

Carol Ann Duffy: The World's Wife

Activities and Worksheets for AS Students

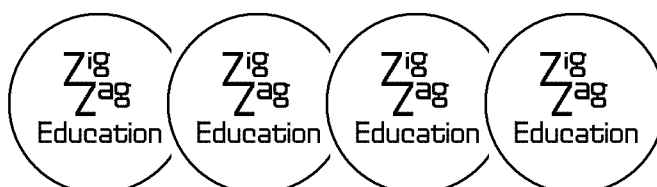


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Teacher's Introduction

These worksheets are directed mainly at students studying the AQA GCE L Unit LitA1C: The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature.

The Assessment Objectives for this unit are:

- AO1** Articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression
[worth 12% of the AS mark and 6% of the A level mark]
- AO2** Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the content and language shape meanings in literary texts.
[worth 18% of the AS mark and 9% of the A level mark]
- AO3** Explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts and interpretations of other readers.
[worth 12% of the AS mark and 4% of the A level mark]

The worksheets have followed the order of the poems in the collection and I have tried to help students to feel their way into the ideas and techniques that Duffy uses gradually. There are more activities for the students to do on each poem, whereas the later worksheets are for students' own ideas and skills. You could, if you prefer, study the poems in a different order.

There is quite a lot of research for the students to undertake, which will help them to develop their learning skills, but they are directed to websites on the premise that they are more reliable than a computer than an encyclopaedia, although of course, most of the information is from the same sources.

There are detailed exercises on each poem, directing students to look at their own ideas and techniques. At the end of the document you will find ideas for grouping the poems (by theme, by connection and comparison), an exercise to help them with exam technique (by looking at different interpretations).

I would recommend that, once the students are feeling reasonably confident with the poems, you introduce past questions for them to try. These are available on the AQA website in Context, together with mark schemes and the examiner's reports.

I have written a detailed guide to all the poems which can be found on www.zigzageducation.com. It is restricted to members only.

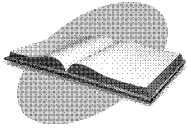
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Little Red-Cap

Research Task



The picture shows the red cap of the French revolution. Find out about its significance and then see if you can relate it to the poem. These websites should be helpful.

<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/xf-cap.html>

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/france/facts/phrygian>

Stanza 1

Language Work

Each of the phrases in the grid below has a symbolic or metaphorical meaning. Write the meaning in the appropriate space.

Childhood's end	
Playing fields	
Factory	
Allotments kept like mistresses	
Silent railway line	
Hermit's caravan	

Group Discussion

These metaphors are all part of a journey.

- How does the journey itself relate to the fairy tale?
- How do the journey and the fairy tale represent a part of real life?

Write your agreed answers in the box below, then compare them with the class.

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Stanza 2

The wolf in this poem refers to the poet Adrian Henri, with whom Duffy had a poetry reading when she was sixteen and, although he was 23 years older than her, the relationship lasted for ten years.

Language Marking

Using a photocopy of this stanza, highlight in one colour all the words and phrases concerned with the wolf. In a different colour, highlight all the words and phrases concerned with the poet.

Underline the words in the penultimate line of this stanza that suggest that she will move.

Look at the qualifiers Duffy uses in the final line of the stanza. Complete the table by explaining the connotations of each one.

Sweet Sixteen	
Never been	
Babe	
Waif	

Stanza 3

What reason does Duffy give for wanting 'the wolf' to notice her?

--

Find a metaphorical phrase that suggests the following:

Sexual Adventure	
Wisdom and knowledge	
A literary infant	
Shedding childhood	
'Stranger danger'	

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What do you think the poet is saying in this stanza about the need to write?

Stanza 4

In the original story, the wolf meets the little girl in the feminine world of the kitchen. What is different about the story here?

What is the effect of the childlike rhyme and the following interrogative?

*got there / wolf's lair / better beware?
For what little girl doesn't dearly love a wolf?*

What is lesson 1 – the love poem? How is it connected with the white dove?

Stanza 5

Comment on the use of language in the following phrases, including metaphorical patterns.

One bite, dead	
How nice, breakfast in bed, he said	
a whole wall was crimson, gold, aglow with books	
words were truly alive on the tongue	
warm, beating, frantic, winged	
music and blood	

Stanza 6

What has the narrator learned after 'ten years in the woods'? Highlight or underline a pair that you think is the most likely.

She has learned that buried bodies nourish the soil and give rise to new life.
She has learned to look for meanings beneath the surface in life.

She has learned that words can create a new way of perceiving the world.
She has learned that birds can give trees a voice.

She has learned that wolves obey an instinctive lunar cycle.
She has learned that older writers repeat their ideas in different words.

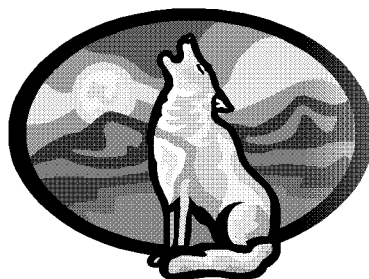
What techniques has the poet used to create the feeling of repetition in the poem?

--

Stanza 7

Write down the two metaphorical images that show the poet becoming an animal and how she finds out meanings for herself.

1.
2.



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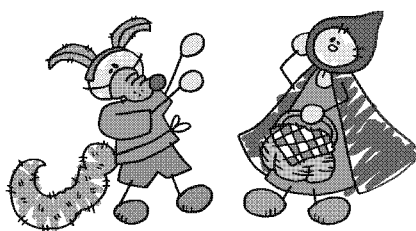


What is the significance of the following images?

Image	In the original fairytale	
<i>I took an axe to the wolf as he slept</i>		
<i>One chop, scrotum to throat</i>		
<i>The glistening virgin white of my grandmother's bones</i>		
<i>I filled his old belly with stones</i>		
<i>I stitched him up</i>		
<i>Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, all alone</i>		

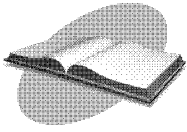
Group Discussion

- Look at Duffy's use of internal rhyme in the poem. Find as many examples as you can and discuss the effect they have.
- Look at the way Duffy uses symbols such as birds, music and colours to create atmosphere. Find as many examples as you can and discuss the connotations.
- Consider Duffy's use of enjambment, not merely over lines but across stanzas. How does she achieve with this technique? You should also look at the way she uses caesura.
- Consider the meter and tone of the poem – how are they related?



Thetis

Research Task



You will find the story of Thetis at <http://www.theoi.com>

Copy and paste the story, with the picture if you wish, in your file. Keep it alongside the poem in your file. Make a note of why Duffy chose Thetis as one of her subjects for the collection.

Stanza 1

Making herself small and able to fly is the first strategy Thetis adopts. Unfortunately, she is not the only one who does this. There is a reference here to the story of Philomela, which you can look up if you can find it.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philomela_%28princess_of_Athens%29

- What is the saying the poet refers to in ...*a bird in the hand*...and how is it used?
- What connections and contrasts does the poet achieve by using the half rhyme *sang* and *sweet / squeeze*?

Stanza 2

Thetis then becomes an albatross, phrased as *shouldered the cross* which has connotations of a cross, especially when combined with *up the hill* – a reference to Calvary. This is the title of the poem, 'The Ancient Mariner', which follows a ship, bringing good weather, a crossbow, and the ship is doomed to disaster.

- Why do you think the poet has personified the crossbow in the last line?
- What are the connotations of ...*I felt my wings clipped*...?

Stanza 3

Stanza 3 begins with humorous references to shopping for a suitable shape, i.e. from the male pursuer, but also implying the right dress size – Size 8 often being the most desirable since it is very small.

- Why was this shape a mistake?
- What is the double meaning of 'charmer' in this context?
- Look at the rhyme scheme in this stanza. How is it used to make connections?

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Stanza 4

The carnivorous big cat is described in rhymes associated with aggression as *gore / jaw*. It is unavailing however.

- Can you mark where the tone of the stanza changes?
- What effect does the colloquial phrase ...*the guy in the grass with the gun* have?
- What is the double meaning of *Twelve bore*?

Stanza 5

Even in her own element, the sea, Thetis is not safe. The mermaid, like eels (and dolphins (friendly to man) and even whales, is followed by the fisherman, with a half rhyme, to add to the double meaning of 'hook, line and sinker'!

- Why is the whale called...*the ocean's opera singer*?
- What is the effect of the half rhyme *singer / sinker*?

Stanza 6

I changed my tune comments the narrator, using a common expression for trying something new, as others haven't worked. The fast moving mammals of the next stanza change to static objects, which will all end up in museums or shops, in 'lifelike' poses to educate the public.

- What is the effect of the two longer, slower lines after the list of creatures?
- What is humorous about the last line?

Stanza 7

Even when Thetis becomes the wind, she knows it is *all hot air*, for above the clouds, for brave young warriors, comes *out of the blue* and the roar of its engine cuts through the silence, which she tries to write her name, symbolically trying to establish her individuality, like the name of a fighter plane in the second world war, which adds another ironic touch.

- What is the effect of the half rhyme *name / hurricane / plane*?

Stanza 8

Turning to fire (symbol for desire) she discovers that her new husband is prone to anger.

- How does Thetis change in this final stanza?
- What is the effect of the internal rhyme connecting *burned / learned / turned*?
- Why do you think Duffy chooses to end the poem – and the metamorphic journey – with Achilles?

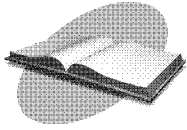
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Queen Herod

Research Task



Find the story of King Herod on the website below. Copy document. Print the document and keep it in your folder: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/>

Find the poem 'The Journey of the Magi' by T.S. Eliot on listen to the poet reading it and then copy and paste the folder: <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/>

You will find echoes of Eliot's poem in Duffy's interpretation

Stanza 1

Language Marking

This stanza consists of two sentences. Look at the first sentence and complete

Quotation	Type of sentence
<i>Ice in the trees</i>	

Photocopy the stanza and use highlighters or other forms of marking (underline) select the following:

- qualifiers describing the three Queens
- qualifiers describing their camels
- the things that were provided for them

Use your highlighting to answer the questions.

Why has Duffy used sentences in the way she has?	
What effect is created by her description of the visitors and their animals?	
What impression is given to the reader of life at Herod's palace?	
What effect is created by the line <i>those vivid three</i> ?	
How is the last line of the stanza connected to the first?	

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The three Queens are referred to as 'wise' just as the Magi are sometimes called 'wise men'. Their knowledge is mysterious – *they knew what they knew*.

Look at the description of the baby and write down what the phrases suggest

Silver and gold

The loose change of herself

Glowed in the soft bowl of her face

The next six lines are reminiscent of a well known fairytale. In 'The Sleeping Beauty' the fairies bestow gifts on the baby princess such as 'beauty', 'wealth', 'good health', 'beauty', 'wealth', 'good health'. What does each of the Queens bestow as a gift on Queen Herod's baby? What are the gifts?

Gift of the tallest Queen

Gift of the Queen with hennaed hands

Gift of the black Queen, who stares
lustfully at Queen Herod while giving it

Look at the list of names given to the male child whose birth will be shown in

- What do the names all have in common?
- Look at the rhythm and the rhyme Duffy has used in this list – what is the effect?
- How does Duffy subvert the idea of Jesus being the representative of man?

When you have agreed your answers, write them in the box. Compare them:

[illegible]

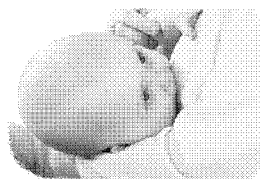
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Stanza 3

Look at the images of the baby, the three Queens and the peacock in this stanza. What do you think the poet is saying about the love and protection the baby will have? What contrast is being made here?



Stanza 4

Group Discussion

The first eleven lines describe the departure of the three wise Queens.

- What effect does the juxtaposition of the three images of the camels, the three Queens, and the baby have?

*I watched each turbaned Queen
rise like a god on the back of her beast*

- Why do you think Duffy has used such a powerful sexual image to describe the Queens?
- How does this image link with the final six lines of the stanza?

Write down your agreed answers and then compare them with the other groups.

Stanza 5

Language Marking

Highlight the use of assonance in the first three lines.

*Some swaggering lad to break her heart
some wincing Prince to take her name away
and give a ring, a nothing, nowt in gold.*

What effect does the use of assonance have in these lines?	
How is Duffy playing on the idea of 'ring', 'nothing' and 'nowt'?	

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Look at the description of the Chief of Staff. The audience is told only three on what each thing reveals about him.

<i>A mountain man</i>	
<i>A red scar like a tick</i>	
<i>The mean stare of his eye</i>	

Read the orders given by Queen Herod and then write in the box why you carry them out.

Stanza 6

Research Task



Look up the constellation of Orion on the following website:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orion_%28constellation%29

Then look up the constellation Cassiopeia (the 'diamond in the sky') on the following website:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassiopeia_%28constellation%29

Make a sky map showing Orion, Cassiopeia and 'The Boyfriend's Star' in the same juxtaposition as in the poem. You could use the pictures of the mythical beings as well as the star diagrams, if you wish. Use a large font to type quotations to stick over the map in appropriate places.

Language Analysis

Comment on Duffy's use of personification in this stanza. How is it appropriate?	
Why do you think Duffy includes the capital W in her sky map?	
Comment on the poet's use of alliteration in the qualifiers used for the star in the East.	
Why is the star blue?	

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Stanzas 7, 8 and 9

In the first of these short stanzas, Duffy outlines 3 roles for the narrator – what are they?	
In the final two stanzas she depicts the two faces of motherhood – what are they?	
Why do you think the feelings here are restricted to girls? (Think about the traditional roles in the Bible story).	

The Whole Poem

Imaginative Writing



Write, in role as Queen Herod, a letter to the Pope, explaining how you acted on her warning and giving your reasons from the poem where appropriate.



This picture of 'The Massacre of the Innocents' by Rubens is one of several of the most famous depictions of this biblical story.

Why do you think Duffy portrays Queen Herod as willing to cause such suffering?

You can find out more about this episode by logging on to:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_the_Innocents

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Mrs Midas

Stanza 1

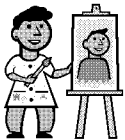
Look up the story of King Midas on the website below. Copy and paste it in print it off and keep it in your folder with the poem. When you have read the story of the myth Duffy has used in her poem. How far has she changed it?

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/midas.html>

Language Analysis

Write down three phrases that show how Duffy creates a normal domestic atmosphere in this stanza. Why does she do this?	
How does she use personification and what is the effect?	
'Blanching' is a cookery term. How is it being used here? What effect is created?	
What is the effect of the simile in the penultimate line of the stanza?	

Creative Activity



In a newspaper, find black and white pictures of rooms. Stick them on to a sheet of sugar paper. Then, using gold and gold glitter, change the items in the picture that are in the poem. You could stick pictures of food and drink and turn some of them into gold.

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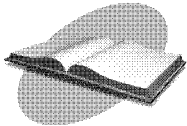
Stanza 2

Group Discussion

- Why does Duffy use so much detail to describe the initial sighting of Midas?
- Why do you think she is so exact about the variety of pear that was grown?
- How is this contrasted with the list of things in the following two stanzas?

Stanza 3

Research Task



When Midas turns the window blinds to gold, the narrator is reminded of her history class at school. Look up the story of the cloth of gold on the website below, copy and paste into your document and add it to your poem folder.

[http://www.britainexpress.com/History/tudor/cloth-](http://www.britainexpress.com/History/tudor/cloth-of-gold.html)

Language Analysis

Look at Duffy's use of short simple sentences in the first two lines. What effect does this have?	
The fourth line is an allusion to the description of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play, 'Anthony & Cleopatra'. How is this appropriate?	
What adjectives does the poet use to describe the look on Midas' face? What impression is being given to the reader?	
From your reading of the original myth, why is the wife's question in the final line particularly apt?	

Stanza 4

Language Analysis

In this stanza, Duffy uses description in interesting ways. What is the effect?

<i>...spitting out the teeth of the rich.</i>	
<i>Toyed with his spoon, then mine, then with the knives, the forks.</i>	
<i>...a fragrant, bone-dry white from Italy...</i>	
<i>...the glass, goblet, golden chalice...</i>	

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Group Discussion

Language Analysis

The minor sentence at the start, <i>Separate beds</i> .	
The word play on ... <i>near petrified</i> ?	
... <i>turning the spare room / into the tomb of Tutankhamun</i> .	
... <i>unwrapping each other, rapidly / like presents, fast food</i> .	
... <i>I feared his honeyed embrace...</i>	

- How does Duffy manage to make the situation in this stanza both funny

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Stanza 8

Mini-Quiz: Can you find references to each of the following in this stanza?

A saying that reflects the sound of metal	
A saying that normally suggests generosity	
A reference to the original story	
An echo of the 'honeyed embrace' in stanza 7	
A metaphorical form of gold	

Stanza 9 and Stanza 10

Imaginative Writing



Imagine you are Midas and write at least three journal entries, starting with being driven up to the castle. You should use as much of the information in the poem as you can – and you get extra brownie points for including a reference to your research activity. Use the information from your research activity with this task – especially on hearing the music.

Stanza 11

Group Discussion

- How does the narrator's tone change during the stanza?
- Who do you think ended up worse off – Midas or his wife?
- Why do you think Duffy chose to end the story here, rather than following the story of having the curse lifted?

Whole Poem

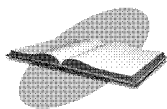
Write an article for a woman's magazine about the story of Mrs Midas. You should choose a suitable format and use headings, sub-headings, pictures, and other appropriate media devices. Try to copy the style of your chosen magazine, whether it is 'Hello' or 'Elle'. Ideally you should find a copy of the magazine and stick to the 'house style' as far as possible. You should try to include quotations from the poem, perhaps as part of an interview with Mrs Midas that could form part of your article.

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Mrs Tiresias

Research Task



Look up the story of Tiresias on the website below:
<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/tiresias.htm>

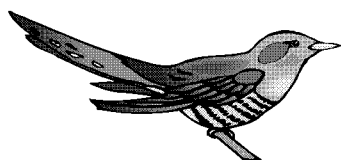
Copy and paste the story into a Word document then file beside this poem.

Language Marking

In the lines below, highlight all the words and phrases that suggest masculinity.

*Out the back gate with his stick
the dog:
wearing his gardening kecks
an open-necked shirt
and a jacket in Harris tweed I'd patched at the elbow

Whistling*



To find out more about 'the first cuckoo of spring' go on to the following websites:
<http://www.wildaboutbritain.co.uk/forums/birds/8535-first-cuckoo-spring.html>

<http://www.england-in-particular.info/calendar/april.html> (go to the heading 'The Cuckoo').

Group Discussion

- Why do you think the narrator 'never let on' that she had heard the cuckoo?
- What do you think is the significance of the roll of thunder she hears that night?
- How does Duffy build up tension before explaining what has happened?
- Where and why does Duffy use a transferred epithet before the asterisk?

Write your agreed answers in the box and compare them with other groups.

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Language Analysis

Work with a partner and write down the connotations of the following phrases:

<i>Life has to go on</i>	
<i>...he himself was working abroad</i>	
<i>...his soft new shape...</i>	

Then discuss with your partner and complete the following grid:

What is the significance of Duffy's use of numbers in <i>One week in bed</i> , <i>Two doctors in</i> , <i>Three painkillers four times a day</i> ?	
The use of the colloquialism <i>...the powers that be...</i>	
How does Tiresias show that he is not totally female in his behaviour over menstruation?	
Why does she use the phrase <i>...his selfish pale face peering at the moon...?</i>	
What is the significance of the moon and his use of the words <i>...the curse...?</i> Could it have more than one reference?	

Imaginative Writing



Read through the next section, after *It got worse* magazine, covering the events mentioned. You will use the poem to help you imagine the life he is leading and his attitude towards sex and his television role.

Write it in the house style of the magazine and include photos, headlines, captions, etc. You will also need to tell your readers about the sex change or whether or not (will you change the name?) is treated just as a man.

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Language Analysis

Discuss with a partner the following lines and complete the grid.

*The one thing he never got right
was the voice.
A cling peach slithering out from its tin.*

Why does Duffy use the image of a cling peach? How does this contrast with her use of images of fruit in the final section?	
What are the connotations of the verb 'slithering'? Why has Duffy used it here?	
What do you think the poet is suggesting to the reader about Tiresias in these lines?	

Language Marking

Photocopy the final section of the poem and use a highlighter to mark all the brittleness or light. In a second colour mark all the words that suggest erotic

Group Discussion

- What is Duffy saying about the contrast in relationships since the pair ha
- What is ironic about Mrs Tiresias' new relationship?
- How does Duffy suggest the contrast between public manners and privat
- In the two final lines, what feelings are being conveyed to the reader?

Write your agreed answers in the box and then compare them with other gr

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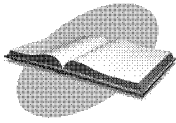
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Pilate's Wife

Research Task



You will find a useful article about Pontius Pilate here:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1273594.stm

Wikipedia has a useful article about Pilate's wife – see:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontius_Pilate's_wife

Charlotte Brontë wrote a poem about the dream of Pilate's wife:
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/bronte/pilate.html>

You may find it helpful to copy and paste some or all of the text from these documents. Then print them off and keep with the poem.

Language Analysis

Work with a partner and discuss the following points. Then complete the grid.

Why do you think Duffy devotes the whole of the first stanza to Pilate's hands?	
Look at the qualifiers the poet uses to describe his hands. What do they suggest about his character?	
What is the significance of the reference to ... <i>shells from Galilee</i> ?	
What are the connotations of ... <i>clapped for grapes</i> ?	

Group Discussion

Duffy is a master of summary.

- What can you infer about Pilate's wife from the simple statement: *I longed for the Nazarene*?
- Who is ...*the Nazarene*...?
- Why do the narrator and her maid go out to join the crowd?

Write down your agreed answers and then compare them with other groups.

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Language Analysis

The figure of Jesus is presented in a minimal way by the poet. Work with a partner to discuss the following:

Why does Duffy ask the question <i>His face</i> ? What does this imply has been said previously?	
Duffy uses two minor sentences as qualifiers. What is the effect of this?	
Why is the sentence <i>He looked at me</i> repeated with the 'me' italicised?	
What word play is involved in the exclamation <i>My God</i> ?	
What two meanings are implicit in the sentence, <i>His eyes were eyes to die for</i> ?	

The poem briefly describes the events of Palm Sunday. Find the account of Palm Sunday in the Bible (Matthew 21:1-11) on the website below. Then write it in your own words in the left hand column and compare it to the account from the poem in the right hand column.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2021:1-11>

Bible account	Poem

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What do you notice about the two accounts?



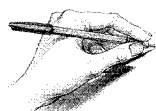
Read through Charlotte Brontë's poem about the dream of Pilate's wife. Write a comparison of the two poems for a new literary magazine for sixth formers. You should consider the ideas, context, viewpoint, language and imagery of the two poems. You should also briefly comment on how the time in which each of them was written has influenced the poets.

Language Analysis

Work with a partner to discuss the following questions and then complete the table.

How does Duffy differentiate between Pilate's hands and those of Jesus?	
Why does Duffy contrast the care taken by Pilate not to get his sleeves wet and the result of his action?	
Why is it ironic that, in this poem, Pilate believes Jesus was God and his wife does not?	
Duffy often uses jokes and witticisms in this collection. Why is this poem free of them?	

Imaginative Writing

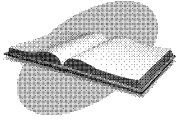


Pilate's wife wrote letters during her lifetime, some of which are preserved and republished.

Imagine you are Claudia Procula and write the letter (to a friend or relative in Rome) that tells the story of the poem. The date is AD 33 although the calendar is different then. You should keep to the events in the poem although you may add extra details where necessary. You should include some quotations from the poem where appropriate.

Mrs Aesop

Research Task



You will already know some of Aesop's fables, like the *Tortoise*. You may also know many of the proverbs which need to know a few more of them to understand the poem. Visit <http://www.aesopfables.com/>

Here you will find all of the fables as well as the life of Aesop. Highlight all the phrases that look as if they might belong to a fable. Find the relevant fables in the collection and copy and paste them into a document, which you can then print off to keep with the poem. You can also look up the story of the American wife, Lorena Bobbitt. Visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorena_Bobbitt

Work with a partner to complete the grid for stanza 1.

What is Purgatory? Why does Duffy use it here?	
What effect is created by the use of internal rhyme in the first two lines?	
What is humorous in the poet's use of the proverb, <i>dead men tell no tales</i> here?	
How is Duffy using the proverb, <i>a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush</i> , in this stanza?	

Work with a partner to complete the following sentences for stanza 2:

Going out was worst because...	
Duffy uses internal rhyme in lines 2 and 3 in order to...	
The six proverbs/fables mentioned in this stanza are...	1. 2. 3.

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Group Discussion

Stanza 3 gives the supposed provenance of the famous 'tortoise and hare' story.

- What simile does Duffy use for the slowness of the tortoise?
- How is it appropriate here?
- What effect does the poet achieve by Aesop's references to his wife as 'Mrs A's'?
- What is being implied?
- What is 'Mrs A's' reaction to his well known moral?
- In stanza 4 what is Duffy achieving by all the interrogatives?
- List all the proverbs/fables mentioned in this stanza.
- What is ironic about the moral at the end of stanza 4?
- What is the effect of the enjambment running into stanza 5?

Write down your agreed answers and compare them with other groups.

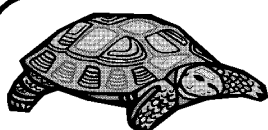
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Work with a partner on language analysis in stanza 5.

What fable does Mrs Aesop invent to turn the tables on her husband?	
What is the double meaning of each of the following: <i>A little cock</i> <i>Cut off your tail</i> <i>Save my face</i>	
How is the final proverb in the poem especially appropriate?	

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Creative Activity



Print the titles of all the fables in the poem in different styles and colours. You could use a word processor or a collage.

Print a large font version of the poem with space around it and stick it over your collage. Annotate the poem in colour. You can then display it or keep it as a useful quick reference.



Mrs Darwin

Research Task



To find out more about Darwin, log on to the following website to find out the publication date of his famous book.

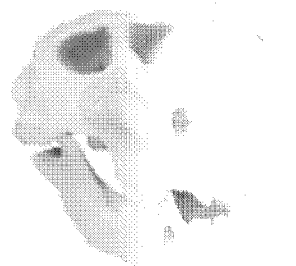
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Origin_of_Species

Group Discussion

- Why has Duffy included the date as part of the poem?
- Why has she written 'Him' with a capital letter?
- Why has she written 'Chimpanzee' with a capital letter?
- What point is she making – not very seriously?
- What is interesting about her rhyme scheme?

Imagine you are Charles Darwin and have just returned from your supposed visit to the zoo with your wife. Write the entry in your journal for this day – using the date in the poem – including the ideas and train of thought that were started by her apparently facetious comment. You may illustrate it if you wish.

To get some idea of Darwin's writing style, visit <http://charles-darwin.classic-literature.co.uk/the-voyage-of-the-beagle>

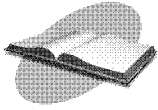


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Mrs Sisyphus

Research Task



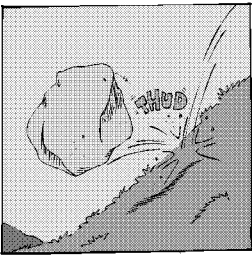
Look up the myth of Sisyphus on the website below. Copy the text into a document, then print it off and keep it with the poem.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisyphus>

Language Marking

Work with a partner. Use highlighters to mark all the rhyming words in the poem. What do you notice about the rhyme scheme?

Why do you think Duffy has chosen a rhyme scheme like this? What cumulative effect does it have?



Make a large drawing of Sisyphus in the centre of a sheet of sugar paper.

Type all the words that his wife uses about him in appropriate fonts and colours in large sizes.

Cut out the qualifiers and stick them over and around your picture.

Put his own words in a speech bubble by his mouth.

Work with a partner to complete the grid.

What does Sisyphus mean when he urges his wife to think of the perks? What is being implied by the poet?	
Why does Duffy compare Mrs Sisyphus with Noah's wife and with J.S. Bach's wife?	
What is ironic about 'my voice reduced to a squawk' and 'my smile to a twisted smirk'?	
What image is created by Duffy at the end of the poem? What effect does she intend it to have?	

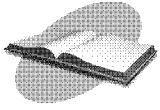
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Mrs Faust

Research Task



Look up the articles on Faust on the following website:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faust>

You will notice the fascination this story has had for many years.

Copy and paste the articles into a Word document, then the poem in your file. You may then refer to it as you study.

Stanza 1

How does Duffy use word play and half rhyme on the name in the first two lines?	
How does Duffy use sound patterning and rhythm to suggest the speed of the couple's romance in lines 3 – 6?	
In lines 7 – 9 their academic careers are covered in three sets of letters. How is this achieved?	
In the final two lines, what is the reader told about the couple? What is suggested by the idea of substituting bathrobes for children?	
How does Duffy make a point by reversing the usual order of possessive pronouns in the final line? What does this tell you about her economical use of language?	

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Stanza 2

Complete the shapes.

Duffy uses minor and short simple sentences in this stanza because...

Duffy uses what personal possessions

In lines 7-8 the description of Faust's face shows a man who was...

In the final line : was 'as bad' wh

In this stanza Duffy uses caesura and enjambment to...

In this stanza, D
a. tripling
b. assonance
c. partial rhyme

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Group Discussion

- What subtle distinction does Duffy make in the first two lines?
- How does she use a) repetition and b) rhyme to make a witty point in the first two lines?
- What is implied by the narrator's feelings in lines 5-7? Could there be a deeper meaning? *chronic irritation*?
- What do the list of activities in lines 8-9 have in common?
- How has Duffy used rhyme for comic effect in the last four lines?

[illegible]

Look at the use of implication and ambiguity in this stanza:

<p>What kind of deals do you imagine Faust was doing 'out East'?</p> <p>Why might they have been expensive?</p>	
<p>What two meanings can be inferred from 'to say the least'?</p>	
<p>What two meanings can be inferred from 'to lay'?</p>	
<p>What two meanings can be inferred from 'get lost'?</p>	
<p>Oscar Wilde referred to his visits to low class rent boys as 'feasting with panthers'.</p> <p>What does this imply about Faust?</p>	

Stanza 5

What clues to the visitor's identity can you find in this stanza?

Why do you think Duffy has used longer lines in this stanza than in the previous stanzas?

Stanza 6

Create a timeline showing the rapid progress made by Faust in this stanza.

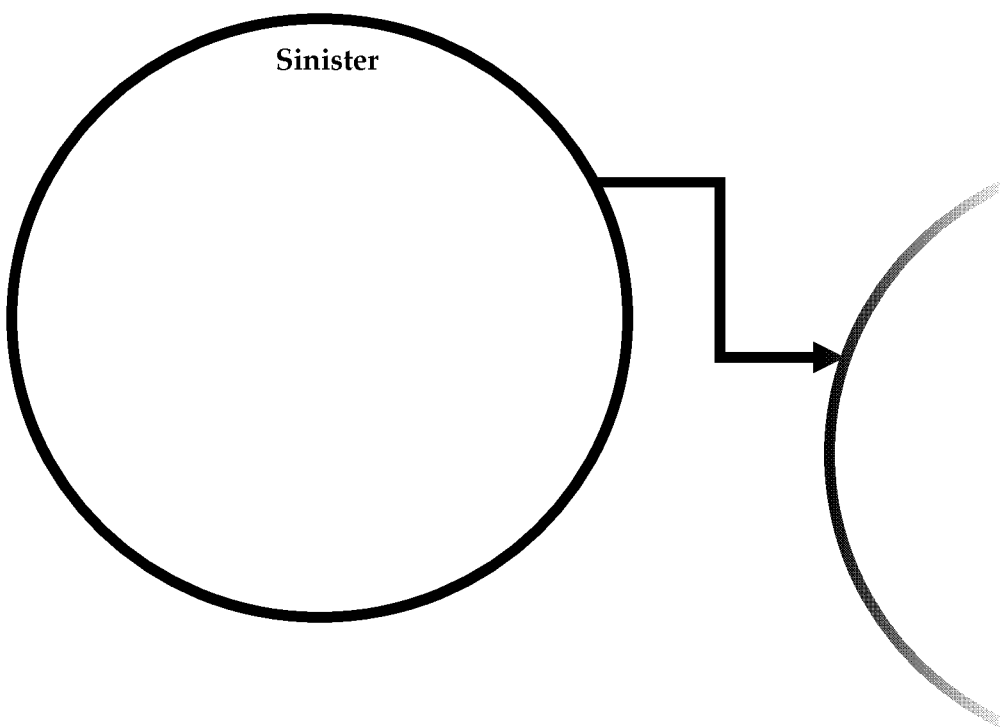
Stanza 7

Group Discussion

- In Marlowe's play Faustus is described as having ridden a dragon to study magic, as challenging God, and making a fool of the Pope. How does Duffy use these ideas to create a sense of the impossible in this stanza?
- Also in Marlowe's play, Faustus is shown using his new found power for good as well as evil. Is this idea reflected in this stanza?
- What do you think Duffy gains by placing the impossible alongside the possible in this stanza?

Stanza 8

Show how Faust moves from the sinister to the less harmful in this stanza. Use the language used?



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Stanzas 9 and 10

These two stanzas are concerned with the narrator’s life as her husband ach



What two meanings does this colloq

What proverbial saying has Duffy subverted in line 3?

What fairy tale is Duffy referring to in line 4? Why does she use it?

In what ways does the narrator change a) herself and b) her lifestyle in these

How she changes herself	How she c

Group Discussion

- Why do you think Duffy uses so much tripling in these stanzas?
- What do the following expressions a) mean and b) imply about the narra

went native

ape, berserk, bananas

went on the run

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Stanzas 11 and 12

Looking at Language

What is implied by the following colloquial or proverbial expressions:

virtual Helen of Troy

.....

.....

.....

the Devil's boy

.....

.....

.....

reap what I sowed

.....

.....

.....

gagging for it.....

.....

.....

.....

going for it.....

.....

.....

.....

rolling in it.....

.....

.....

.....

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Research Task



The website below will give you the story of Marlowe most of Duffy's references are taken.

<http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeyn>

How has she used the story of the play in these two stanzas?

How has she updated the references for a modern audience?



*Is this the face that launched a
thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers
of Ilium?*

These lines describe Helen of Troy and refer to her role as a cause of wars (Ilium was the city of Troy).

In Marlowe's play, Faust is terrified at the thought of Mephistopheles coming off to hell, crying out

*"Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven
That time may cease, and midnight never come."*

How does Duffy's Faust react to the news that the devil is on his way to claim her?

Why are these two stanzas printed mainly in italics?

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Stanza 13

What is the meaning of the reference to a *serpent's hiss*?

The smell of evil is sulphur – referred 'brimstone'.
Why do you think

What is the effect of the writer's use of the senses in this stanza?

Wh
the
Fau



Why do you think the devil's hands might be described as 'scaly'?

What is in
hands pol
terracotta ?
think Duft

How does Duffy achieve a humorous effect in what should be a terrifying incident?

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Stanzas 14 and 15

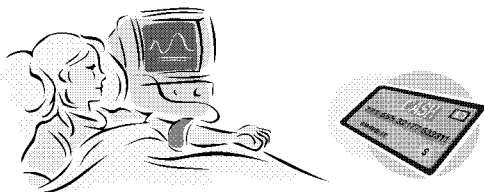


How does Duffy use sound pa
to create humour?

What is implied about the narrator's
character in the first two lines of stanza 14?

What does
la vie' at th
mean? How

What is meant by 'bought a kidney with my credit card'? What does it imply



What effect does Duffy create with the
use of alliteration in the penultimate
line of the poem?

What serious point might it leave the
audience considering?

What is your opinion of the poem?

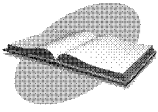
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Delilah

Research Task



Find the story of Samson and Delilah on the following website
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samson>

The story has fascinated artists and writers for centuries. 'Samson Agonistes' and you can see some of the paintings on the website below.

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgi-bin/WebObjects/works/work?workNumber=NG6461>

Write a summary of the story and print off the pictures. Duffy has, typically, decided to give the story from Delilah's entirely different motive for her action than greed.

Points for Discussion



What does Samson request from Delilah in stanza 1?

List the feats of strength that Samson mentions in stanza 2.

What is the physical sign of his strength and bravery in stanza 3?

In stanza 4, why does Delilah feel sure he wants to change?

In the final part of the poem what does Delilah do? What motivation does Duffy provide for her act?

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Looking at Language and Techniques

What do you observe about Duffy's use of alliteration in this poem? How effective do you think it is?	
What is effective about the use of transferred epithet in stanza 2 – <i>flay the bellowing fur / from a bear</i> ?	
In stanza 3, why has Duffy placed the scar <i>over his heart</i> ?	
In stanza 3, what do you imagine a <i>four-medal wound</i> to be?	
How does the use of the crude term 'fucked' link with the previous stanza?	
How is the idea of change linked by repetition in stanza 4?	
Why do you think the line <i>I was there</i> is separated from the main stanzas, but rhymes with <i>That's the how and the why and the where</i> ?	
What is the effect of Duffy's use of sibilance at the start of stanza 5?	
Why is the line in stanza 5, <i>I let him slip...on the floor</i> much longer than any other line in the poem?	
What is the significance of sharpening the scissors and chaining the door when related to the biblical story?	
What is implied by the qualifiers that describe Delilah's hands in the penultimate line of the poem?	

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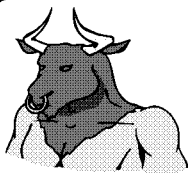
Looking at the rhyme scheme

Look at the way in which Duffy uses rhyme or half-rhyme to link ideas with
Select two or three examples of this technique and show how it is effective.

1.
2.
3.

The metre of the poem gives it a conversational tone. How appropriate do you
Select three examples that you find effective and explain why they work.

1.
2.
3.



The Minotaur is a creature from Greek myth. Find out about it and
why it might have been used in this poem.

In stanza 5 there is a reference to *the black and biblical air*. There is a wry allusion
famous verse play 'Under Milkwood' which refers to the 'small town, starling
under cover of this pitch darkness, much 'malarkey' is going on. It is used because
were generally black [although inside their pages were many stories like *Satanstoe*]
an appropriate reference?

--

Is there a serious point that Duffy is making in this poem? What do you think?

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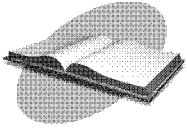
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Anne Hathaway

Research Task



You are probably aware that Anne Hathaway was Shakespeare's wife. You can find out more about her on the website:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Hathaway_%28Shakespeare's_wife%29

You should copy and paste this article into a Word document and save it in your file with the poem.

The poem is in the form of a Shakespearean sonnet. Why?

In the first three lines, the bed they share is compared to *a spinning world* – but what is Shakespeare's imagination portrayed here?

How and why does Duffy describe their lovemaking in terms of language?

How does the writer make use of the senses in line 10?

Like many of Shakespeare's sonnets, the poem is in the form of an extended metaphor. What is being used and why?

In what poetic metaphor is their lovemaking mentioned in the first three lines?

Shakespeare's wonderful use of language is compared to *shooting stars*. How does the narrator feel? Why has Duffy used this comparison?

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Some nights I dreamed he'd written me... What do you think the writer means?

In what ways does Duffy equate Will Shakespeare as a writer, with Will Shakespeare?

Can you think of some of Shakespeare's works which suggest that he knows love?

What comparison does the poet make between a casket (used for holding a dead body) and Anne's memory? How effective is this?

How does Duffy use linguistic terminology to contrast the experience of Anne's guests in the 'best bed'?

This is one of the most celebratory poems in the collection, where Duffy imagines love both in words and in lovemaking; where the two are intimately woven together. Through words and language is brought vividly to life. She also uses Shakespeare, comparing love, or a lover, to something greater in time or the natural world, such as remembrance. Compare Shakespeare's famous sonnet No. 18 and give your own response to both poems.

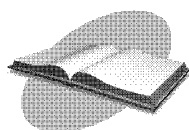
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Queen Kong

Research Task

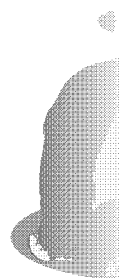


This poem is Duffy's 'take' on the famous 1933 film 'King Kong' who falls in love with a girl kidnapped to be a sacrifice. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Kong for information.

If you visit the website below you can see a number of clips from the film – although the best research would be to watch some of the professional reviews.

<http://www.kingkongmovie.com/home.html>

After watching one or both of the films, you should annotate a copy of the poem, showing how Duffy has related her poem directly to scenes in the original film – but with a gender difference



What is implied in the phrase <i>my little man</i> in line 2?	
How does Duffy use humour in the first stanza by appealing to the reader's imagination?	
<i>the village</i> is Greenwich Village in New York. Why does the poet use this location?	
What can be inferred by the phrase <i>As you see...</i> in stanza 2?	
What kind of film is the man in the poem making? How does this compare with the director in the film?	
Why do you think the writer uses the phrase <i>held his wriggling, shouting life...</i> in line 13?	

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Stanzas 3 – 5

What does this gorilla gain by being able to communicate with the audience?

The final line in stanza 4 recalls another film actress, Mae West and her famous line. How is Duffy using the reference?

What references from the film is Duffy using in stanza 5?

What is the double meaning of *I watched him fly*?

How does Duffy make Queen Kong sound like a love-struck teenager? Do you think it's effective?

How is the relationship between the gorilla and the man depicted in stanza 4 different from that between King Kong and Fay Wray (the actress in the original film)?



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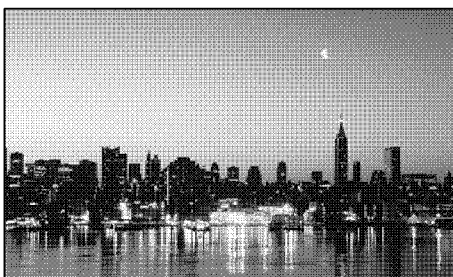


Stanza 6

Look at the way in which Duffy uses language to portray the feelings of Queen Kong

What are the symptoms of loss she shows in the first two lines?	
What do you think the writer means by the parrots <i>clacked their migraine chant</i> ... ?	
How effective is the assonance of the <i>swinging monkeys whinged</i> ?	
What kind of fever do you think Queen Kong has?	
What is the symbolism of <i>...a fat red moon rolled on the jungle roof when the gorilla has her period</i> ?	
What do all these symptoms lead to?	

Stanza 7



How does the poet make a connection between the island and New York in the first two lines?

How is Duffy creating humour by the idea of a giant gorilla being 'discreet'?

What is going on behind a thousand windows of the city?

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Stanzas 8 and 9

When Queen Kong finds her man, he has a photograph of her over his bed. What does this have for this? What is the only interpretation the gorilla puts on it?

How effective do you consider the simile in line 1 of stanza 9?

How do the events of stanza 9 reflect those towards the end of the film?

What is the main difference between this scene in the film and in the poem?

What is incongruous about the idea of Queen Kong shopping at Bloomingdale's (a high-end department store)? What do you think Duffy wants to convey to the reader?

What is the mood and tone of the final three lines of stanza 9? Why do you think New York like this?

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Stanzas 10 and 11

What clues are there to the kind of life the director and the gorilla lived together?

Find a quotation that suggests that the man was fond of the gorilla.

Find a quotation that suggests the man was sad about being taken to live with the gorilla.

In what ways does the poet show Queen Kong behaving as an animal in the poem?

What do you think are the connotations of using the man as an ornament?

In what way does the poet show Queen Kong behaving like a person in the poem?

What serious points do you think Duffy is making in the poem about the nature of this modern version of Beauty and the Beast?

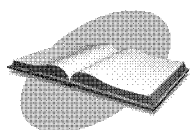
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Mrs Quasimodo

Research Task



Quasimodo is the protagonist of Victor Hugo's novel, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Look at the website below, where you will find information about the story, a list of the characters and a list of the places made of the book.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunchback_of_Notre_Dame

The poem opens, appropriately, with the bells of Notre Dame. How did the poet describe them as a girl?

How effective is Duffy's use of personification in lines 2 and 3 of stanza 1?

Make a list of the things we learn about Mrs Quasimodo in the first stanza.

How does the poet create a contrast between the narrator and the bells in stanza 2?

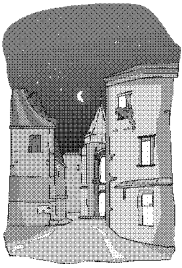
What is your impression of Mrs Quasimodo from this introduction?

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Why do you think she felt at home in Paris? Look at the descriptions of her :
is the significance of the line *I frightened cats*?



The description in stanza 2 of her apartment is that of a typical Paris building and buildings mentioned, log on to <http://z.about.com/d/cruises/1/0/b/R/3/> contrast the inside of the apartment with what is outside the window?

Stanza 3 describes Mrs Quasimodo's first visit to the bells she loves and her with Quasimodo. Select two phrases Duffy uses to show her first reactions to

Why do you think the time of year might be significant?

Why do you think Duffy uses the anglo-saxon term 'fucked' instead of 'mad'?

What meanings do the words 'gaping' and 'stricken' have if the bells are put does the poet create about the bells?

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1. How does Duffy link stanza 3 and stanza 4 through assonance?

2. Why does she want

4. Check the description of Quasimodo on the wikipedia page from the research activity. How does Duffy make humorous use of it in stanza 4?

3. An epithalamium is a bridegroom song. What does she mean when she says the poem effectively is Quasimodo?

What do you think the line *fragrant air* means?

The angelus was Mary's traditional prayer. It was rung at midday. What news from the angel that she would stop work to pray. What does she mean here?

What does she add that was not in the original book and why?

Why does she put this section in the form of a question?

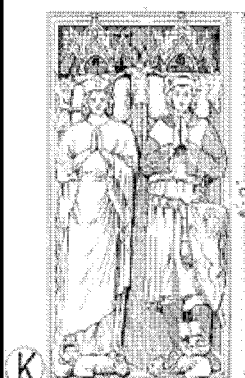


Why do you think Duffy leaves?

So more fool me.

The narrator describes their married life living in the cathedral grounds. How does he introduce another voice at this point?

These are the statues on the front of Notre Dame Cathedral. How are they described by the narrator?



TOMB OF LANDGRAVE HENRI, MARBURG

This is the kind of tomb that might be found in the lady chapel (dedicated to the Virgin Mary) with carved statues of the tomb's inmates. What do the queen next to her husband symbolise?

The seventh hour – the bells were used to chime the canonical hours (hours of prayer). In the evening, it is likely that it was calling people to *vespers*, the evening prayer. What does this suggest about Mrs Quasimodo?

How does the comment on the stone queen lead into stanza 6?

How does Quasimodo start to find fault with his wife?

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As they say in France when a man begins to behave like this, 'Cherchez la femme'. Quasimodo doesn't have far to look. Who is the 'pin-up gypsy'? How does the poem have a modern touch?



I should have known.

This is the second line in the stanza. Why?

How do the last two lines of the stanza echo the last line of the previous stanza?

Make a list of the qualifiers used to describe the gypsy in the next stanza. How does the narrator feel about her?

And given sanctuary

Why do you think this line is on its own? What does 'sanctuary' mean?

Find three phrases that Duffy uses to contrast the ugliness of the narrator with the beauty of the gypsy.

How does the poet get the reader to feel sympathy for Mrs Quasimodo in the final stanza?

Why does she end this stanza with two lines of minor sentences detailing the gypsy's life?

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What point is Duffy making about the way in which women are who are hardly pin-ups themselves?

In the following stanza, Mrs Quasimodo sets about getting revenge. Women are rather innovative in this department – stories in newspapers testify to those who cut their husband's best suits to ribbons, thrown paint stripper over their cars and their most precious belongings. Mrs Quasimodo gets her revenge in a similar way. She cannot blame Esmeralda, who is a victim herself, so she turns her attention to her husband's other 'mistresses' – the bells.

The stanza tells the story of the destruction of the bells in an extended metaphor technique?

How well do you think the personification works as part of the metaphor in this stanza?

The lines *The bells. The bells. / I made them mute* are an allusion to the hunchback of Notre Dame, where 'the bells, they made me deaf' and has a sardonic humour about it. How well does Duffy use this?

The second part of this stanza is all negatives. How does Duffy convey the absence of the chimes at the same time as the narrator gleefully announces their absence?

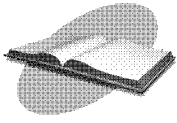
At the same time as destroying the bells' ability to mark special occasions how does Duffy try to imply what will be lost?

Why do you think she wants silence back?

What is her final insult to the 'murdered' bells? Do you think this is an appropriate ending?

Medusa

Research Task



Look up the story of Medusa and the various theories at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medusa>

See if you can relate this knowledge to Duffy's poem.

This is one of the poems where the protagonist speaks as herself, rather than through a narrator, although she is still seen in relation to men and as a bride.

Stanza 1



A suspicion, a doubt, a
jealousy grew in my mind...

How is Duffy using the idea of a head as a metaphor?

How has Duffy used sound patterning to suggest the turmoil of Medusa's thoughts?

List the physical forms that symbolise the suspicions and jealous doubts in her mind.

What are the 'bullet tears' in her eyes?

Why do you think this stanza concludes on this question?

How does this link to stanza 3?

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Stanza 3

Medusa's imperative to her *perfect man, Greek God, my own* is to be terrified. How does this stanza reinforce the theme of jealousy?

Although she is making serious points, Duffy introduces humour in stanza 4. Medusa begins to use her power of petrifying things. What happens to each

A bee	
A songbird	
A ginger cat	
A pig	

What does Medusa see in the mirror? How is this image symbolic? Why does she see a volcano? (Think about Medusa as creator and destroyer).

In the final stanza, Perseus appears. How is he depicted?

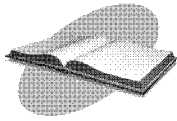


What is the double meaning of the final line? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

Wasn't I beautiful?
Wasn't I fragrant
and young?

The Devil's Wife

Research Task



This poem is about Myra Hindley and written as though out more about this notorious murderer, log on to the of the case is essential to understanding this poem. The <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/452614.stm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myra_Hindley

Part 1

Make a list of all the words and phrases that are used to describe Ian Brady in the first two stanzas.

Make a list of all the words and phrases used to describe Myra Hindley in the first two stanzas.

How does Duffy use rhyme and sound patterns to reflect the feelings and beliefs of the poem?

In stanza 3 Duffy covers the whole period of the murderous activities the pair were involved in. How does she suggest the way the pair worked together to entrap children?

In the final two lines of this part, Hindley describes her feelings mainly in terms of her relationship with Ian. How does this description fit the famous photograph on the BBC website?

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Part 2

How does the first stanza connect this part to the previous one?

What references can you find to the photograph of Hindley by the grave on

Stanza 2 refers to the way the media reported the trial but also to the hold B
references can you find to each of these?

Talk with other students about why you think Duffy called this part 'Medu

In stanza 3, how and why does Duffy use dialect, colloquialism and abbrevi

In stanza 4, why do you think the narrator says that being the devil's wife is
What point is Duffy making here?

What are the two meanings of the following phrases? (You will need to read
in prison).

- 'double locked'
- 'dying inside'

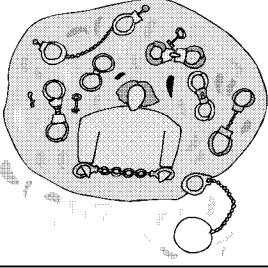
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Part 3

'Bible' refers to Hindley's reported re-conversion to Catholicism in prison. Her involvement in Brady's actual crimes. What does the lack of punctuation suggest?



Read this part aloud as the narrator might have said it. Make a list of all the people she had no part in the terrible crimes of which she was convicted.

Part 4

This refers to how long her term of imprisonment seems, but also to spiritual 'night of the soul'. Where do you think the 'words that crawl out of the wall' come from?

Why do you think Duffy follows her decision to confess with 'Amen'?

What is the purpose of listing all these methods of execution and torture?

What is the implication of 'If life means life means life'?

What are the implications of what she did – for herself and for all human beings?

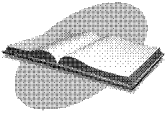
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Circe

Research Task



The story of Circe comes from Homer's Odyssey. Find the following websites:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circe>

<http://www.loggia.com/myth/circe.html>

Divide into four groups.

Each group takes part of the poem, as follows:

- Group A takes stanza 1 except for the last line.
- Group B takes the last line of stanza 1 and the whole of stanza 2.
- Group C takes the whole of stanza 3.
- Group D takes the whole of stanza 4.

Each group should look at how Duffy makes use of the following within the poem:

- the senses
- colloquialisms
- metaphor
- double meanings
- narrator and audience
- listing
- recipe format
- use of rhyme
- enjambment
- caesura
- repetition
- alliteration



In addition, group A should consider the opening of the poem and Group D should comment on the mood and tone of their stanza.

Read the whole poem through in your groups, substituting the word 'man' for 'woman'. What notice do you make?

Present your stanzas in order to the rest of the class, demonstrating what you have learned about the poem's ideas and techniques. Focus in particular on how they relate to women's stories.

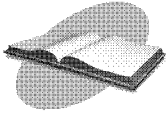
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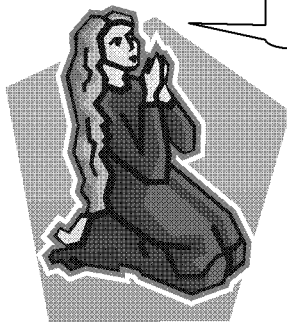
Mrs Lazarus

Research Task



This poem is based on the New Testament story of Jesus. It has inspired a number of writers especially because of the message the audience would like to know – whether the typical fashion, is more concerned with the way it might be resurrected in this fashion. You can find the bible story at <http://www.newadvent.org/bible/joh011.htm#41>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lazarus>



I had grieved.

List the forms that the narrator's grief

These forms may seem excessive to us, but if you have watched funerals from on TV you will know it is typical of Middle Eastern culture. How does Duffy emphasise this?

In stanza 2 how does Duffy use expressions of colour to express grief? How does the colloquialism 'dead men's shoes'?

In stanza 2 how does the poet express the feeling of being only half of a couple and wife are one flesh'?

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What is meant by these phrases?

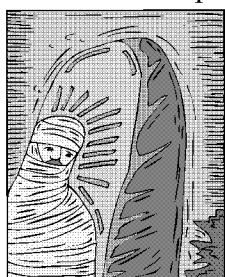
Gaunt nun	
Stations of Bereavement	
Icon of my face	
Shrunk size of a snapshot	

In stanza 4 find three phrases that describe how Lazarus' memory faded.

What is suggested in stanza 5 about a possible new relationship?

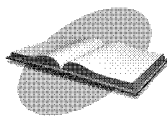
What image does Duffy create around the narrator in stanza 6? Why does she create a peaceful scene?

In what ways does Duffy portray the return to life of Lazarus, in the reaction of the narrator and her description of Lazarus himself?



Pygmalion's Bride

Research Task



Find the story of Pygmalion on the following website, which has been used and adapted by many writers and artists.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion_%28mythology%29

Read through the whole poem and then discuss the following:

- What kind of woman does the sculptor really want?
- How has Duffy used the myth to make a comment about female identity?
- Why do you think she presents Galatea as a manipulative woman, using tactics to persuade Pygmalion to leave her alone?

What point is she making about the way that men try to define women by w

Make a list of the phrases Duffy uses that can be applied equally well to a st

How does Duffy use the following techniques:

- humour
- colloquialism
- simile
- rhyme
- bathos
- metaphor

Do you think the final two lines provide a satisfactory ending to the poem?

What do they suggest about the 'relationship'?

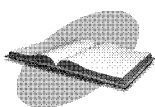
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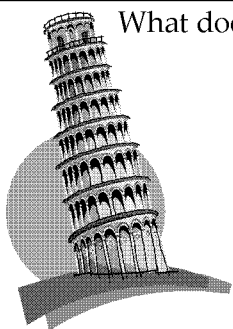
Mrs Rip van Winkle

Research Task



Read an outline of the story of Rip Van Winkle on
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rip_Van_Winkle

How does Duffy use metaphor to describe getting older, in stanza 1? What is the significance of this metaphor?



What does she do while her husband sleeps for twenty years?

What are the implications of each phrase below?

I took up food / and gave up exercise	
But what was best...farewell to sex.	
...sitting up in bed rattling Viagra.	

What point do you think Duffy is making about the position of women in modern society?

How has she subverted the image of the wife in the original story?

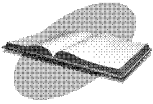
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Mrs Icarus

Research Task



Find the story of Icarus on the website below:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icarus>



Icarus seen drowning
everyone around. People
daily lives regardless

'The Fall of Icarus', by Pieter Breughel (1558).

How does Duffy use both rhyme and cumulative adjectives to produce humour in this short poem?

Read the poem, 'Muse' by W.H. Auden (follow the link to the website). What difference in approach of these two poems?

What is Duffy saying about the way that women are expected to support men?

What is implied about the different way in which women behave?

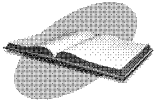
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Frau Freud

Research Task



In order to understand the poem you will need to know Freud – the father of psychoanalysis; in particular you need to know the nature of his theories on sexuality, which Duffy is using.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud

The voice of the narrator here is a very different one from that of the real Freud. He is accumulating a large number of terms for the penis. How many can you collect?

How many terms can you think of for the female equivalent organ?

What do your findings suggest about the different ways in which males and females think about sex?

How does Duffy use rhyme to create humour – and to make points?

Why do you think Duffy includes the anachronistic reference to Monica Lewinsky who she is, then visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monica_Lewinsky

How do the final two lines subvert Freud's theory of 'penis envy'?

Why do you think Duffy chose to write her poem in the form of a sonnet?

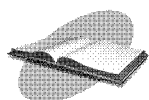
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Salome

Research Task



Find out about Salome and how she has been depicted by artists and writers by visiting <http://en.wikipedia.org>

How is Duffy's depiction of Salome showing her as a modern 'laddette' ?	How does Duffy achieve the end of the poem?

How does Duffy use each of the following to create a) humour and b) tension?

Rhyme	
Alliteration	
Onomatopoeia	

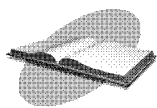
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Eurydice

Research Task



Find out about the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus was inspired from many writers and artists. As usual, Duffy is inspired on this story. Compare her viewpoint with those you find. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orpheus>

How does Duffy play with colloquial language in stanza 1?

What suggests that the poem will be as much about language and writing as about love?

What kind of character is being portrayed by the narrator in stanza 2?

What connotations/allusions can you find in:

- 'Ye Gods'
- 'knock-knock-knock at Death's door'
- 'Big O'

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In stanza 4 how does Duffy suggest the celebrity status of Orpheus?
How does she satirise it at the same time?
Stanza 5 opens with a rather crude deflation of Orpheus' supposed powers. would rather 'speak for myself'?
What, in the following stanza, is 'the deal'?
Why do you think Duffy includes the comment, 'the Gods are like publisher
What are the implications of 'Orpheus strutted his stuff'?

What is the reaction of the following to Orpheus' 'stuff'? Explain each of the

The bloodless ghosts	
Sisyphus	
Tantalus (Refer to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tantalus).	
Eurydice 'the woman in question'	

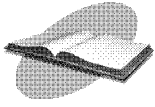
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What is each of the following?	What images does Duffy use to trapped in her marriage?
Octave	
Sestet	Why do you think Duffy reminds instructions given to Orpheus of world?
Quatrain	
Couplet	How does she make the journey
Elegy	
Limerick	In the stanza beginning 'Girls, f how does Duffy create different words and phrases?
Villanelle	
History	What is the 'inspiration' of Eury Orpheus to turn and look at her work?
Myth	How does Duffy subvert the en
What is the overall effect?	What do you think she means b they a good ending?

The Kray Sisters

Research Task



The Kray sisters are Duffy's feminist take on the famous Kray brothers. You can find out about their lives and crimes at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reginald_Kray

For a more biased (and less literate) account of the Krays, visit <http://www.thekrays.co.uk/>. This site also has an interesting history of London's East End.

In stanza 1 how does Duffy satirise the myth of the lovable cockney?

What kind of lifestyle do the girls have? How is this related to the Kray brothers?

In stanza 2 Duffy deliberately mixes facts to create myths, e.g:

- 'Cannonball Vi' is an amalgam of the Krays' grandfather and mother. The incident can be found at http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/emily_wildfire
- 'Juniper fumes' refers to juniper berries which are one of the ingredients in gin.
- Vera Lynn was a famous singer during World War 2.
- Emmeline's army were the suffragettes.
- The '14 war was the First World war.
- 'Diamond ladies' were both hard and precious.

What is the cumulative effect of all these 'stories'?

Useful Notes

Glossary of rhyming slang used in the poem:

frog and toad	road	• NB 'geezer' is cockney slang for a 'bloke' or a man.
whistle and flute	suit	• Saville Row is a street in London where the haute couture is sold. It stands for the best and most expensive in British men's clothing.
three penny bits	tits	
mince pies	eyes	
God forbids	kids	• The Austin Princess was a car similar in style to an open-top car you would use for a wedding. 'Up West' refers to the fact that most of the theatres and better restaurants are situated in the West End of London.
Vera Lynn	gin	
orchestra stalls	balls	
butchers (hook)	look	

- 'The Smoke' is a slang name for London.
- 'Clocking' is cockney slang for 'taking note of'.
- 'Our manor' refers to the area controlled by the gang - like feudal lords!

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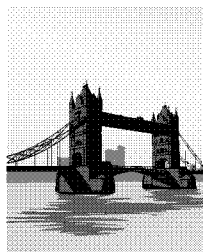
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In stanza 3 how do the twins set about achieving their ambition to be 'Queens'?

What are the connotations of the following phrases?

Belles of the balls	
holding the hand of the past	
the map of the city under our feet	
the list of places they 'clock'.	



Hungerford Bridge, originally designed by Isambard Kingdome, is the only combined railway and river bridge in London. It gives an excellent view of London by night with the lights along its banks.

Vita Sackville-West and Violet Keppel had a scandalous affair from 1910 to 1913, after their marriages. They even eloped to Paris together until their husbands found them out. Why do you think Duffy made them 'pin-ups' of the twins?

How has Duffy used caesura and enjambment in this stanza to create the effect of a narrative?

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The 'autobiography' continues to allude to the Krays – the disastrous marriage room for women in their lives and the inverted sense of values. Comment on the following:

words like 'enrolled' and 'the firm'	
the use of capitals for Engaged and Rule Number One	
the subversion of the famous RSPCA slogan	
the use of slang such as 'well out of order', 'plonker' and 'dosh'	
the names of their clubs	
the ambiguity of the 'Protection' offered to women	

Comment on the way in which Duffy uses a) slang and b) alliteration in stanza 5.	How do the photographs of celebrities reflect the poem? Look up any of the stars.
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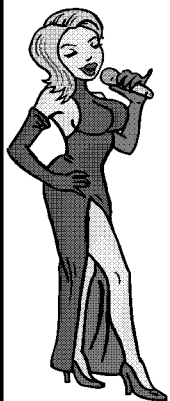
How does Duffy accurately reflect the delusion held by gangs like the Krays that this was a safer place?

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In your own words, write an account of the scene in the club as the Kray sisters



On the surface of things, it appears as though this is a big party being enjoyed. However, the phrases that Duffy uses to undercut this impression.

How does Duffy use the 1966 song by Nancy Sinatra, 'These Boots Are Made for Walkin''? You can find the lyrics for the song on <http://www.lyricsondemand.com/onehitwonders/thesebootsaremadeforwalkin> and you can watch Sinatra's performance on <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=7OU7Nezg7Ls>

How far do you think this poem is a successful parody of the legendary live performance?

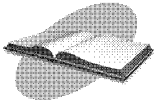
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Elvis's Twin Sister

Research Task



Read about the life and career of 'The King' at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elvis_Presley

You can listen to 'Are You Lonesome Tonight' on http://www.last.fm/music/Elvis+Presley/_/Are+You

Photocopy the poem. Highlight all the references to the religious life in one colour. Highlight all the references to Elvis or rock 'n' roll in another colour. How well do you think Duffy has put the two ideas?

In what ways is Sister Presley shown as a typical nun?

In what ways is she untypical?

What point do you think Duffy is making here about the lifestyles of the brother and sister?

Gregorian chant is also a form of music. The phrase is completed by the words 'our paschal lamb, is sacrifice' - a hymn appropriate for a church service.

What is the mood and tone of this poem?

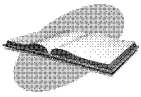
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Pope Joan

Research Task



Find out about Pope Joan on <http://en.wikipedia.org/>

Some Essential Notes

- *Transubstantiate* – refers to the RC belief that Christ becomes a real presence when the priest says 'This is my body'.
- *Frankincense* – gift of the Magi and the incense burned during Mass.
- *The Papal chair* – prior to the 'Popemobile' the pontiff was carried in a kind of sedan chair on the shoulders of strong men.
- *Cardinals... etc.* – the clergy of the church in descending order of rank.
- *Vicar of Rome* – one of the Pope's titles.
- *In nomine patris... etc.* – Latin form of the blessing.
- *Brides of the Lord* – nuns are considered the brides of Christ in a spiritual sense.

What are the connotations of the phrases below?

blue-green snakes	
nearer to heaven than cardinals...	
the closest I felt to the power of God...baby pushed out...	
in my miracle	

Why do you think the poem is written in one single sentence, although it is

In what way has Duffy used the legends and stories of Pope Joan to make a

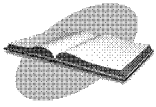
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Penelope

Research Task



Penelope was the wife of Odysseus. You can find her on Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penelope>

You should also follow the link on this page to see the tapestry.

Select the words and phrases from stanza 1 that suggest Penelope was expecting the Trojan wars finished.

Give a brief outline of the scenes in the tapestry.

Comment on the use of language in the following phrases:

childhood's bouncing ball	
a snapdragon gargling a bee	
my thimble like an acorn...umber soil	
heroism's boy	
wild embroidery of love, lust, loss, lessons learnt	
loose gold stitching of the sun	

Photocopy the poem and highlight all the words and phrases of colour. What way Duffy uses colour in the poem?

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Look at the way in which Duffy uses metaphor. Select three metaphors that they are effective.

1.

2.

3.

What two meanings can be ascribed to the phrase 'picking out' in the final s

What does the description of the woman suggest about Penelope?

In the final stanza, when Penelope hears Odysseus' footsteps outside her do performs has a number of connotations.

1. How could it be linked with the competition she organises for the suitors

2. Read the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops on <http://en.wikipedia.org/w> action could allude to this episode.

3. What is the significance of the colour of the thread she is using?

What conclusion do you reach about Duffy's re-telling of the story and the

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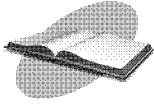
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Mrs Beast

Although linked with the story of 'Beauty and the Beast' this is not a version you will recognise!

Research Task



The faces mentioned in stanza 1 are all those of women from myths, literature and history – thus linking the different parts of the whole collection. You will need to find out about the women whose faces are all to be seen in Mrs Beast. Look on these websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_of_Troy
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/cleopatra.shtml
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/shakespeare.shtml>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nefertiti>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mona_Lisa
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Garbo
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Little_Mermaid

What do all of these women have in common?

What is Duffy's opinion of the behaviour of the little Mermaid?

How does Duffy use repetition in stanza 2 to emphasise the narrator's independence?

What are described as 'the beast' in stanza 2?

What do the last 3 lines of stanza 2 suggest about Beast and Mrs Beast? [Charlotte would cost a small fortune].

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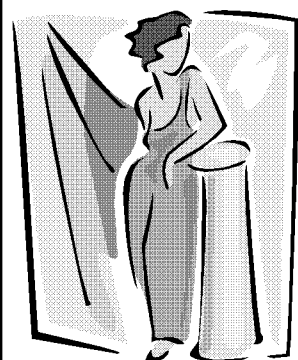
List all the words and phrases that suggest bestial qualities in stanza 3.	What are the connotations of the following
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘the lady says’ • ‘the pig in my bed was invited’
	The Poker school gives Duffy another opportunity to meet each of the other ‘beautiful and rich women’

The Poker game is described in some detail. If you are not familiar with Texas Hold ‘em, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas_hold_'em and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_to_play_Texas_hold_'em

The main variations of poker are Stud, Draw and Texas Hold ‘em. Sidewind play online poker games.

Why do you think Duffy spends so much time describing the poker game?

Why do you think the game depends on two Queen Spades’?



The line of women who were ‘unable to win’ shows the poet that they were women who were exploited in some way – most of the stories, look on the following websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eve_%28Bible%29
<http://www.literaturepage.com/read/grimms-fairy-tale>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marilyn_Monroe
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessie_Smith
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluebeard>
<http://tudorhistory.org/wives/>

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Why do you think Diana, Princess of Wales might have been included?	The ultimate woman they toast, Fay Wray, King Kong movie. Wi
---------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

Comment on the use of language in the following phrases:

those tragic girls in my head	
taste the stars on the tip of my tongue	
thumbing my pearls, the tears of Mary...like a rosary	
the captive beautiful, the wives	
the moon was a hand mirror breathed on by a Queen	
My breath was a chiffon scarf for an elegant ghost	
Let the less-loving one be me.	

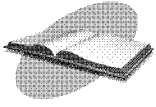
What do you think Duffy is saying about male and female expectations as ci legends?

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Demeter

Research Task



Read the story of Demeter and Persephone on

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/d/demeter.html>

The opening lines of the poem seem to express both Demeter's grief at her daughter's disappearance and her feelings before the birth of her daughter. What kind of poetry did she write?



What does the colloquial phrase 'to break the ice' mean? How is Duffy using it here?

How does Duffy use the metaphor of 'walking across the surface of the earth' to create a cathartic effect?

How does the mood of the poem change in stanza 3?

How does Duffy create tension in this stanza?

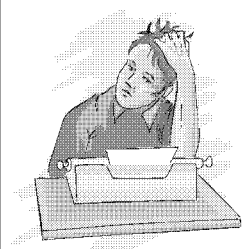
Why has the poet broken up the clause 'walking across the fields' with 'my daughter'?

Why has she come 'from a long, long way'?

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What the frozen writer of the first two stanzas was unable to achieve just by being there – the emotional pathetic fallacy, and rounded off with a picture of the poet who appears to be smiling, as the upturned shape of the crescent moon suggests the beginning of a new cycle, suggests.

The poem is written in sonnet form, but in an unusual layout. What is the layout? How is this form appropriate to the meaning?

How does the feeling of Demeter for Persephone contrast with the feeling of Persephone for her mother?



The poem works on several levels of meaning. Comment on each of them.

How does the poem explore the ancient myth of Demeter and Persephone?	
How does it explore the feelings of the poet for her daughter?	
How does it explore the act of creating a poem?	

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Grouping the Poems

There are several ways of grouping the poems. Look at the headings in the table below and group the poems you think belong in each category.

<i>Mythology</i>	
<i>The Bible</i>	<i>Literature</i>

Each of these groups may seem to be different, but when we look closely at them we can see how they all incorporate elements of myth or legend, in one way or another. The historical figure of Mary Queen of Scots was 'legendary' because of the way that writers or the media have created an image of her. She was demonised into 'the devil's wife' by the newspaper images of her and the stories of her terrible crimes every time there was a suggestion about her release. The Kray brothers became the ethos of the East End gang in their own lifetimes, while Elvis Presley is 'the King'. Darwin and Freud were the 'fathers' of modern evolutionary theory / psychoanalysis, respectively. Anne Hathaway and the 'second best bed' have been a subject of fascination, while the story of 'Pope Joan' has been revived by feminists seeking to argue against the dominance of the catholic church. The figures from literature / media have become a part of modern culture as familiar to most people as the figures from Greek and Roman legends.

If we view the whole collection in this way, it becomes clear that Duffy has a different viewpoint; one that sees the originally masculine orientation of the 'mythologising'. Her viewpoint is resolutely human, female and modern and her language and style to match.

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An alternative set of groupings can be seen here. Again, write the poems un

<p><i>Wives</i></p>	<p><i>Female</i></p>
	<p><i>Female</i></p>

In the first group of poems, the very fact that the women are known by their husbands' names is a statement of Duffy's intention. Duffy is trying to give them a voice. The traditional dominance of male figures in literature is overshadowed by the female perspective of things. The conventionally heroic male figure is turned upside down by the voices given to their wives by Carol Ann Duffy. In these stories we see these male figures not as heroic but as very unimpressive, such as the brief comments of Mrs Darwin and Mrs Icarus.

The poems in the second group are far more varied in tone, ranging from the innocent of Little Red-Cap, through the frightening vindictiveness of Circe, to the more complex of women who have been victims, those who have been happy without men, those who have real love and those who have destroyed men.

At the centre of the collection is a meditation on the relationships between men and women for women to find a voice. In these poems they have found a number of voices, all the same because they are the voice of the writer. They cover a range of emotions, from desire, loneliness, grief, loss, love, anxiety, and contentment.

The poems in the final group show Duffy exploring how a woman might re-occupy a man. Queen Kong uses very different methods to get her man. Mrs. Aesop's twin sister is happy and fulfilled without the need for fame or money. Mrs. Aesop uses her power to protect women. Only Queen Herod reacts in the same way as her husband. For different reasons, such as the fierce protective love of a mother for a daughter.

Create lists of your own for the themes and ideas within the poems, e.g. how women are the victims of men (Queen Herod, Thetis, Demeter) or how women are the victims of men (Mrs. Aesop, Mrs Midas, Mrs Icarus, Mrs Faust, Penelope, Eurydice, etc.)

Other ideas include 'jealousy' (Mrs Tiresias, Mrs Faust, Mrs Quasimodo) like Sisyphus, Queen Kong, Circe,) what happens when women behave like men (Little Red-Cap) selfishness – usually shown by men but sometimes by women (Mrs Faust, Circe) the joy of true love (Anne Hathaway, Demeter, Thetis, Poppy) content without men (Mrs Rip van Winkle, Pygmalion's Bride, Penelope, Eurydice) Add your own thoughts to your lists.

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The World's Wife – Poetic Technique

Like all poets, Carol Ann Duffy uses a variety of techniques to create the effect. The most noticeable of these is her use of colloquial language and slang. Duffy is spoken by her readers and that sounds natural when read aloud. She does not use a type of 'poetic language' which is correct. Her poems here are mainly in the voice of women who have found their voice through her in the modern world, and although characters are distinct, their voices tend to sound the same. She tends to juxtapose metaphors, as in *Little Red-Cap*:

*I stitched him up.
Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, and*

Often the slang phrases are used as bathos, when she has built up the public image as in *Eurydice*, when the entrancing power of Orpheus' art on the natural world and the image is destroyed by the single word:

Bollocks.

Often they are used for comic effect as in the brief summary of Mrs Faust's life:

*shacked up, split up,
made up, hitched up*

or in *Frau Freud*, where the piling up of slang terms for the penis to prove it is for that member ends in the word 'pity'.

Duffy has fun with *The Kray Sisters* where she can use rhyming slang and gangster 'respect' and 'well out of order' to give an authentic voice to her London gangster places where she mixes formal and informal diction to witty effect, for example:

*Just picture my face
when I heard
Ye Gods
a familiar knock-knock-knock at Death's door.
Him.
Big O.*

In addition, she makes use of popular sayings, clichés or proverbs, which add to the conversational tone, as do the one word sentences which are common in this style. In this poem here is *Mrs Aesop* where the whole text is based around tales with a moral, and an inversion at the end, where the 'tables are turned' and the moral is used against the teller. Duffy uses these maxims to create double meanings as in *Thetis* where talk is the opposite of *Stuff that*.

She also uses them to create comic emphasis by using several synonymous words for death in *Eurydice*:

*I was dead. Deceased.
I was Resting in Peace. Passé. Late.
Past my sell-by date.*

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They are used so frequently within the poems that they become part of the everyday speech, although we can be sure that Carol Ann Duffy has chosen them carefully. Rhythmically the poems work on the cadences of normal speech, just as Shakespeare uses different methods to obtain their effects. Some of the poems here work on the rhythm of *Sisyphus* or *Salome* to create their comic effects, others, like *Thetis* use the rhythm of a desperate speed. Other poems contain very little rhyme, except where a poet like *Quasimodo* when her husband loses interest and looks at her

with no more love than stone / I should have known

The rhymes can also be used for emphasis, as in *Mrs Faust*, where Duffy rhymes 'stone' with 'known'. Other poems use various forms of sound patterning (alliteration, assonance, sibilance) to create their rhythmic effects. The use of patterns of sounds is much clearer when the poems are read aloud because poems work on sound and rhythm in a similar way to music. Particular to this form of verse, rather than having a conventional form or rhyme scheme, the metre is often based on an internal rhythm which is not always obvious to a reader. For example, in *Queen Herod* the lines contain a significant amount of sibilance, a pattern that conveys the sound of the sea as it comes from the 'second best bed'. The use of assonance in *Queen Kong* where the poet uses 'ee' to link the idea of the watcher and the sleeper.

*I remember peeping in at his skyscraper room
and seeing him fast asleep.*

Duffy uses various poetic forms and metres within the book. Some poems are in the traditional pentameter form, like *Little Red-Cap*, *Anne Hathaway* and *The Kray Sisters*, but others may vary between stanzas. Although the stanza breaks may seem arbitrary, Duffy has crafted them carefully, using enjambment where she wants to link lines together where a break is intended. This is shown in *Mrs Beast* where the first stanza ends and the second starts with 'is better.' The two stanzas are separate in that the first deals with the danger of trusting princes and the second with the superiority of beasts, but the two are linked by the contrast. It also puts sex at the heart of the relationship! The remaining stanzas continue the contrast as the subject clearly changes from beast and sex to poker and then from the danger of women who need prayers. She also uses the sonnet form four times. In *Annex* is a parody of Shakespeare and both this and *Demeter* are true love poems. In *For the Unfaithful* in the 'Bible' section of *The Devil's Wife* it shows a breakdown, not only of a

Copy out and complete the grid – you will need to make space for each poem.

Poem	Form	Metre	Rhyme
Little Red-Cap			
Thetis			
Queen Herod			
Mrs Midas			
Mrs Tiresias			
Pilate's Wife			
Mrs Aesop			

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Writing About Poetic Techniques in the E

Poems to use for this exercise

Little Red-Cap
Thetis
Queen Herod
Mrs Midas
Mrs Tiresias
Pilate's Wife
Mrs Aesop

Find several examples from the above poems that you could use in the exam
her poems work.

Looking at Duffy's use of poetic techniques:

- Use of colloquial / slang language – effect created?
- Use of popular proverbs or sayings – effect created?
- Use of rhyme – full, internal, half rhyme – effect created?
- Use of sound patterning; alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia
- Use of enjambment and caesura – effect created?
- Use of imagery, connotations, transferred epithet – effects created?
- Use of symbol, metaphor, allegory, allusion, motif – effects created?
- Use of metre – naturalistic, rhythmic, long, short, slow, fast, varied – how
the poem / stanza / lines?
- How humour is used – through rhyme, absurdity, unusual viewpoint, the
wordplay, puns, double entendres, incongruity, etc.

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Looking at Interpretations by other Readers

Assessment Objective 3 asks you to 'explore connections and comparisons between texts informed by the interpretations of other readers.'

Of course you will have plenty of opportunity to discuss these poems within your own different responses. However, you may also want to know how professional readers and students from other schools have responded to the collection.

Divide into four groups:

- Group A will analyse the responses of professional reviewers.
- Group B will analyse the responses of scholars studying Duffy's work.
- Group C will analyse the responses of readers on the Amazon website.
- Group D will analyse the responses of other AS students.

You will need to assess the overall impact of the poems in terms of the poet's self-disparagement by the writers in your group and prepare useful handouts for your group that will enable them to include a brief summary of ideas in an exam essay for AO3. You will also see that there are quotations from Carol Ann Duffy in the

Professional Reviews

'...this style of writing has strong links with the senses. Duffy's poetry is not only, nevertheless sensual and often of a very personal nature; her best-known poems deal with her mother, and her sexual attitudes.'

Adam Wilson from 'Carol Ann Duffy in the 1990s'

'It sparkles with wit, intelligence and an impressive lightness of touch, while exploring deep emotional experiences: loneliness, jealousy, self-loathing, desire, the fierce control of the female.'

'Carol Ann Duffy plays with words the way Mozart played with notes. Duffy's poetry, like composing, is highly sophisticated in both concept and execution, economically and strangely light despite its substance.'

'*The World's Wife*' is the most radical book of poetry to be published for years. It undermines the myths by which masculinity has been sustained for millennia.'

If Duffy can do this for thirty male archetypes, she can do it for all of them. It is an emotional territory as Susan Faludi's *Stiffed* but, because it deals with myths, I suspect the book will win no awards except those awarded to women by women. It stands it from standing as the major achievement of British poetry at this end of the

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Scholars

'Duffy's interest [is] in the ways in which women struggle with and strategise

Getting the voice right: sexuality and embodiment

G

'...[the poems] though often presented humorously and with apparent flippant critique of traditional discourses about gender, identity and difference.'

V. Lauryl Tu

'Behind Every Great Man': Carol Ann Duffy

'Perhaps it is all too easy to unpack patriarchy and laugh at the myriad of poems in *The World's Wife*' but more difficult to ascertain how they have managed to prolong.'

Patriarchy, Power and the Psychopath

Amazon Reviews

'Humour is the abundant keynote of this accessible collection.'

'The universality attributed to the "world's wife" risks becoming a feminist cliché. Some poems are impeccable, and some of these poems boast astonishing conceits.'

Christina Pugh for

'I felt that the humour was very dark, in places the humour seemed morbid, but it was at things which are actually quite disturbing if you think more about it.'

'Thanks Carol, you made me realise what idiots men are. And you didn't do what that feminists do.'

'The many relationship breakdowns in these poems are not always anti-marriage. Sometimes things happen. Sometimes the female characters are not so nice; sometimes it's just that Duffy happens to be writing about women and marriage, which she does with a touch of humour.'

AS Students on the Internet

'The World's Wife is sly, clever, pithy, very funny, sometimes very thought-provoking. Somehow it manages to be both erudite and accessible. Smashing stuff.'

'The World's Wife, particularly seen in Mrs Beast is an ode to man-hating. For those who wish to appear mature by not being offended by the taboo subjects use irony and unoriginal. Reversing sexism is no way to fight it. If a man had written it, he'd be finished.'

'I am reading Carol Ann Duffy, *The World's Wife* for my A level – Lively and witty. The humour Duffy brings out the voice of women in myth, however it can be too much. I feel sick with the dirty comments and feel that the poet is too extreme.'

'Carol Ann Duffy's collection, *The World's Wife* has a lot going for it, there's and I particularly like the way in which Duffy has modernised traditional most were Demeter, Mrs Faust, Queen Kong and The Devil's Wife. However and this is it. I'm sure most of those who have read it will agree with me that is not even funny after a while. I'm sure we all love the odd gender joke but know that there have been great inequalities for women and they have had suffering. But being a member of the female species, even I found some of them they're all fantastic if read separately but as a collection they are a bit OTT.'

'I think that *The World's Wife* collection by Carol Ann Duffy is quite good a moment in my English Lit class. Her ideas might be a bit over the top but so as being inferior to men (even now in the 21st century) and have not gotten Duffy just wants to involve the women and makes sure that their voice is heard.'

Carol Ann Duffy on 'The World's Wife'

'I think the poems are looking for the missing truth, rather than accepting the you look at King Kong, which is one of my favourite movies, it's not necessarily go about things. I thought that if a woman gorilla had fallen in love with a more subtle about it.'

'So it's looking for missing or hidden or unspoken truths in old stories. It was just gone through a list of favourite tales and revised them. You had to find in the story. That's why it took so long to write. Each poem had to be personal kind of autobiographical element in it, whether it had happened to me or was intellectual truth.'

'It's meant to be funny, but there's also the darker side of love - like Mrs Queen with the hunchback turns nasty when he abuses the way she looks]. I tried to'

'I wanted to use history and myth and popular culture and elements from to anchor it in a deeply personal soil and make an entertainment.'

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