationships or friendships; they also seek to explore death and remembrance in a way that is meaningful to readers, otherwise they would not serve their purpose as a part of the collection.

For example, remembrance is also a form of giving 'life' to a person (especially in poetry, as explored, for example, by Shakespeare in his sonnets). 'Wish' explores this on a personal level, giving the reader the opportunity to connect it to the other 'dead' females in the collection, as well as the subject. It evokes equally the possibility of this happening, and yet the poem itself suggests that the 'what if' it presents is acted out, thereby bringing the loved one back to life in the perfect sense that the poem is read at all, for example.

## Teacher's Notes: 'North-West'

This poem, about returning to the area of one's upbringing, is elegiac in a different way, as it mourns a period of personal history and, at the same time, the unlived life that could have been. The unnamed companion might be considered to be a former lover, a schoolfriend, or a friend. It is indicated that Liverpool is the location, and this is supported by the reference to 'Loves You' by The Beatles. The fact that the song title is not mentioned, even effects the secret it hides: it leaves unsaid (appropriately as this is a relationship that never was) and leaves the reader to uncover them. The predominantly half rather than full rhymes, the fragmented business or inconclusiveness, and this connects back to the theme of 'unborn children' in the final poem of the collection.

The metaphors work to create the overwhelming atmosphere of grief, often through the use of 'grieves', the light is scattered into 'frets'. While the comparison can be made to other types of experience as one matures ('wondering what we lost'), the poem contrasts with the rest of the collection due to its personal tone.

The final poems in this collection move away from the appreciation of the political and social relationships with children, or their rights to their own generative function, and pass on to the theme of adulthood.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Teacher's Notes: 'Death and the Moon'

'Death and the Moon' connects the poet and her mourning, and the dead, to the moon. It is about the death of Adrian Henri, Duffy's former partner, and is addressed in sympathy to his death, Catherine Marcangeli. It is her 'widow's cry' that is described in stanza 2.

In this sense the poem resurrects him; the more his absence is described, the more the metaphor and personification. In terms of structure, the poem is about acceptance. The poem 'Wish' explores a fantasy of resurrection. 'Death and the Moon' accepts the impossibility of crossing the barrier to reach the beloved, despite attempting it in stanza 2. It emerges out of this process.

In this poem, death seems paradoxical because it doesn't make sense to the poet to find her lost friend so closely in life only to find him so closely, only far away in death. The poem is somewhat paradoxical because the poem brings him as a companion to the consolation of permanent and lasting. The moon seems to function as a sort of companion, and it is worth asking why a poem that seems to dwell on the impossibility of comfort is addressed to the lost person. Maybe that the metaphors and poetic content are themselves, a consolation to the hours the interests of the departed – who was, after all, a poet. The audience for the poem is in fact not Marcangeli but Henri himself – who was known for his poetry.

## Form, Structure and Language in 'Death and the Moon'

<b>Structure</b> The more the poem moves towards its final valediction, the more enjambment becomes a feature. Terminal caesurae ensure that none of the sentences begin in the initial position as they did in stanzas 1 and 2.	<b>Metaphors</b> Count the metaphors in the poem. They feel like they were written to make the world of the poem as intense as a means of communication with the dead. These images of communication ('stuttered ears', 'ghosts of my words') are an impassable barrier now. The poem actually has a metaphor to explain the metaphors to explain the measure 'the space between the end muteness is the end of the world' may seem appropriate. The world has been silenced.
<b>Oxymoron to present shock</b> Duffy's mood of bafflement presents the feeling that Henri's death is nonsensical and reminds us that his bereaved loved ones are in shock. Oxymoron presents impossibility because all oxymorons are impossible: 'tough confetti', 'hard rain'. The overall message of the start of the poem is Duffy's speechlessness, which is why her breath is described as 'wordless'.	
<b>Comparison/connections</b> This poem is perhaps the only poem with little or no feminist purpose. It is linked, perhaps mysteriously, to the poems about writing and its purpose, which also at times elect 'not to' write to evoke space or silence.	<b>Failure of poetry</b> Duffy's final argument is that if we fail to reach the poet's words, are prayers, she cannot then, for the poem to be heard by the dead and allow them to be heard by the night is 'mute'.

<b>Comparison and presentation of themes</b> Which other poems, even if they belong to the 'political' category, are about mourning this one? Which poetic techniques are used to create a sense of a broken or choked voice? Can you compare the dead person in this poem to other dead people in the rest of the collection?
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Teacher's Notes: 'Wish'

While it conforms to the personal nature of the final poems in the collection, *Wish* is hybrid because it can be related to the earlier poems much more readily. This is like the poems about mistreated women and death, and fascinatingly this poem can be read as a sort of continuation of the fates of the women from earlier in the collection who have suffered.

This poem includes a line that appears to draw directly on a description of a mistreated woman in a poem 'Theseus and Ariadne'. Graves shows us Ariadne abandoned and left, presciently, by her callous (half-God) lover Theseus:

*her set walk  
Down paths of oyster-shell bordered with flowers  
Across the shadowy turf below the vines*

All Ariadne can do here is wander and be passively reflecting on the trauma of being neglected (like 'Anon'), longed for (like the women in 'Beautiful') and moribund (like the women in 'History'). Graves' story is unexpectedly positively, because in the myth of Ariadne's virtue – rescued from the island by Bacchus, who makes her his wife and brings her to his household. She is then pictured at the end of Graves' poem 'playing the Queen to the wicked Theseus never realises. Duffy is also attempting to symbolically rescue some of the women perhaps why she recalls Graves' lines with comparable diction, and conceivably even this may simply represent the subject matter of a lost loved one):

*Her bare feet walk along the gravel path  
between the graves*

Duffy's resurrection seeks to undo all the suffering that was concomitant with the death of the body in rewind. In the final lines, Duffy manages to create a rebirth that might be like Jesus. This resurrection also has symbolic significance for many people, not simply for the person: everyone is influenced by 'the light'. After creating this emotive agenda, the poem turns the subject and object of its argument into question: the 'heavy door' the speaker opens (the epiphany represented by the resurrected female, could place HER in a coffin and the speaker in the poem is female). It could even be read that the occupants of the coffin are reanimated (if they are sleepers who can be 'woken by the light'). Equally 'why do I open' both to the speaker and to the protagonist.

While many students will want to read this poem biographically as a catharsis for Duffy, it presents a restricted understanding of how poetry might work for a wider audience. The poem connects with the earlier 'dead' female characters in the collection (AO2: structure). The reading does not present an explanation for why the subject/object relations of the poem are made to work confusingly.

The poem is asking the reader to consider what the 'heavy door' might represent – the speaker off from the loved one she wants to be reunited with. Some readers have suggested it be Duffy's mother, who is described in humorous terms in another collection in 'Be'. The poem communicates the impression that the force of regret and loss might make it possible for a sheer will-power and desire connects it perhaps to the anger and loss of poem 'Wish' a response to these poems and an imaginative effort to give new life to the characters in these poems, as well as Duffy's own life?

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Form, Structure and Language questions on 'Wish', 'Moon' and 'North-West'

### 'Wish'

Try to write a simplified story in note form explaining what we SEE happening in this:

1. A (female) body in a grave starts to move
2. The body grows warmer
3. ...

Is it possible to imagine the character in this poem is related to those in for example 'Death and the Moon' or 'North-West'? Why do you think the poet wants to show us this figure being brought back to life?

### 'Death and the Moon' and 'North-West'

1. What do we get out of these two poems facing each other suggest about the poems?
2. Why do you think the poet seeks to write these two poems about mourning?
3. What makes these poems different to the opening poems of the collection?
4. In what ways could we consider these poems 'feminine gospels' in the sense of the title? How do they relate to all women's lives?

### 'North-West'

1. What is the objective correlative in the second line?
2. Are most of the rhymes in 'North-West' full or half rhymes? What is the effect of this?
3. There are three full rhymes at the end of the lines. What is the effect of them?
4. Which images in the poem can be connected to the words *evanescent* or *transient*?

### 'Death and the Moon'

1. Which words indicate the harshness of death?
2. Ignoring the friendship and co-parenthood of their child, and reading the poem as if it is about a stranger, what do you feel the poem says about why they were important?
3. Why does Duffy use the adjective 'living' to describe her sleep after the funeral? What is the effect of this adjective?
4. Which lines indicate that the person who has died was a poet who was important?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Worksheet 1: 'Wish': Different Ways to Read: Biography

Many readers have felt encouraged to read Duffy's work in a biographical way (more like a life). This is because some parts of the previous book to this one (*The World's Wife*) sketch certain stages in the poet's life. Which poems in this collection seem to have a biographical feel? I have briefly sketching out some ideas here:

	Quotation (try choosing some of your own too)	How it could be read autobiographically
'Tall'	'She needed a turret, / found one' 'Taller was colder, aloner, no wiser'	
'The Light Gatherer'	('For Ella') 'Where I knelt watching'	
'Loud'	'Before, she'd been easily led'	

1. Reading 'Wish' in a similar way to 'Tall' – what are your feelings about why the poet is at the grave?
2. Could it be her mother? Or to Duffy who has died – perhaps her mother, for example? Or a female friend?
3. What do you feel was the motivation for writing the poem?

## Non-biographical Reading of 'Wish'

1. Look through the collection and try to locate characters who appear either to be dead or alive.
2. What arguments does Duffy make by showing these characters? Bearing in mind what is our response to the character in 'Wish'?
3. Do you feel that we could view the character in the grave who re-animates in 'Wish' as characters from previously in the book?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Whole-text Activities

### Context: Historical Events

Duffy refers to many historical events and contexts in her poems. AQA A English o 'no text exists in isolation but is the product of the time in which it was produced' the historical context on the right, and the way it links to the poems.

Idea	Poem	Hi
<b>War</b> Explore all the wars mentioned in this poem and prepare a short speech explaining them – who was involved, where and when. You could also give some of 'Loud'.	'History'	
<b>Political views</b> Research and list some of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thatcherite ideas</li> <li>2. Blairite ideas</li> <li>3. Socialist ideas</li> </ol> Then consider which of these Duffy might support based on your reading of the poems.	'Work', 'The Woman Who Shopped', 'Loud'	
<b>Change: homosexuality and the law</b> Create a timeline you can show the class of important events in the history of this theme: the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885; the 1954 Wolfenden Report; Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988. Now consider how this history is relevant to Duffy's poems in <i>Feminine Gospels</i> .	'White Writing', 'A Dreaming Week', Miss Batt and Miss Dunn in 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'	
<b>Resistance and rebellion</b> Research online the famous article by Rebecca Walker from <i>Ms</i> magazine, 'Becoming the Third Wave' (1992). You should also try to find out about the Anita Hill hearings, which prompted Rebecca Walker's article.  Consider what these events and the article have said about how men use power. Consider what the poems have to say about Duffy's use of influence and her increasing fame as a poet. Does she feel she can help the world easily?	'Tall', 'Work', 'Loud', 'The Virgin's Memo'	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





# 1. Characterisation and Themes

Task: Tick all that apply to each poem.

	Seems to combine aspects of femininity into one character	Seeks to change herself in some way	Contains a comic transformation or role reversal (e.g. justice)	Uses hyperbole (or a conceit meaning it exaggerates an idea)	Presents motherhood as key to female experience
'The Long Queen'					
'The Map-Woman'					
'Beautiful'					
'The Diet'					
'The Woman Who ...'					
'Work'					
'Tall'					
'Loud'					
'History'					
'Sub'					
'The Virgin's Memo'					
'Anon'					
'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'					

	Elegiac tone (mourning for something lost)	Tone of a personal love poem	Discusses the craft or process of writing poetry in itself – 'writing it'	Uses the concept of irony (or a 'not' structure)	Presents motherhood as key to female experience	Female identity
'A Dreaming Week'						
'White Writing'						
'Gambler'						
'The Light Gatherer'						
'The Cord'						
'Wish'						
'North-West'						
'Death and the Moon'						

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 2. Themes: Connections between Poems: Finding an

**Task:** Complete the missing quotations and choose wording for a connecting quality. Some are done for you.

Connecting quality	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation
These poems treat female identity as something ancient that is transmitted through time	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Long Queen'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'The Long Queen couldn't die.'	<b>Poem:</b> 'Anon'  <b>Quotation:</b> '...she passed on her pen the tradition down through the years'	<b>Poem:</b> 'Bea'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'She never...'
These poems treat motherhood as crucial to female identity	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Long Queen'  <b>Quotation:</b>	<b>Poem:</b> 'History'  <b>Quotation:</b>	<b>Poem:</b> 'Wo'  <b>Quotation:</b>
These poems present female characters who feel out of place or isolated from society	<b>Poem:</b>  <b>Quotation:</b> 'But by now the people were tiny'	<b>Poem:</b>  <b>Quotation:</b>	<b>Poem:</b>  <b>Quotation:</b>
	<b>Poem:</b> 'Work'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'She trawled the seas, hoovered fish, felled trees'	<b>Poem:</b>  <b>Quotation:</b>	<b>Poem:</b>  <b>Quotation:</b>

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



### 3. Themes: Structure of the Collection – First Nine Poems

**Task:** Let's explore which themes and treatments recur, and where in the collection they are related in style, imagery or type of protagonist. Write a note for all that apply.

	The main character observes the world from a detached perspective	The main character seems separate from the mainstream	The main character transforms or grows	The main character tries to change the world
'The Long Queen'				
'The Map-Woman'				
'Beautiful'				
'The Diet'				
'The Woman Who Shopped'				
'Work'				
'Tall'				
'Loud'				
'History'				

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 4. Attitudes and Values: In Context

**Task:** While you are probably using *Feminine Gospels* as a core text, it is still a good idea to consider the poems we suggest some poems for you to examine to find ideas to suit each of these themes. You don't **have** to use *Gospels* as a secondary text, but it can still be a good idea to.

Theme	Suggested poem	Key quotations and notes about the message the poem
Gender	'Sub'	
Class and status	'The Long Queen' / 'Beautiful'	
Race and ethnicity	'Loud' / 'The Map-Woman'	
Imperialism (and nationalism)	'History'	
Post-imperialism (the way countries still try to use and project power despite no longer having empires)	'The Map-Woman' / 'Loud' / 'Tall'	
Changing social and legal norms	'White Writing'	

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 5. Attitudes and Values: Issues in Duffy's Poetry

Here is a list of 13 concerns that come up in Duffy's poetry.

**Task 1:** Rank them in order of how much they bother you – either by cutting them out, or perhaps by awarding a rank.

**Task 2:** Note down the titles of the poems that deal with these things. How many of Duffy's concerns match your own?

Issues	Ranking	
Women's body image		
Reproductive expectations / 24-hour fertility clock		
People project ideas of what you should be like onto you		
Challenges of bringing up children		
Consumer culture and its influence		
Anger/disappointment at male behaviour		
The need to call out abuse by males		
The erasure of women from history		
The expectation that women are supposed to be capable of normal life while menstruating, pregnant or breastfeeding		
Balancing the desire for a career with having a family		
The lack or rarity of women-only institutions/spaces		
The fact that marriage for millennial women is only allowed for heterosexual couples		
The fact that so many amazing and interesting women of the past have been lost to history and are, therefore, uncelebrated		

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## 6. The Writer's Use of Language: Imagery

**Task:** Locate an example of each type of imagery in the named poems. After each example, write an explanation of what the imagery might want to begin by describing in your own words the picture it places in the mind's eye. Note that an

Type of imagery	Example	
Elemental or weather imagery in 'Tall', 'Loud' and 'The Woman Who Shopped', and a two-word phrase in 'Work'		
Imagery of the 'The Woman Who Shopped' and 'History'		
Classical (to do with Ancient Greek myths or literature) imagery in 'Beautiful'		
Imagery of ecological disaster in 'Work'		
Imagery describing mothers losing their children in 'History' and 'Loud'		
Gambling imagery in 'Gambler' and 'Beautiful' – is it used for different effects? What are they?		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 7. The Writer's Use of Language: Techniques Used in

### Enjambment

Enjambment is the breaking of a unit of sense (a phrase, a clause or a whole sentence) across the continuation of the phrase on the next line. The opposite of this is end-stopping, where the sense fits onto a single line.

Enjambment / run-on lines come in TWO TYPES:

1. **Necessary** (or normal) enjambment (the normal kind) – when the sentence is complete on the next line.
2. **Revelatory** enjambment (the clever kind!) – when a line presents a complete thought, but the sentence is continuing when we get to the next line.

Let's try to locate the two types of enjambment in these examples:

*They flee from me that never did me seek  
With naked foot I tread upon my chamber*  
(Thomas Wyatt)

The first line is a complete sentence and makes sense on its own. So, we *discover* the meaning of the first line when we reach the second line – this is a **revelatory** enjambment and it is most definitely

*I am not prone to weeping, as our sex  
Commonly are;  
(Shakespeare)*

The sentence is not complete until the second line and does not make sense until the second line – this is **normal** enjambment. Also, after the words 'Commonly are' there is a **caesura**, which is a pause, but by the fact that the phrase or statement is complete, causing a pause.

### Uses of enjambment: your turn to research

Enjambment may also be used to postpone the purpose of the line until the following line, to create curiosity of the reader and shock them with a surprise. Explore the uses of enjambment in the example, 'The Virgin's Memo' and any other poems you like. Find the quotations that

- To reveal suddenly the identity of the main character in a poem ('History')
- To postpone to the next line the identity of the addressee ('The Virgin's Memo')
- To split up a commonly used phrase to make it into a shorter and rather disturbing phrase ('Loud')
- To delay a simile to the next line so it is presented with more impact ('Loud')
- To make a terminal (final) word of a line stand out before continuing the phrase ('Loud')
- A revelatory enjambment reveals an expletive phrase at the start of the next line ('The Woman Who Shopped')

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 8. The Writer's Use of Language: Techniques Used in

**Task 1:** Locate the features on the left in the chosen poems. You can write some notes below 'Quotation'. Some have been left blank for you - so choose a feature of your poems you want to focus on for this one.

Technique	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation
Adjacent rhymes	<p>Poem: 'The Diet'</p> <p>Quotation: 'Mirror, svelter, slimmer'</p> <p><i>Duffy's tricolon of rhymes communicates the anxiety the poet feels about her image.</i></p>	<p>Poem: 'History'</p> <p>Quotation: 'Not a tooth in her head / half dead'</p> <p><i>'dark and harsh, the sudden adjacent rhyme links her age to her moribund condition.'</i></p>	<p>Poem: 'The Who Shopper'</p> <p>Quotation: 'Went out with silver shilling, willing...'</p>
Enjambment strongly breaking up a simple phrase	<p>Poem: 'The Diet'</p> <p>Quotation: 'Stared in / the mirror'</p>	<p>Poem: 'History'</p> <p>Quotation:</p>	<p>Poem: 'The Who Shopper'</p> <p>Quotation:</p>
Alliteration or consonance	<p>Poem: 'The Long Queen'</p> <p>Quotation: 'wet nurses, witches, widows, wives,'</p>	<p>Poem: 'The Virgin's Memo'</p> <p>Quotation:</p>	<p>Poem: 'Another'</p> <p>Quotation:</p>

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





**Task 2:** Locate examples of the following techniques in any of the poems. You should explain their effect or purpose.

Technique	Poem	Quotation	
Necessary enjambment			
Total lack of enjambment – lines are neatly end-stopped, complete the sentences by the end of the line			
Initial, terminal or medial caesura (a natural or notated pause in the middle of a line)			
End-stopping			
A list within a line			
Masculine caesura (a pause after a stressed syllable)			
Internal rhyme (rhyme occurring within a line, not at the end)			

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 9. The Writer's Use of Language: Tone and Style

**Task:** Let's build some notes about the effect of the tone and style of the poems. The first have been done in the left-hand column.

	Tone of the poem / describing style	Quotations showing tone and how it develops
'The Long Queen'	Summative, representative of a fantastical, encomiastic genre.	'No girl growing who wasn't the apple of the Long Queen's eye'
'The Map-Woman'	Informal, comic in parts.	'... her body was certain, an inch to the mile'
'Beautiful'	Adventurous and daring at times; progressively more tragic and mournful as it develops.	'meanwhile, lovely she lay high up in a foreign castle's walls' Later in the poem: 'Dead, she's elegant bone / in mud'
'The Diet'	Explores the boundary between comedy and tragedy. Recounts a story; uses a comic style to extend hyperbolic 'going to extremes' narrative.	'Seed small, she was out and about, looking for home.'
'The Woman Who Shopped'	Tone is driven, anxious, compulsive.	'She loved her dingy rooms of her heart'
'Work'	Shares the drive of 'The Woman Who Shopped' but reads differently.	Opening: 'worked from home' Ending: 'worked, to the bone.'
'Tall'	Light-hearted and adventurous, playful idea develops slowly into something more troubling and then finally eschatological.	Early: 'rising 8 foot / Bigger than any man'  Late: '... caught their souls in her hands as they fell / From the burning towers'

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



	Tone of the poem / describing style	Quotations showing tone and how it develops
'Loud'	Tone of fairy tale or parable changes to one of violent protest and horror. This also becomes increasingly critical in tone about religion.	'she could call abroad without using the phone' (represents Duffy's growing international reputation) 'the screaming children cowering under their beds'
'History'	Graphic tone dealing with the horror of being abused and neglected.	'She woke again, cold, in the dark'
'Sub'	Dark fantasy. A hyperbolic story told in first person. Ironic because events are tongue-in-cheek.	'It was one small step for a man for Neil to stand on the Moon, a small hop for me to stand in'
'The Virgin's Memo'	Ironic, whimsical.	'maybe not herpes, son, or' (text illegible)
'Anon'	Witty jokes present plays on words. Sense of an unheard voice because of the anonymous women discussed.	'A nun / Anon'
'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'	Comic and excitable style relies on anecdote to present the motif of laughter. This develops into more personal insights into the characters and, therefore, a more serious tone.	'Mr and Mrs. Day' gently ate. She eyed him loving his fish'  'Miss Batt and Miss Fife had moved / To a city. They drank in a dark bar where women danced'
'A Dreaming Week'	In 'White Writing', this poem presents an imagined reality. Tone is hugely varied due to imaginative flights of fancy.	'for a date with the glamorous dark'

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



	Tone of the poem / describing style	Quotations showing tone and how it develops
'White Writing'	Repeated negative refrain is a constant reminder of the unfairness and inequality of marriage laws.	'No laws written to guard you'
'Gambler'	Whimsical and playful, with a serious focus in the way the gambler's life is savoured and self-destructive.	'It's words she picks, names she ticks.'
'The Light Gatherer'	Formal and serious, a love poem using extended metaphors to discuss motherhood, leading to a sense of infinity in the final image	'A jewelled cave, opening out at the end of a tunnel of years'
'The Cord'	Evocative, paradoxical and mysterious.	'real enough and hidden'
'Wish'	Elegiac, mysterious and marked by deep emotion and loss.	'Nobody died. Nobody wept.'
'North-West'	Elegiac and marked by a sense of loss	'a grave for you / unloved loves, unborn children'
'Death and the Moon'	Elegiac and marked by a sense of loss	'the goldfish are tongues in the water's mouth'

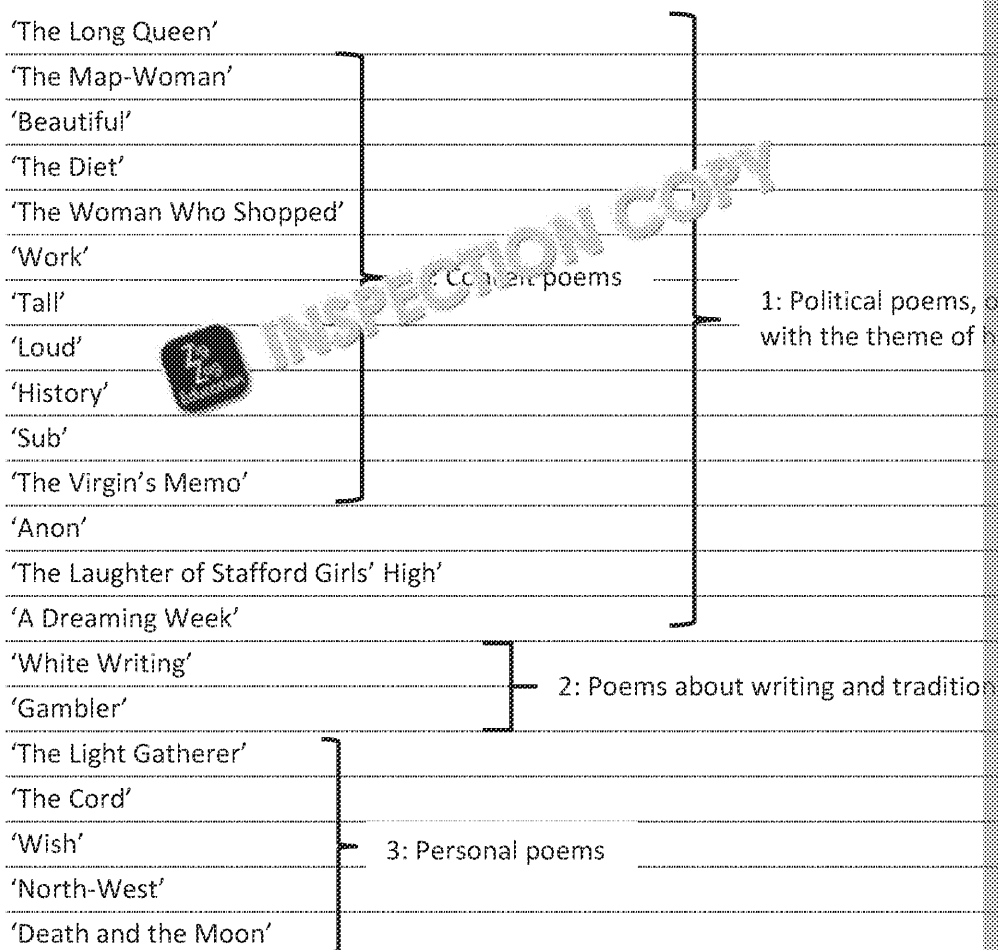
INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 10. Structure

It is possible to get exam questions asking you to examine a view about how the collection is structured, that certain distinctions can be made, and it is worth having an overview of the collection to get an efficient start on such a question. We can consider the collection in terms of three categories of poems that deal with the topic of writing and poetry, and more overtly personal poems.



**Task:** Answer the following questions on the structure of the collection:

1. 'Anon' and 'The Long Queen' could be said to start and conclude the 'political' poems. What do they have in common?
2. Why do you think 'The Map-Woman' was positioned second?
3. Why is 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' positioned to form a barrier between the two types? What does it have in common with both the poems before and after?
4. Apart from 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High', why do the following poems belong to category 1 and also of another category? (1: 'White Writing', 'Gambler', 'The Light Gatherer', 'The Cord', 'Wish', 'North-West', 'Death and the Moon')
5. How could 'The Long Queen' be considered part of category 2?
6. If there was a connection between 'The Long Queen' and 'Death and the Moon', what might it be?
7. What might emerge from the fact the personal poems are placed last, not first?

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## 11. Form

**Task:** Look at the descriptions of formal features below. Decide which poems they describe. Then, use your findings to write a short paragraph about the form of ONE of the poems and why Duffy uses these features.

- A** Long sentences, heavily punctuated with clauses, contributing to a wandering
- B** Medial caesurae are used to give a sense of an unfinished explanation
- C** Short lines, frequently enjambling to give a feeling of a narrative told with mild
- D** Internal rhymes reference each other across quite large distances, even whole
- E** Lacunae (gaps in a manuscript) are used to give the impression that parts of the
- F** The poem uses unexpected rhyming couplets occasionally (one where there is no rhyme, then suddenly find one)
- G** Sonnet form is used, but with a complex and gradual transition rather than a
- H** This poem avoids end-stopping except at the final line of a stanza, so it is full of enjambments

Poem	Formal feature A to H	Purpose and effect
'The Long Queen'		
'History'		
'The Virgin's Memo'		
'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'		
'Wish'		
'Death and the Moon'		

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 12. Critical Reception

**Task:** Evaluate what you think of the critical views presented here.

Quote / critical opinion	My view: agree or disagree	Evidence
Duffy's poetry 'lingers over moments of transient happiness'. Do you think it is morbid or pessimistic?		
Winterson: Duffy's great skill is to show us voices from history 'with words we never heard'. Is Duffy too interested in the past?		
Simon Brittan says Duffy often 'uses language for empty rhetorical effect'. Do you think her poems are too focused on being persuasive or argumentative?		
Lavinia Greenlaw, regarding the '80s and '90s: 'She is the first poet to articulate that bankrupt and dislocated era.' Do you agree that Duffy's poems are too focused on protest?		

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



### 13. Essay Practice

1. It has been said of *Feminine Gospels* that it 'runs miles with myths that don't' – that Duffy is trying to present new images of femininity to put right old ones. ('The Virgin's Memo')
2. 'What I was trying to do was use the idea of gospel truth: in a sense the gospel these poems were about trying to find truth about particularly female issues. Examine the idea that Duffy wants to find the truth about female issues. ('And the Winner Takes It All')
3. 'Each of our ages has its own idea of beauty, its own symbolic woman.' Examine the idea that Duffy is trying to present women who represent all women. ('The Woman Who Shopped')
4. '*Feminine Gospels* presents suffering as a key element of female experience.' Examine the idea that Duffy presents suffering as a key element of female experience. ('Queen', 'History', 'Tall', 'Loud')
5. 'These poems tell tall stories as though they were true confessions.' Examine the idea that Duffy's poems are essentially personal in *Feminine Gospels*. ('The Lipstick Smearer', 'Gambler', 'The Woman Who Shopped')
6. Examine the idea that Duffy's poetry is a form of ventriloquism – presenting other voices as her own. ('The Virgin's Memo', 'Sub', 'Tall')
7. 'Auden said poetry is what happens. But I wonder if the opposite could happen – if poetry could make something happen. Examine the idea that Duffy's poems have a practical purpose. ('The Woman Who Shopped')
8. 'In each poem, I'm trying to reveal a truth, so it can't have a fictional beginning.' Examine the idea that *Feminine Gospels* presents real women and real women's lives. ('The Map-Work', 'Stafford Girls' High')
9. 'It's the sadness of the real world that gives her words weight.' Examine the idea that the purpose of *Feminine Gospels* is to expose suffering in the world. ('History', 'Loud', 'Tall', 'The Woman Who Shopped')
10. Examine the idea that Duffy's poetry in *Feminine Gospels* presents women as victims of social problems. ('The Woman Who Shopped', 'The Diet')

#### Do:

- use your own choice of poems if you can – if not, useful poems are listed in box 13.1
- answer the question, absolutely all the time
- analyse language, form and structure
- close-read and evaluate the power, position and associations of individual words
- compare and contrast poems
- as you read through these questions, try to decide which poems tend to agree with the question given
- remember that some questions are less polarised, like question 5 here, and do your own thinking about what you feel to them

#### Don't:

- forget about the question at any point and start churning out your pre-prepared ideas
- present overlong or wandering quotations when you can be more precise – a few words (and even then only if one of them is 'a' or 'the', and so on)
- forget to compare poems to bring out your interpretation
- spend the whole time analysing one poem mentioned in the question and ignore the others – this is avoiding the question
- latch on to a single detail without first showing you understand the purpose of the poem

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**





## 14. Essay Practice Tasks

1. It has been said of *Feminine Gospels* that it 'runs miles with myths that don't' that Duffy is trying to present new images of femininity to put right old ones.

A partial sample response for this question could look like this:

Many of the characters Duffy creates in *Feminine Gospels* are not pre-existent myths or legends. The Long Queen can be viewed as a goddess or a cult figure, details and the unique experiences of the lives of women. She can be read as Elizabeth, reflecting the context of Duffy's role as Poet Laureate, but, at the same time, having been present throughout time: 'unseen, she ruled and reigned'. And yet, some of Duffy's feminist concerns: she is 'unseen' and not a 'queen' (a notable invisibility can be found in many of the other characters in the collection – for example, 'The Virgin's Memo' and the subject of 'Aunt'). For this reason it is possible to read the poem in a way, noticing that the characters have both a sense of power and, at the same time, can perhaps be seen as a type of irony, where Duffy shows us a character with the reader to suspect that they don't exist. Duffy refers at the end of the poem to the lines 'true or false', but these words are stated in a very definite way and more definite 'laws' of the Long Queen. This suggests that Duffy certainly feels they exist, and in the logic of the poem she 'exists' even if she doesn't exist – all the 'possessions' if only for a 'moment of time'. Some readers might feel that Duffy develops a sense of belonging and strength for women, but others might find pathos, as she exists in a sort of fantasy world that reminds us of fairy tales.

'History' also presents a character who is both present and absent and, therefore, developing throughout the collection. Here Duffy may have more political or social issues, as it gives us a female perspective on a subject dominated by men (this can be noticed in the poem details many painful atrocities and pitiful moments of suffering that in surveying history can be seen in other poems too, for example 'Beautiful World' seeks to take out truths about what has or has not changed through time for an essentially bleak view of history, because at the conclusion the feminine perspective (therefore perhaps be named 'herstory') is either dead or absent, and worse than the human race who 'sprayed graffiti' on her door.

These two characters do have the quality of trying to 'put right' things Duffy has seen, but they are not necessarily successful. Even in other poems where a positive view is given, still the sense of irony that women are not recognised as they should be. The term 'legend' might apply to the Long Queen, but the term 'myth'. This poem uses irony because of its invisibility, as each of the feats the female speaker achieves is dominated by a male world.

**Task 1:** Write the remainder of the essay focusing on what needs to be added

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



2. 'What I was trying to do was use the idea of gospel truth: in a sense the gospel these poems were about trying to find truth about particularly female issues, to examine the idea that Duffy wants to find the truth about female issues.'

**Task 2:** Part of a sample response for this question could look like this. Compare which is better. You may wish to list their strengths and weaknesses in a table.

### Extract 1

Many of the poems in the collection can be viewed as fantasies that try to pass through characters who face or experience remarkable things, and these things as women. The Map-Woman is one such character, who has the map of her body. She is trapped in this experience because she cannot get out, but the map is always with her. To leave her home town, it is like she is lost in a town which is printed on her body away but cannot. The truths Duffy is trying to present here are that it's redefining your identity, and if you're not being who you are, it's like trying to remove your skin. Perhaps Duffy is saying that the body has something to do with being a woman like her. She might feel like she's not very feminine, and the body is a map.

### Extract 2

The impression of a 'map' that seems present everywhere could be taken to represent male-influenced modes of thinking that measure out the world, connect places, and are opposed to intuition. For this reason the character in 'The Map-Woman' feels like an unremarkable town she lives in. At the same time it can be read differently: her body is crucial to her sense of identity -- it has plans of its own that she cannot control, like her menstrual cycle. The conceit in this poem presents the map as not only inside her but also outside the main character's body, but her experience of it seems to make it her own. In this way if she is walking the streets, she is also always continuously mapping her identity (the markings of the map can also be read as a metaphor for identity). The sense that it argues that women often want to re-invent themselves, and do so metaphorically by shedding her skin. The argument of the poem, and perhaps the 'story' told as 'truth', is therefore perhaps that feminine identity cannot be avoided. Whether she likes it or not, the character has to become comfortable with her body and what it represents.

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



3. 'Each of our ages has its own idea of beauty, its own symbolic woman.' Exam is trying to present women who represent all women.

A sample response for this question could look like this:

In 'Beautiful', Duffy examines the responses to iconic beauties of different 'ages' in some respects. However, her focus is what they share, and the poem seen in chronological order, that symbolically all four protagonists are the same, being betrayed by 'history' as Princess Diana is at the end. However there are also times, as if modern femininity has lost some qualities that it possessed in antiquity, as if Helen of Troy may have resourcefully cut the throat of her lover, or also punished dreadfully for having the acumen to escape in a boat by being the only one of Helen of Troy shares with her treacherous lover. Marilyn Monroe is the iconic beauty after she dies – pointing out the irony of the fact that the crowd (or the media) admiring of her symbolic beauty with little care for her suffering as a human being. Marilyn is being compared to herself, as if her self-identity is something that is public rather than the private. All of the women in 'Beautiful' have been defined by property or media imagery, and Duffy likens this to mythology in classical times where women's true identity is sacrificed to the mythology that surrounds their beauty.

The purpose of *Feminine Gospels*, then, could be to present new images of femininity, to put things right, and also to mourn the damage done to women by being placed on a pedestal. Duffy is noticing the qualities Duffy considers crucial to femaleness. Motherhood seems to be a reason the main character in 'Loud' rages against the harm done to children. Here, the media again is the target of Duffy's disapproval; the 'News' is the cause of that it has brought this suffering to her attention, and also because it has a distorted perception of that suffering. For this reason the 'News' is 'gibberish, crap'. At the same time, the proverbial 'finding her voice' is empowering in the sense that it gives rise to the underdog, the 'under the odds'. *Feminine Gospels* is trying to present and represent the responses of women rather than simply finding new 'symbolic' women who would in any case be defined by the media.

**Task 3:** What is present in the extract and what is lacking so far? Use the grid to identify what is present and what needs work.

INSPECTION COPY

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



<p><b>AO1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceptive, assured and sophisticated argument in relation to the task</li> <li>• assured use of literary critical concepts and terminology; mature and impressive expression (28%)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>AO2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceptive understanding of authorial methods in relation to the task</li> <li>• assured engagement with how meanings are shaped by the methods used (24%)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>AO3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceptive understanding of the significance of relevant contexts in relation to the task</li> <li>• assuredness in the connection between those contexts (24%)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>AO4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceptive exploration of connections across literary texts arising out of historicist study (12%)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>AO5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceptive and confident engagement with the debate set up in the task (12%)</li> </ul>	

## Glossary

<b>Allegory</b>	A device where characters or events symbolise ideas or concepts. A story or a poem can be called an allegory if it describes something that is not what it seems. If this is the case, it's more likely to be called a metaphor. So 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' has been called an 'allegory of the rise of feminism' because it features female figures who develop and mature to achieve things.
<b>Apocrypha (meaning 'hidden away')</b>	Texts, especially religious texts, that are not considered to be part of the canon (see below).
<b>Aphoristic</b>	A brief, curt statement presented in a laconic (brief, concise) manner.
<b>Bathos</b>	A sudden change in style or tone from something elevated or dignified to something unrefined, ordinary.
<b>Caesura</b>	A pause or break in a line of verse, often found in the middle of a line.
<b>Canon (literary/biblical canon)</b>	The texts respected by most people to be important or key. The texts that make up the Bible are called 'canonical', but those that are not are called 'apocrypha' and are <i>non-canonical</i> .
<b>Cathartic</b>	A term from drama that means 'cleansing' or 'purging'. When a person experiences sadness or strong emotion as a result of reading a poem or watching a play, this emotion can happen (which may also lead to feeling more satisfied) – this emotion is catharsis.
<b>Conceit</b>	An extended metaphor that gets more extreme or unusual, but at the same time more effective or more impressive (like the metaphor in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock').
<b>Clause-length diminution</b>	A frequent technique of Duffy's. This means that the writer starts with long statements until the final statement is very short (often by using a single word or a few clauses). An example would be the opening of 'History', where the first statements that have increased impact because they follow a long build-up.
<b>Enjambment</b>	When a line of poetry continues on to the next line, or carries over to the next line.
<b>Ephemeral/transient/evanescent</b>	Three words meaning passing, temporary or disappearing.
<b>Fable</b>	A traditional folk story.
<b>Herstory</b>	A feminist concept indicating that a true understanding of history is so male-dominated and therefore a female history ought to be made up for it.
<b>Metaphysical</b>	The term itself means to do with the nature of being and existence. However, in poetry, it refers to a type of poetry from the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Metaphysical poetry plays a lot with philosophical ideas, and often features a witty and sometimes remarkable use of poetic conceits.
<b>Metamorphosis</b>	Transformation (literally, changing shape) – Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> is a collection of myths and legends, and frequently concern themselves with the transformation of gods and mortals, but also show us a kind of poetic justice.
<b>Objective correlative</b>	A set of images, events or ideas that convey a very particular emotion. T.S. Eliot wrote: 'which shall be the formula for that <i>particular</i> emotion, which shall be the formula for that <i>particular</i> external facts, which must terminate in a sensory experience immediately evoked.'
<b>Pathos</b>	Deep emotion or sympathy.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



<b>Persona</b>	The correct term for the character speaking in a poem.
<b>Poetic manifesto</b>	A set of ideas presented in a poem or an essay about what argument explaining the desirable qualities poetry ought to have.
<b>Rhyming couplet</b>	A pair of lines that rhyme fully at the end. The term 'couplet' comes from the Elizabethan belief that love birds (doves) lay an egg and mate for life – couplets are baby doves. For this reason, couplets are traditionally associated with love.
<b>Sonnet form</b>	A love poem with a set rhyme scheme written (traditionally) in iambic pentameter with a rhyming couplet at the end. 'Wish' is an interesting poem in sonnet form, but is actually in very varied free verse, and even in iambic pentameter and therefore breaks with tradition, it still ends with a rhyming couplet.

## Glossary of Poetry: Metre

<b>Metrical foot/feet</b>	Poetry often can be said to be composed of metrical feet.
<b>Blank verse</b>	Poetry that is in iambic pentameter but not rhymed at the end.
<b>Free verse</b>	Poetry that has a very complex and varied set of rhythms and is not said to have a regular metre. Much of Duffy's verse is of this type.
<b>Caesura</b>	A natural pause in a line of verse, often found in the middle of a line.
<b>Dactylic</b>	Composed of dactyls, metrical feet which go strong-soft-soft. It has a heavy feel at times, which imitates the sound of the horses running on a track.
<b>Iambic</b>	Composed of iambs, metrical feet which go soft-strong. It is the most common in English poetry, and creates a feeling of explanation – because of its strong beat, it is not assertive.
<b>Trochaic</b>	Composed of trochees, metrical feet which go strong-soft. It has a slightly 'marching' or even 'military' feel.
<b>Trimeter</b>	Composed of three metrical feet, for example three iambs or three dactyls.
<b>Tetrameter</b>	Composed of four metrical feet, for example four iambs or four dactyls.
<b>Pentameter</b>	Composed of five metrical feet, for example five iambs or five dactyls.
<b>Choriamb</b>	A trochee followed by an iamb.
<b>Iambic pentameter – five iambs</b>	This is the metre of the sonnet and of much English verse. Shakespeare and Milton. 'Wish' is not in iambic pentameter, but it is in line 7.
<b>Initial/medial/rhymical</b>	At the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the line. A trochee in the middle of a line of iambic pentameter, for example, is a <i>medial</i> rhythmical variation.

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



# Suggested Answers

## Background Activities

In each case, if your pupils don't arrive at the points below, they have not been unsuccessful. Suggest to them the ideas they don't reach and see what they think.

### 'Feminine'

#### Task 1

Students may come up with some of the following ideas of what the feminine might mean:

- 'femaleness' but especially the qualities associated with it
- 'life-giving' and therefore associated with the Earth and nature as well as women
- the qualities of 'holding' or 'receiving' which some people consider archetypally feminine
- the moon, for example (because it has a menstrual cycle) which is a symbol considered feminine
- feminine qualities in psychoanalysis – the idea that all people contain masculine and feminine aspects of their identity
- images of the feminine in art and literature – the ideas they tend to be associated with (for example, grace, beauty, or vengeance, nurturing, and threatening in negative representations)
- writers and philosophers sometimes use the term to mean a feminine mythological figure or a goddess

#### Task 2

Research task – answers will vary

#### Task 3

Personal responses required

#### Task 4

Consider what the characters have in common. Students should provide their own ideas but the female figure here has been the subject of the male gaze in the media; have been famous for refusing to marry or don't marry (Rabiah, Elizabeth I, Pope Joan); are the subject of important holy books (Kali, Helen of Troy). In seeking the overlooked or undervalued qualities, pupils may find aspects of the feminine are interesting in Kali, Boudica and Joan of Arc.

#### Task 5

Students will relate the sticky ends that many of these women came to to their feelings about the world. Do encourage responses including women from the world of popular music.

### 'Gospels'

#### Task 1: n/a – reading task

#### Task 2: Make a list of definitions for the term 'feminine gospel'. Possible responses:

1. A gospel by a woman
2. A gospel about either a woman or women
3. A gospel that is feminine
4. A gospel that lacks or avoids masculine shortcomings
5. A type of truth that is uniquely feminine
6. A story with a kind of authenticity a 'male' person cannot access
7. A story of fundamental truths that ordinary women would recognise or know
8. A feminine story that aspires to a universal truth

#### Task 3: Why might you want to write a 'feminine' gospel?

Responses might include: to welcome some diversity. However, the following is worth steering towards:

1. To make female voices heard where male voices have predominated.
2. To give an authentically female version of the truth that contrasts with a patriarchal 'truth'.
3. To give the other side to an experience, the other perspective.
4. To present the truth but in a feminine or female way.
5. To present singularly female truths about the experience of women in order to make sense of their lives and commitments.
6. To present a deeper truth less embedded in power structures than those in the gospel, out of certain roles of responsibility.
7. To present a more diverse and inclusive notion of femininity (think of the female figure as fierce and passion as well as the more traditional Christian notions of obedience).

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Context: First- and second-wave feminism

### Task 1:

#### First-wave feminism (nineteenth century to early twentieth century)

- Women should have the right to vote in elections
- Women should be allowed to participate in conversations about politics
- Women who get married should be considered the co-owners of their house
- Women should be allowed to work
- Women should have the right to attend school or university
- Women who are married or have children should be allowed to work
- Women should be allowed to have access to their children if they get divorced
- Women should be allowed to inherit property if their husbands die

#### Second-wave feminism (1960s to 1980s approx.)

- Women should not have to accept the existence of class inequality
- Women who get jobs should have the same employment rights as men
- Women should earn the same as men doing the same job
- Women should have the right to choose whether to become pregnant
- Gay women (and men) should be allowed to have families
- Women should not suffer rape in marriage – rape in marriage is still rape
- Women should have access to places which concern themselves with women's needs – safe spaces for women
- Women shouldn't be subjected to beauty standards as these objectify women
- Women should call out 'de facto' inequality – where laws are not unequal but number of people affected is
- Equal rights under the law must not be denied due to sex
- Decent childcare is necessary to ensure women can work effectively
- Women should not be declined job offers on the grounds of sex, or that they are likely to get pregnant

### Task 2:

#### Radical feminism (1960s onwards)

- In a patriarchy, all sex is rape
- Women are essentially seen as animals by men
- Childbearing is the most important work there is, and should accordingly be the most respected
- In a patriarchy, all sex is rape
- Patriarchy is not only the oldest and most universal form of oppression, but the primary
- The nuclear family oppresses women
- Marriage, prostitution and heterosexuality are all patriarchal institutions
- Lesbianism is a suitable political response to male domination in society and relationships

#### Third-wave feminism (1990s to 2010s)

- Different women can define feminism differently
- Working-class women often experience oppression in ways middle-class women won't
- Women can express their sexuality very openly in a way that attracts attention, and that's OK
- It is OK for women to engage in marriage as long as they have been able to agree the terms
- Transgender rights are important because there are diverse types of women

### Walk-through Activities

No indicative content provided here. See 'Teacher's Notes' section for guidance on these activities.

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





## Whole-text Activities

### Context: Historical Events

Context or historical event	Poem	Explanation (include
War	'History'	Bloody Crusades – Christian anti-Semitism includes from the medieval period Bannockburn 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 1314 – a battle from the first War of Scottish Independence Passchendaele 31st July 1917 – the third and bloodiest battle in the area of moving moving' commemorated the lost soldiers of World War One in her poem an anti-war battle but a massacre by the Nazis of Jews around Kiev, and the largest single mass killing in the Nazi campaign against the Soviet Union Vietnam – a reference to the Vietnam War, a war between North Vietnam supported by the United States. It lasted 20 years. In 'Loud' the war is the Afghanistan War, when the United States invaded
Political views	'Work', 'The Woman Who Shopped'	Students' views will vary but they are likely to uncover Duffy's left-wing politics years old during the 1980s, the period of Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first from 2002, the time of the Blair government (which lasted from 1997 to 2007) Thatcherite ideas: commercialism; moneymaking seen as a virtue; suspicion of council housing to private individuals; individual responsibility as opposed to heterosexual marriage; the nuclear family; belief that anyone can progress hard enough. Strong support for private profits. Low taxes and less support for Blairite ideas: multiculturalism, support of Europe and pro-European Union partnerships. Support for private profit within reason. Increased support for Socialist ideas: belief in higher taxation to support the welfare state, education public ownership of industry and some means of production. Profit is not right
Change: homosexuality and the law	'White Writing', 'A Dreaming Week', the love relationships in 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'	Students are likely to note that the law has gradually decriminalised homosexuality moved back in the direction of disapproval by creating Clause 28, which evokes a world where official marriage and partnerships between gay people unwritten. Students might note that Miss Batt and Miss Fife have a very private and Miss Nettleton a far less discreet relationship about eloping with Miss Barrett like Robert Barrett Brown. This was a marriage where he took her away from an official marriage. Students might note that the gay relationships in this poem began with Diana Kim. Students might discuss whether some of the key relationships of the poem.
Resistance and rebellion	'Beautiful', 'The Virgin's Memo'	Do the students feel that the concerns in these articles have improved in Students will evaluate Duffy's thoughts on how much women can be heard poems express a lot of doubt about this, and often show a woman's voice Students will note that these poems are poems of protest but also demonstrate

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 1. Characterisation and Themes

	Seems to combine aspects of femininity into one character	Character Seeks to change herself in some way	Contains a comic transformation, or one involving poetic justice	Uses hyperbole as a conceit (meaning exaggerated comparison)	Presents motherhood as key to female experience	female identity
'The Long Queen'	✓				✓	
'The Map-Woman'		✓				
'Beautiful'						
'The Diet'			✓			
'The Woman Who Shopped'		✓	✓			
'Work'				✓	✓	
'Tall'				✓		
'Loud'				✓	✓	
'History'						
'Sub'		✓	✓	✓		
'The Virgin's Memo'					✓	
'Anon'	✓					
'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'				✓		

	Elegiac tone (mourning for something lost)	Tone of a personal love poem	Discusses the craft or process of writing poetry itself – or writes it	Uses a conceit of femininity in argument (not using a 'not' structure)	Presents motherhood as key to female experience	female identity
'A Dreaming Week'				✓		
'White Writing'			✓	✓		
'Gambler'			✓			
'The Light Gatherer'		✓			✓	
'The Cord'					✓	
'Wish'	✓					
'North-West'	✓					
'Death and the Moon'	✓					

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 2. Themes: Connections between Poems: Finding and Using Evidence

Connecting quality	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation
These poems treat female identity as something ancient that is transmitted through time	Poem: 'The Long Queen'  Quotation: 'The Long Queen couldn't die.'	Poem: 'Anon'  Quotation: '... she passed on her pen Like a baton Down through the years'	Poem: 'Beautiful'  Quotation: 'She never aged'
These poems treat motherhood as crucial to female identity	Poem: 'The Long Queen'  Quotation: '... the Viet-nurses, stones, widows, wives, mothers of all these.'	Poem: 'Anon'  Quotation: 'She'd seen them easing him down from the cross, his mother gasping for breath,'	Poem: 'Work'  Quotation: 'her brood do peopled skys trebled.'
These poems present female characters who feel out of place or isolated from society	Poem: 'Tall'  Quotation: 'But by now the people were tiny'	Poem: 'Anon'  Quotation: 'If she were here She'd forget who she was,'	Poem: 'Loud'  Quotation: 'She stayed up night, in the w rain, wailing, lightning.'
Suggestion (others are possible): These poems present women as capable of extremes	Poem: 'Work'  Quotation: 'She trawled the seas, hoovered fish, felled trees'	Poem: 'The Woman Who Shopped'  Quotation: 'Six shopping bags at her feet'	Poem: 'The Diet'  Quotation: 'No sugar, salt'

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



### 3. Themes: Structure of the Collection – First Nine Poems

	The main character observes the world from a detached perspective	The main character seems separate from the mainstream	The main character transforms or grows	The main character tries to change the world ultimately
'The Long Queen'	Yes.	Yes – because she is a sort of secret.	No – she is continuous and complete.	N/A
'The Map-Woman'	Yes – she seems detached and isolated despite the map imagery.	No – the map of the ordinary world is imprinted upon her.	She doesn't seem to be able to get away from the map.	Yes – the reassurance seems to be a way to escape.
'Beautiful'	The more modern the poem, the more the speaker is aware of the world.	No – these are famous archetypes.	These characters are concerned mainly with survival.	All of the characters adapt and survive but are not due to it.
'The Diet'	Yes – she is isolated.	She becomes progressively less present and less relevant.	She believes she is improving herself, but this is folly.	Yes – the poem shows the speaker's attempt to diet to lose weight is pointless and recursive.
'The Woman Who Shopped'	She is too absorbed by her addiction to be detached.	No – she engages with typical capitalist behaviour through her shopping.	She transforms but into a human department store, symbolically losing her identity as a person.	No – she is overwhelmed by her shopping addiction.
'Work'	No – she is too busy giving life to the whole human race.	She is a figure of totality, but suggesting overconsumption can be a female trait.	Yes – she grows infinitely to produce offspring that make up the whole human race.	She is constantly engaged in providing for her children, which means she is adapting.
'Tall'	Yes – this poem and the next are partly about the isolation of the speaker.	Yes and no – the poem arguably allegorises Duffy's new-found status as a famous poet.	Yes, but she is not sure how successfully. The poem looks at what Duffy hopes to achieve as a poet.	The final line of the poem suggests that she is trying to help the world, but it is futile.
'Loud'	Yes – her frustration makes her detached.	Yes because the poem is drawing attention to the fact that the speaker's feelings are being ignored.	Yes – a poem of frustration and sorrow than adaptation.	'Tall' she is not 'Loud' more for the things she witnesses.
'History'	Yes – she stands and observes the historical events that detail the abuses of men and male rulers.	Yes, but she is also the female perspective on history personified.	No. She also gradually deteriorates and appears to pass away due to abuse and neglect.	She is a witness and that function cannot be ignored.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



#### 4. Attitudes and values: In context

Theme	Suggested poem	Key quotations and notes about the message the poet conveys
Gender	'Sub'	Students are likely to note that the speaker adopts historically male roles, such as the juxtaposition of specifically female experiences, such as menstruation, with male-dominated areas of activity. They may notice that men may not have the same society values visible sporting activities as pregnancy or giving birth. In real terms far more than music, sport or space exploration, the poem's details to humorously critique the competitive nature of men's world, for example, 'nursing the precious egg of the ball'.
Class and status	'Tall' / 'The Queen' / 'The Beautiful Women'	Students may notice that the Long Queen seems to be a 'classless' form of power, not rule over them using power but perhaps instead sympathy. 'Tall' charts Duffy's growing fame allegorically, but also clearly shows that she can cure the world even though they may want to rescue humanity, as the last line suggests happiness or fulfilment, as the famously beautiful women are subject to the same fate ultimately in the section about Princess Diana, who is destroyed, in Duffy's poem.
Race and ethnicity	'Loud' / 'The Map-Woman'	'The Map-Woman' firmly links identity to locality and surroundings, but 'Loud' is a poem that links atrocities abroad to our own actions and responsibilities. It lays a lot of blame at the door of the main organised religions and religious institutions. 'Map-Woman' Duffy is presenting a more wholesome attitude to identity and many of which she seems to regard as flawed in their attitudes.
Imperialism (and nationalism)	'History'	'History' records many examples of cruelty and atrocities over time, and the woman who burns in the flames is an example of this, and the 'children who were rescued Jewish children from Nazi Germany – although many would have been rescued, as 'Loud' does, these phenomena with organised religion (originally imperialism are fundamentally connected with patriarchy, and it is women who suffer all this in the poem is 'History'. Christianity is a very slightly more 'turned to stone', implying power that is lost its original purpose and message.
Post-imperialism (the way countries still try to use and project power despite no longer having empires)	'The Map-Woman' / 'Loud' / 'Tall'	While Duffy's work does not directly address this in <i>Feminine Gospels</i> , 'The Map-Woman' and 'Loud' show how an individual's background is written upon her skin, and how we are shaped by our background, locality, upbringing and so on. At a global level, post-imperialism can refer to the condition of a country that has lost its empire and reassess its ideologies of superiority and its narratives of pre-eminence through the powerlessness of the characters in 'Tall' and 'Loud'. This may be seen after a fantasised life of adventure and achievement. This could be typical of a satirical in function.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



Theme	Suggested poem	Key quotations and notes about the message the poem
Changing social and legal norms	'White Writing'	This topic is more straightforward and might suit a differentiated approach of non-writing because of the fact that same-sex marriage and partnerships were not legal at the time, but the couple still wants to formalise their relationship. Same-sex marriage was made legal in March 2014 in England, several years after the poem was written. The poem seeks to formalise a same-sex relationship using the language to formalise a same-sex relationship. 'Writing it White' as an idea reminds us of the social resistance to unfairness in society or perhaps even to the poet's own choices, the poet nevertheless writes it. The

### Attitudes and values: Issues in poetry

#### Task 1

Ranking poems in order of personal response from students.

#### Task 2

- Body image ('The Diet')
- Reproductive expectations / Reproductive clock ('The Long Queen', 'The Map-Woman')
- Fame / notoriety / people projecting their idea of what you should be like onto you ('Beautiful')
- Challenges of bringing up children ('Work')
- Consumer culture and its influence ('The Woman Who Shopped')
- Anger/disappointment at male behaviour ('History')
- The need to call out abuse by males ('Loud')
- The erasure of women from history ('Anon')
- The expectation that women are supposed to be capable of normal life while menstruating, pregnant or breastfeeding ('Work')
- Balancing the desire for a career with having a family ('Work')
- The lack or rarity of women-only institutions/spaces ('The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High')
- The fact that marriage for millennia has been only allowed for heterosexual couples ('White Writing')
- The fact that so many amazing and interesting women of the past just have been lost to history and are, therefore, forgotten.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## 6. The Writer's Use of Language: Imagery

Type of imagery	Examples (note these could vary)	
Elemental or weather imagery in 'Tall', 'Loud' and 'The Woman Who Shopped', and a two-word phrase in 'Work'	'Tall': 'The kind of weather heading their way... floods in the UK' 'Loud': 'She stayed up there all night, in the wind and rain, / Wailing, uttering lightning' 'The Woman Who Shopped': 'The sky was unwrapping / ... ripping itself into shreds' 'Work': 'wept rain'	<b>(NB this is personal and can vary)</b> Scenes of isolation, and a weaker seems to be a sort of describe tears of the main the promotion of the main through the elements.
Imagery of the body in 'The Woman Who Shopped' and 'History'	'Her skirts were glass do... closing' 'credit cards swirled / ... her blood' (both from 'The Woman Who Shopped') 'His ... in a bed, not a tooth in her head'	Students may notice that the main character's condition is someone who is a victim but fact, to epitomise or even a degree. In both cases, these unbridled capitalism ('The Woman Who Shopped')
Classical and modern imagery (to do with Ancient Greek myths or literature) imagery in 'Beautiful'	'A child of grace, a stunner' (about Helen of Troy) 'In a golden barge, her fit girls giggling' (Cleopatra) 'her teeth gems, her eyes sapphires pressed by a banker's thumb' (Marilyn Monroe) 'her bones danced in a golden dress in the arms of her wooden prince' (Princess Diana)	Students should notice that about all four women. Often – Cleopatra's description is then juxtaposes this with imagery typical of a Shakespeare contrasts similarly with the
Imagery of ecological disaster in 'Work'	'trawled the seas, hoovered fish, felled trees' '... wept rain, scattered the teeth in her head for grain'	Students may comment on the woman herself in scattered share space with elemental images in this poem move on, and connect this to the
Images of religion or religious activity in 'History' and 'Loud'	'been there when the fisherman swore he was back from the dead' 'as the air of Rome / turned to stone' ('History') 'shaking the bells awake in their towers' 'the prayers of the priest, the pad of the feet' In the mosque...' '... the screams / of the child / ... their pews' ('Loud')	The images in 'History' do son, but the reference to the religion in this poem, which to 'stone'. In 'Loud', Duffy she also doesn't seem to connect with 'Muslims, Christians, people about the folly of religion
Gambling imagery in 'Gambler' and 'Beautiful' – is it for different effects? What are they?	'She played / ... in the dust, / ... she slipped her gambling hand / ... to his pouch and took his gold, bit it, / ... Caesar's head between her teeth' ('Gambler') 'It's words/ she picks, names she ticks' 'the words seemed to fit. Most days she sits with her stump of a pen writing the poems of bets.' ('Beautiful')	Duffy uses gambling imagery daring and resourcefulness attitude to writing poetry. In 'Gambler', Duffy makes the names of the horses sound

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 8. The Writer's Use of Language: Techniques Used in the Poems

Technique	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation	Poem and quotation
<b>Adjacent rhymes</b>  Answers are personal choice, and responses are subjective, but sample ideas are offered here.	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Diet'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'Mirror, svelter, slimmer'  <i>Duffy's tricolon of rhymes communicates the anxiety the protagonist feels about her image.</i>	<b>Poem:</b> 'History'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'Not a tooth / in her head / half dead'  <i>And here, the sudden adjacent rhyme links her age to her moribund condition. The shortening of the sentence also adds drama.</i>	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Shilling'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'shilling, will'  <i>Shows the speaker's desperation for money and the expectation of a different personal impression of addiction.</i>
<b>Enjambment strongly breaking up a simple phrase</b>	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Diet'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'Stared in / the mirror'  <i>The enjambment develops the sense of the nervous, intense mood of the dieting woman, but it also inserts a pause into the process to evoke the way she does it. This phrase is also the conclusion of a tricolon of active phrases in parallel, and the last word begins a tricolon of phrases about her new appearance.</i>	<b>Poem:</b> 'History'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'not a tooth / in her head'  <i>Here the enjambment provides a gap which also imitates the gap where a tooth should be. This contributes to the picture of the 'history' woman as failing, elderly, in poor condition and perhaps moribund – as she may have died by the end. It mirrors the same structure in other second lines of stanzas, connecting the images of Christ's suffering to hers.</i>	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Shilling'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'it / on cloth'  <i>Here the enjambment suggests the associated image of a shilling being present.</i>
<b>Alliteration or consonance</b>  Examples are provided, but again this is subjective and personal views will vary.	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Long Queen'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'wet nurses, witches, widows, wives,'  <i>These groupings remind us of the democratic nature of the poem, and also recall different aspects of a woman's life. The 'w' sound is a strong soundbearing letter, and the inclusion of 'witches' to denote that the speaker is not recognised as well as those who are. The alliteration connects these categories, suggesting they are interdependent.</i>	<b>Poem:</b> 'The Virgin's Memo'  <b>Quotation:</b> '...w...ss...cne, asthma'  <i>The 'w' sound here reflects the alliterative style of the poem, which makes us think of a child's nursery alphabet. It creates the impression that the negative things in creation were all the conscious result of the actions of an irresponsible child.</i>	<b>Poem:</b> 'Anon.'  <b>Quotation:</b> 'Anon.'  <i>These words are repeated several times in the phrase 'Anon.' The implication is that the speaker is forgotten or forgotten.</i>

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED





**Task 2:** Please note that answers are personal choice and will vary a great deal. (Examples are given for assistance on one poem!)

Technique	Poem	Quotation	
Necessary enjambment	Examples given: 'The Light Gatherer'	'and as you grew / light eat'ed in you' 'and you slept / with' no moon held in your arms'	Person which growth
Total lack of enjambment – lines are neatly end-stopped or complete their sentences by the end of the line	'The ...'	(maybe not) 'The menopause or mice, mucus, son,'	Person extreme is the m is not a particu singular
Initial, terminal caesura (a natural or notated pause in the middle of a line)	'Sub'	'Ringo had 'flu when the Fab Four toured Down / Under'	The un impro rapidly
End-stopping	Examples given: 'White Writing'	'No vows written to wed you, I write them white, my lips on yours, light in the soft hours of our married years.'	Each line ceremon
A list within a line	'The Woman Who Shopped'	'Saved up a pound, a fiver, a tenner Blew it / on clothes; wanted a wedding, a wedding dress, groom, married him, wanted a honeymoon, went on one,'	These o shopping
Masculine caesura (a pause after a stressed syllable)	'Tall'	'A tree dangled an apple At bite-height. She bit it. A ... light stuttered On red. ...'	These o the po her urg
Internal rhyme (rhyme occurring within a line, not at the end)	'The Diet'	'... one, ... inner'	The que the cha

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 9. The Writer's Use of Language: Tone and Style

Task: Pupils will find their own interpretations, which will be valid, but teachers might like to use these examples

	Tone of the poem / style	Quotations showing tone and how it develops (examples)	Notes/Comments
'The Long Queen'	Summative, representative, nostalgic, fantastical, encompassing, reverent.	'No girl growing with her the apple of the Long Queen's eye'	Nurturing all girls. The encompassing all female. Natural imagery
'The Map-Woman'	Anecdotal, comic in tone	'Her body was certain, an inch to the mile'	Her skin symbolises her represent identity; face of womankind?
'Beautiful'	Irony, and daring at times; inevitably more tragic and painful as it develops.	'meanwhile, lovely she lay high up in a foreign castle's walls' Later in the poem: 'Dead, she's elegant bone/ in mud'	The poem is recounting overview of history and women are seen have contrasting tones.
'The Diet'	Explores the boundary between comedy and tragedy. Recounts a story; uses a comic style to extend hyperbolic 'going to extremes' narrative.	'Seed small, she was out and about, looking for home.'	The narrative is both conclusion. The character because she suffers from she is homeless and is
'The Woman Who Shopped'	Tone is driven, anxious, compulsive.	'She loved the changing rooms of her heart'	Main character is vain and changeable.
'Work'	Shares the driven tone of 'The Woman Who Shopped' but ends differently.	Opening: 'worked from home' Ending: 'worked, to the bone.'	Shares the driven tone and destruction rather
'Tall'	Light-hearted and adventurous, playful idea develops slowly into something more troubling and then finally eschatological.	Early: 'rising 8 foot / Bigger than any man' Later: '...light their souls in her ... as they fell / From the burning towers'	Progresses from the successful failed attempts to reach image of the Twin Towers
'Loud'	Tone of fear, or violent protest or. This also becomes increasingly critical in tone about religion.	'she could call abroad without using the phone' (represents Duffy's growing international reputation) 'the screams of the children cowering under their pews'	The initial ideas are playful are appalling and uncomfortable connecting the fear of have been known to

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



	Tone of the poem / style	Quotations showing tone and how it develops (examples)	Notes/Comments
'History'	Graphic tone dealing with the theme of being abused and neglected.	'She woke again, cold, in the dark'	The isolation and sorrow. Listen to the perspective of a miserable quotidian existence. Have this tone while the
'Sub'	Comic fantasy. A hyperbolic story told in first person. Irony because events are tongue-in-cheek	'It was not my first for a man from Neptune and on the Moon, a "top" for me to stand in'	The humour and silliness. An uncomfortable realisation by the recognition that
'The Virgin's Memo'	Irony, which	'maybe not herpes, son, or' (text illegible)	Sense of an unheard world which can be described. The alphabet presents a
'Anon'	Uses present plays on words. of an unheard voice because of the anonymous women discussed.	'A nun / Anon'	While the main thrust presents some disturbance, the poem seems to go
'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'	Comic and excitable style relies on anecdote to present the motif of laughter. This develops into more personal insights into the characters and, therefore, a more sombre tone.	'Mr and Mrs Mackay silently ate. She eyed him boning his fish'.  'Miss Batt and Miss Fife had moved / To a city. They drank in a dark bar where women danced'	Lines about the romance. Both the sisterhood and are often juxtaposed. Goes mad, is contrasted
'A Dreaming Week'	Like 'White Writing', this poem presents an imagined reality. Tone is hugely varied due to imaginative flights of fancy.	'for a date with the glamorous dark'	The unreal quality of the develop around it. Un
'White Writing'	Repeated negative refrain is a constant reminder of the unfairness and inequality of marriage.	'...is written to guard you'	The seriousness of the presented alongside. It is one of extreme dignity. Unfairness should exist
'Gambler'	With a focus on the way the poet savours and selects words.	'It's words she picks, names she ticks.'	Third-person description. Humour abounds in contrast with are actually selected. Many opportunities for 'splash', but this poem

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



	Tone of the poem / style	Quotations showing tone and how it develops (examples)	Notes/Comments
'The Light Gatherer'	Personal tone of a love poem using extended metaphors to discuss motherhood, leading to a sense of infinity in the final image	'A jewelled cave, opening out at the end of a tunnel of vea	These magical words secret or personal pro very much similar to many generations.
'The Cord'	Evocative, paradoxical and mysterious.	'A cord, grand and hidden'	The poet uses a third discuss daughterhood needs to be recovered contradict each other
'Wish'	my serious and marked by motion and loss.	'Nobody died. Nobody wept.'	Elegiac poem about a life, Lazarus-like. A pr sorrow and loss is mo loved one back alive. which might undo mu
'North-West'	Elegiac and marked by a sense of loss	'a grave for our ruined loves, unborn children'	The world visited in the as well as a world of a sense of sorrow inside
'Death and the Moon'	Encomiastic	'the goldfish are tongues in the water's mouth'	The poem, despite its ways of seeing the world commemorate the in exploring the kinds of as a poet.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 10. Structure

### Task:

1. **'Anon' and 'The Long Queen' could be said to start and conclude the 'political' poems.** They both explore an imagined figure. They both present a range of women in lists considered. They both seek to rescue unknown or voiceless women from history. They look at women through the ages and up to the present day through a kind of inheritance of occult figures.

2. **Why do you think 'The Map-Woman' was positioned second?**

It is best to answer questions like this in respect to the structure around them. 'The Map-Woman' and contrasts with 'The Long Queen'. It presents an individual and situates them in the opposite of what 'The Long Queen' does. However the Map-Woman can also be considered as the women who are all the 'possessions for a moment of time' of the Long Queen. The poem is concerned with time and gender and its implications, and perhaps has a subtle relationship with it – as the women the Long Queen cares for.

Now look in the other direction to the poem that follows. 'Beautiful', like 'The Map-Woman' places them in the present, also like 'The Map-Woman'. However, it is concerned with history, as well as the local issues of acculturation, locality and personal identity. The women of 'Beautiful' are not concerned with modern ideas of personal identity – two – Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana – who are also pursued and hounded like the Map-Woman. 'The Map-Woman' is positioned early in the collection to help counterbalance and juxtapose 'Beautiful', which is a cultural history of a different sort, concerning the development to a specific moment. 'The Map-Woman' studies a moment in time in the present, while 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' development of something up until a specific moment.

3. **Why is 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' positioned to form a barrier between 'Beautiful' and 'The Map-Woman'? What does it have in common with both the poems before and after? Is it both personal and political?** 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High' is both personal and political, exploring character and the form of the teachers more so than the girls. Because it represents Duffy's own collection, it has much in common with the tragic personal poems that conclude the collection, especially 'The Map-Woman'. However, the political concerns of the previous poems are also present because it is a twentieth-century feminism. It performs some of the mission of 'Anon' by giving women a voice and engages with Duffy's own feelings of nostalgia and appreciation for the benefits of feminism.
4. **Apart from 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High', why do the following poems have a common theme and also of another category? And, which other category (1: 'White Writing'; 2: 'The Map-Woman') is like the early poems in the collection because it concerns itself with the treatment throughout history and by the law.**

'Tall' is a traditional poem of protest at injustice and shares many features of the other poems. It is more troubling and apocalyptic as they progress. However, it is also a personal poem about Duffy's growing fame and recognition. The poem debates whether this recognition is a blessing or a curse. It concludes that it is not – the speaker wants to save the world, to prophesy its tragedy. She can only 'catch' souls who fall, rather than preventing them from falling in the first place.

'Wish' is a very personal poem exploring the loss of a loved female figure. It is not present at all like the political poems. It is early in the collection of the poems focus on the personal. It is also a level on which the poem is symbolic as well as personal. The poem is a resurrection of a spiritual feminine quality as well as an individual loved one.

5. **How can 'The Long Queen' be considered part of category 2?**

'The Long Queen' can be considered a piece of writing about writing as well as a fairy tale. It suggests Duffy's sense of mission for her poetry and her sense of its objectives to capture different types of female experience – whether they be 'wet-nurse' or 'witch'.

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



6. If there was a connection between 'The Long Queen' and 'Death and the Moon', 'Death and the Moon' is a valedictory poem for a close friend and former partner. It is a major influence on Duffy's life and poetry, the poet Adrian Henri. In it, Duffy has to reflect on the life she has yet to live and the poetry she has yet to write. Hence the 'ice' over her pond to seek the right way to explore her response. Her response in poetry is in a sense a response to these early influences. In that sense, while 'Death and the Moon' collection, in a funny way it actually starts it. One could attempt – perhaps wrongly – that the remoteness and distance the poet evokes represents the fact that her own work is contrasting to Henri's.
7. What message emerges from the fact the personal poems are placed last, not first? Various readings become possible due to this. One is that Duffy is concluding that this is her project to tell the true story of a feminine gospel concludes with her own, or might be that these personal poems are not altogether so personal as we might have thought, impersonal as well as personal, and Duffy might be conscious of her work being read in this way. 'Wish' could even be read this way, in which case Duffy resurrects herself. Another reading might explore the summative, public issues that matter to her politically, which she does in the personal ones.



COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 11. Form

Poem	Formal feature: A to H	Purpose and
'The Long Queen'	A (Long sentences)	Pupil's personal response, but likely to explore the sense of a narrative below term from the title, indicating also an apparently 'long' inheritance and
'History'	H (Avoids end-stopping), D (Internal rhymes)	Pupil's personal response, but likely to explore the way the rhymes present an observer of history. The long sentence length in each stanza even is perhaps a clue to the poem's 'fatigued' early in the poem. The clauses
'The Virgin's Memo'	E (Lacunae) G (Short lines)	Pupil's personal response, but likely to explore the political meaning of the poem, especially to female voices. Alternatively, they may notice the idea that some modern men, and also the idea that a woman might have created a better world, enables us to have a guess at some of the missing terms. The short lines even
'The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High'	A (Long sentences), C (Short lines), F (Unexpected rhyming couplets)	Pupil's personal response, but likely to explore the fact that the poem uses an overflowing quality which imitates the behaviour of the girls and their laughter of feminism and its complex ramifications. The occasional and apparently random events coming together to unexpectedly fit or match up. This might be sisterhood, or, of course, the lesbian relationships later explored in the poem
'Wish'	G (Sonnet form)	Pupil's personal response, but likely to explore the fact that a traditional sonnet sometimes line 12. This poem doesn't do this, but gradually unfolds its wish and appears to provide a sort of redemption for everyone, but this revelation begins
'Death and the Moon'	B (Medial caesurae)	Pupil's personal response, but likely to explore the way this poem frequently paradoxically, the sense of something beginning rather than ending. This is the centre of the poem. These features create an argument of continuity and saying goodbye. In this sense, the form of the poem contradicts the content

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## 12. Critical Reception

Quote / critical opinion	My view: agree or disagree	Evidence (support or oppose)
Duffy's poetry 'lingers over moments of transient happiness'. Do you think it is morbid or pessimistic?	Personal response	Personal response, but poems that might work well to agree with 'Woman Who Shopped' (and 'Sub' for successful gratification). Poems that might cause us to disagree might include 'The Long Goodbye' and 'The Soldier' which linger over transient happiness and are also about war.
Winterson: Duffy's great skill is to show us how we have come from history 'what we never heard of' but we are too interested in the present. Do you agree?	Personal response	Personal response, but poems that might support or oppose this view. Poems that might support this view are 'The Light Gatherer' and 'The Soldier' which shed light on the current moment and whether humanity has made progress. Students, however, should really try hard to nuance this question relative to the present, such as the way 'Sub' explores expectations of the past with a view to enriching a sense of current identity (as with 'The Light Gatherer' vocabulary). There are poems which address the present with a view to the past, such as 'White Writing'.
Simon Brittan says Duffy often 'uses language for empty rhetorical effect'. Do you think her poems are too focused on being persuasive or argumentative?	Personal response	It is easy to find poems with political purposes that support this, but it is also easy to find poems with polemical purpose. These include 'The Light Gatherer' and 'The Soldier'. It is debatable whether a persuasive poem can necessarily be described as empty. Would this critic call a male writer's rhetoric 'empty' simply because it is persuasive?
Lavinia Greenlaw, regarding the '80s and '90s: 'She was the first poet to articulate that bankrupt and dislocated era.' Do you agree that Duffy's poems are too focused on protest?	Personal response	This is about how candidates seek to argue their points. One can argue that Duffy produces poems that are not partly poems of protest, or whether they are. The obvious 'protest' poems are 'The Light Gatherer' and 'History', and the important poems of protest, such as 'White Writing', are present. 'The Diet' and 'The Woman Who Shopped' can be read as protest poems. However, it is also possible to point out that not all of Duffy's poetry roots in protest. 'The Soldier' and 'Girls' High' hails from some time before this, while 'Sub' does 'History'.

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**





## Essay Practice

These essays require a personal response and, therefore, will vary. However, sample answers to three essays to give you an idea of what students might include. Please note that AQA A Level English Literature requires 'two poems'. Students should use the exam board's mark scheme to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their essays, including the balance between the assessment objectives.

1. It has been said of *Feminine Gospels* that it 'runs miles with myths that don't exist but is trying to present new images of femininity to put right old ones.' ('The Long Queen', Duffy's concern in many of her poems in *Feminine Gospels* is that women and the female history and patriarchy in such a way that serious reparative work must be done. She achieves this through the overarching notion of a feminine point of view and a style of writing like *écriture féminine*. This notion had been around since 1975 and focused on inscribing a new way of writing. One way in which Duffy achieves this is through the use of new characters, sometimes an amalgam of a number of already-known figures.

One such example is the Long Queen, who, as a character, brings together ideas of the 'Long Queen' along with a set of new myths and legends donated by Duffy. These are quite different from the ones described with a strong sense of atmosphere, making her seem rather like a patron saint, her 'words flow from her bones'. This character is esoteric, a divine secret hidden in a world of mystery. The connections to Elizabeth I are regular and accurate, as with several poems in the collection. The poem follows this by ascribing to her a new votive or spiritual quality – this is the queen 'of all the dead... female'. Duffy, in using her reference to the chivalric tales of the idea that the worlds of fairy tales and magic are curiously and uniquely feminine, with the fate and instincts of a woman or girl. As with the idea of rewriting a gospel, the poem in terms of 'her laws', as if providing a response to the 'New Law' represented by the Bible. These laws are celebrations of the key transformative events in a woman's life, experience rather than rules to live by.

'The Long Queen' absolutely conforms to the idea of rewriting attitudes to put right the history of menstruation – where the 'law' is that it should be 'no cause for complaint' and symbolised only through its association with the moon. The words 'royal red' denote value and a new, improved world, would denote status and 'intent'. This is a myth that should exist as a part of the experience in connection and through a lineage: the proliferation of the Long Queen's babies born to 'honour' her who will grow up to be a 'teacher, teller of tales'. The final opinion that there is a wisdom and communion of women that stretches back through history celebrates it. Duffy's first move in presenting the notion of a feminine 'gospel' is this collective figure of authority.

A different figure is given a new mythological identity in the comic but also tragic poem 'The Virgin's Memo'. The voice is theoretically that of the Virgin Mary, but we are also transported to the idea of a male force which must be asked to take responsibility for it.

We are given also the idea of a woman's voice being drowned out as it is arguably in such a world that do exist, which present more views and positive notions about women and their place in the Bible. For this reason the lacunae in the text comically present missed or redacted information, implying the idea that the male it was addressed to ignored it. The link is made in a poem between the son and the totality of God the Father, who gently the poem is criticising for creating a structure gives the reader the opportunity to project their own observations into this. The lack of care men have for the suffering women are bound to experience: 'the men of the world', which is 'lovely' and evokes the image of a small child drawing or painting, is a positive thing present, it is also found in the poem. Duffy's argument here is that such a voice very much exists.

'The Cord' is perhaps the most complex example of a new but necessary mythology for women. The idea of a 'cord' is crucial is lost and must be rediscovered. As with the lacunae in 'The Long Queen', this quality is also esoteric as it is 'real enough and hidden'. The idea that it is necessary to undergo a journey or travail to achieve this link between mother and child, the Long Queen, that it is a magical process akin to the language of a fairy tale: the 'cord of the forest'. Here, we see a set of ideas that might modify the statement that Duffy creates. She is partly arguing in this poem that they already do exist but need to be either uncovered or created through storytelling and exploration.

Duffy presents female characters with mythic and spiritual power in 'The Long Queen' and 'The Virgin's Memo'. However in 'The Cord' she explores the idea that modern women put their past through the matrilineal bond, which is similar in nature to the maternal connection in 'The Long Queen'. Duffy does create myths that ought to exist, but they are bound up essentially with the human experience.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



2. 'What I was trying to do was use the idea of gospel truth: in a sense the gospels are a poems were about trying to find truth about particularly female issues, but doing it was that Duffy wants to find the truth about female issues. ('Anon', 'Tall', 'White Writing', *Feminine Gospels* approaches the idea that there is a type or layer of particularly female apparent in a patriarchal world or through male-dominated culture. There are different poems. Many, such as 'Anon' and 'The Virgin's Memo', proceed from the idea that the systematically and habitually effaced or ignored, and others such as 'Beautiful' explore the public eye and the media, has a worrying tendency to subsume, dominate and silence the female voice. Lastly, Duffy's satirical eye falls upon religion and its effects in several quotation in the essay question. In treating the Christian gospels as 'tall stories', she may be more 'true' or authentic. The reader may be conscious that this applies to all the only the quasi-religious or spiritual ones such as the Long Queen.

Duffy's poetry also seeks to find the truth about women's treatment by men, and the issue'. In 'Beautiful', Duffy traverses historical territory to unearth a truth that argues feminism: ultimately the figure of Princess Diana suffers a no less unpleasant treatment who we are to understand as 'the history's stinking breath'. It is disturbing to think that Duffy has been seeking to find that the male gaze and attitude of society could be itself in danger of becoming the next casualty – the gaze of society doesn't even admit of describing an authentic perspective of their own, as Duffy notes when she has Monroe's body note 'her strong resemblance to herself'. This section of the poem of possession of her, discarding bits that don't fit with its projection onto the 'cutting' of the poem appears to be that the lot of women is getting worse – where Cleopatra or Helen of Troy disappear in disguise, Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana are trapped have to perform their public identity despite being inwardly distraught or 'betrayed'. This does not present a 'tall story' but culturally accepted and even factually accurate 'story' through the adventures of the women presented and their skilful approach to solving

'Tall' signposts its role as the key 'tall story' and it provides allegorically an overview of frustration with the issue of influence. As the character grows in stature in the poem, isolation and frustration. Fame or recognition carries a problematic set of side effects but her head is now 'in the clouds' as though she becomes further removed from the ground despite the adulation of 'crowds', she 'cured no-one'. This reference to the power of a bleak outlook for its power to solve the problems of humanity, and it is significant that the most tortured poem about the state of the world in 'Loud'. 'Tall' ends with an eschatological giant – now celestial – woman rescuing the world 'in her hands' as if catching people from the World Trade Center on 11<sup>th</sup> September. While an excellent example of a hyperbolic double-edged, because while it presents such pathos in her fantasy of redemption, it also shows the futility of human efforts to face challenges. It may be that this is why Duffy elects to truncate rhythms in order to present a sense of hassle, stress and anxiety, and to end the poem begun after terminal caesurae: 'He Turned / And fled like a boy / On.' Similar quick-cut one-word sentences abound in 'Loud', giving to these tall stories a sense of urgency. The purpose is to present her distaste at the tenor of the tabloid press and its reporting of 'crap, in the / cave of her mouth'. It seems that the 'howl' of 'Tall' is continued in 'Loud' of truth expressed in these two poems is a lot more challenging and far less consolatory than the Christian message. We can imagine that this poem arose from the idea that Duffy read the development where she decided to be more topical and militant, having enjoyed in the consensus, the 'national whoop', and then how to address much starker issues, the victims of war.

Ironically, Duffy's statement that the gospels are a tall story 'told as truth' is reversed in fact presented important historical, social and personal truths as though they are tall stories often employing extreme tropes of hyperbole such as a metaphysical conceit, as in 'Tall' and 'Diet'. Here, arguably a 'tall' story is in fact a small one due to the subject matter, and the painful truth in the lives of many women and girls. Presenting a continuous descent in esteem, the poem presents a double irony in that this is the fate of anorexia sufferers. Duffy presents in all of these poems is unrelentingly factual and bleak, and in fact, the

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



3. 'Each of our ages has its own idea of beauty, its own symbolic woman.' Examine the poems in the collection, trying to present women who represent all women. (For: 'The Woman Who Shops', 'Queen', 'Anon', 'History'; Against or both: 'Tall', 'The Light Gatherer'; Against: 'Wish'). In *Feminine Gospels*, Duffy humanises the symbolic women of her quotation but also offers a personal experience for women through her own mythological characters. This contrasts with the poems in the collection, which are ostensibly not intended to be representative of all women – but the poems that tie them together with the broader experiences of women and their relationships.

One of Duffy's important arguments about the idea of a female perspective is that poems have been similar through the ages; 'Beautiful' and 'History' present this argument. 'Stafford Girls' 'High' presents a contrast to it, suggesting that progress is made in realising the story of second-wave feminism. In 'Beautiful', Duffy varies the verse form to suggest the passage of time, but maintains a snappy modern lexis to suggest also the opposite. In this manner, the argument is made that women's problems have not changed. The last line of the poem – links it to the poem entitled 'History', which shows the same argument but this time through a transhistorical female figure. Both poems suggest the existence of historical progress for women. This is more powerful in 'History' because the symbolic female who watches the world also watches the rise and fall of patriarchal institutions, like the walls of the Vatican church. The poem holds the inner narrative (the inner poem) within a prosaic story of a slow decline. The poem, like 'Beautiful', is a single section, almost as if two poems were written and then combined. The 'outer' poem and the 'inner' poem are linked by the pun that she was 'History'. From the poor condition of the aged lady is caused by the suffering she witnesses during the section. Here, the Church is held up as the ultimate patriarchal institution, and the suffering of other types: the 'saint' is next to the 'dictator', the 'martyr' next to the 'king' by the creation of an established religion concludes with the Holocaust and the children never again see their parents. The poem makes the fairly direct argument that organised religion has been the direct cause of most of the following historical suffering. Closely paired, the poem has a tired and frustrated atmosphere, as though the repetition of male abuse throughout history is both but also risible and boring. These rhymes also link the outer and inner sections of the poem. The feature the two styles of writing share: the old lady is 'alone' and also 'bones' at the end of the 'breath' and 'death' rhyme internally as do 'Rome' and 'stone', long sounds that link the start. History here seems locked into a negative cycle.

At the conclusion, where the inner poem transfers again to the outer, the connection between the suffering of the past and the current condition of Duffy's protagonist through the inner poem. This rhyme bridges the two areas and creates the cause and effect argument that a woman's life is not just unvalued but in fact imperilled. This is more than a symbol of 'all women' but a condemnatory judgement passed on male power over time. Duffy uses the image of a woman to represent a female perspective as well as women.

'Wish' is a fascinating example of a personal poem taking the form of a resurrection for a lost female whose spirit is sorely missed in this world could be seen as a fitting resurrection. The representative female or matriarchal figures used as the focus for the earlier poems in the collection, sorrow and loss first found in 'History' is revisited but with the sense that a lost mother figure. The octave of the poem can be read both as an imagining of the reanimation of a loved one or as a reminder that lost women of the past (such as those commemorated in 'Anon') were not forgotten and understood. The central lines of the poem encourage a sense of resurrection, and the poem suggests the return of the unrecognised and unnamed woman. This is a cryptic poem which hints at the idealistic line 'nobody slept who could be woken by the light' suggests a healing sense the poem presents a message to the poet and to the reader, with the idea of a resurrection before the resurrection goes from imagination to reality. The reader is able to imagine the possibility of redemption of the women for whom the anthology is different. The poem is dedicated to sacredness to 'History', asserting the idea of spiritual healing through the resurrection. The resurrection here is a female 'second coming' of sorts, but not of a spiritual or magical nature. Duffy's poems do explore images of women that represent all women, but they also explore history and the need for personal healing too. 'History' and 'Wish' fulfil these functions.

4–10. Personal responses required.

## Essay Practice Tasks

### Tasks 1–3

Personal response required – answers will vary.

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**

