Poetry Anthology (C720)
for first assessment 2027

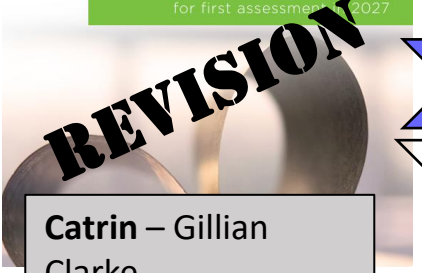
REVISION

Poetry Anthology Revision:

	What's it about?	Key quotes.	Key context.
The Schoolboy – William Blake	The poem critiques formal education as stifling to a child's natural joy and connection to nature. The poem questions how a child can ever be happy and free if they are trapped in school.	"I love to rise in a summer morn" "How can the bird that is born for joy / Sit in a cage and sing?" "O! it drives all joy away" "Under a cruel eye outworn" "Nor in my book can I take delight"	• William Blake had little formal education, leaving school at 10, then studying drawing, • He gained very little recognition in his lifetime. • He is considered an important Romantic poet.
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud – William Wordsworth	The speaker recalls seeing a field of golden daffodils by a lake. The daffodils appear to dance joyfully in the breeze, creating a lasting impression on the speaker. Later, when he feels lonely or contemplative, the memory of the daffodils brings him joy and comfort.	"I wandered lonely as a cloud" "A host of golden daffodils" "Fluttering and dancing in the breeze" "They stretched in never-ending line" "And then my heart with pleasure fills"	• He was a key figure of the Romantic movement. • Wordsworth grew up in the Lake District. • Believed in nature's power to heal and inspire. • The poem was inspired by a walk he took with his sister in 1802 near Ullswater.
Cousin Kate – Christina Rossetti	The poem is about a girl who is taken advantage of by a lord. She gets pregnant but is abandoned, and shunned by her neighbours. The lord then marries her cousin, Kate. Kate held on to her purity. However, the narrator is smug and triumphant as she is the one with a child.	"He wore me like a golden knot" "Your love was writ in sand" "I sit and howl in dust" "You grew more fair than I" "My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride	• The poem highlights Victorian double standards. • Rossetti wrote Cousin Kate in 1862 during the Victorian period, when women were thought to be inferior to men. • Rossetti volunteered at a shelter for fallen women.
Sonnet 29 – Elizabeth Barrett-Browning	The speaker writes directly to her love, expressing how she longs for them to be together. She uses an extended metaphor of wild vines to represent her thoughts, wrapping around the tree to symbolise how they love each other.	"I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud" "Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should" "I do not think of thee—I am too near thee" "Burst, shattered, everywhere!" "I am too near thee"	• The poem would have been seen as risqué in the strict moral code of Victorian society. • Unhappy youth: very poor health, her father was a tyrant and her brother drowned. • Eloped with Robert after a secret courtship.
Drummer Hodge – Thomas Hardy	'Drummer Hodge' describes the hasty burial of a drummer boy killed in the Boer War, in a landscape that was utterly alien to him. Hardy reflects on the fact that Hodge will never see England again.	"They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest / Uncoffined" "His homely Northern breast and brain" "Yet portion of that unknown plain / Will Hodge for ever be" "Strange-eyed constellations reign / His stars eternally" "Fresh from his Wessex home"	• Published in 1899, during the Second Boer War in what became South Africa. This was a war between the Boers, and the British Empire. • Hardy was inspired to write the poem after reading about a local boy who was killed in the war.
Disabled – Wilfred Owen	A poignant portrayal of a young soldier who returns from war physically and emotionally broken. The poem tracks the thoughts and feelings that the soldier experiences as he deals with the way his life has been changed forever.	"He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark" "All of them touch him like some queer disease." "Why don't they come and put him to bed?" "Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn" "Smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years."	• Born in 1893 and died in 1918. • His poetry is characterised by powerful descriptions of the conditions faced by soldiers in the trenches. • He wrote 'Disabled' in 1917 after witnessing the brutal effects of war.
I Shall Return – Claude McKay	In I Shall Return, the speaker vows to return to their homeland, anticipating the joy they would feel at seeing the natural beauty of this place once again. They also imagine hearing the music and seeing the dancing and interaction of people in the community.	"I shall return again; I shall return" "golden noon the forest fires burn," "And realize once more my thousand dreams" "Stray melodies of dim remembered runes." "To ease my mind of long, long years of pain."	• McKay migrated from rural Jamaica to the USA. • However, although McKay travelled extensively, he never did return to Jamaica. • Published in the collection Harlem Shadows in 1922 - a key work in the Harlem Renaissance.
Decomposition – Zulfikar Ghose	The poem is about how the speaker sees a photograph he has taken of an old beggar sleeping on the street in Bombay. It looks as if his body is already decomposing and decaying. He regrets having taken the picture, as he realises he should not exploit a person's suffering.	"His arms and legs could be cracks in the stone," "Brain-washed by the sun into exhaustion," "he lies veined into stone, a fossil man." "chides me now for my / presumption at attempting to compose / art of his hunger and solitude."	• The poem is set in Bombay - India's largest and most densely populated city. • Born in India and lived in Pakistan, UK and US. • He is deeply aware of different perspectives. • He often discusses ideas around the Global South.

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Catrin – Gillian Clarke	The poet describes how she remembers the birth of her daughter and the struggles of labour as they both strove to break free of each other. The second stanza is set when Catrin is growing up and shows the teenage confrontations and rebellions as she pushes the boundaries set by her mother.	"I can remember you, child" "Our first fierce confrontation" "Still I am fighting you off" "The tight red rope of love" "From the heart's pool that old rope"	• Catrin was written in 1978. • It is an autobiographical account of the birth of her daughter, Catrin, and their relationship as the daughter grows up. • It is quite a feminist poem as Clarke wanted to show women voicing their experiences.
Blackberry Picking – Seamus Heaney	The speaker looks back to childhood, describing how the taste of the first mature berries gave them the urge to pick more. They recall how they filled any containers they could find. They stored their haul in an old bathtub in a cattle shed, but soon the berries began to rot and turn sour.	"At first, just one, a glossy purple clot" "Summer's blood was in it" "We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre" "The juice was stinking too" "I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not"	• Included in Death of a Naturalist, in 1966. • Heaney was a traditionalist. • His early poetry explored rural life and nature. • He was interested in exploring Irish culture. • Northern Ireland was divided by the violent political conflict known as the Troubles.
Kamikaze – Beatrice Garland	The poem is about a kamikaze pilot failing to complete a suicide bombing mission during WW2. The pilot looks out of his plane and remembers the beauty and power of nature. On his return, he is shunned and rejected by his family and society. They believe his actions are cowardly.	"Her father embarked at sunrise" "He must have looked far down / at the little fishing boats" "my mother never spoke again" "He no longer existed" "Which had been the better way to die"	• Kamikazes were suicide bombing missions in WW2 (1939–1945). • It was considered to be a patriotic way to die. • Written in 2013 in 'The Invention of Fireworks'. • In her poetry, Garland often explores the themes of life and death in the natural world.
War Photographer – Carol Ann Duffy	The poem describes the photographer developing photographs. The poem shows the contrast between 'rural England' and normal life with the atrocities he has seen. As the picture develops, he remembers the suffering. It describes how readers will only respond to pictures of suffering for a split second.	"Spools of suffering set out in ordered rows" "A hundred agonies in black-and-white" "The reader's eyeballs prick / with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers" "He stares impassively at where / he earns his living and they do not care."	• The poem refers to real-life conflicts. 'Belfast' refers to the Northern Ireland. • 'Beirut' is a reference to The Siege of Beirut, in the Lebanon War in 1982. • 'Phnom Penh' is the capital of Cambodia, where a genocide occurred between 1975 and 1979.
Dusting the Phone – Jackie Kay	The speaker describes the anxiety of waiting for a phone call from a lover. The act of dusting the phone becomes symbolic of their obsessive longing, frustration, and the desire for connection. The speaker's fixation on the phone symbolises their emotional vulnerability and unfulfilled desires.	"I am spending my time imagining the worst that could happen." "The future is a long gloved hand. An empty cup." "Silver service. I polish it. I dress for it." "Your voice / disappears into my lonely cotton sheets."	• Kay explores modern relationships and the way contemporary forms of communication, like phones, reflect emotional experiences. • Growing up in a politically engaged household, Kay developed a strong sense of social justice and identity, which often informs her writing.
Remains – Simon Armitage	The poem is narrated by Guardsman Tromans, one of the soldiers involved. He is deeply affected by what happened and feels overwhelmed with guilt and regret. The memory haunts him. In an attempt to cope, he returns to alcohol and drugs, but nothing helps — he remains tormented by his actions.	"On another occasion, we got sent out" "Probably armed, possibly not" "His bloody life in my bloody hands" "The drink and the drugs won't flush him out" "dug in behind enemy lines"	• Simon Armitage was involved with a documentary on Channel 4 (The Not Dead). • He wanted to increase awareness of PTSD and create sympathy and understanding for soldiers. • The poem is based on Guardsman Tromans - a soldier in Iraq in 2023 and suffered from PTSD.
Origin Story – Eve L Ewing	The poem is autobiographical and the speaker in the poem is the poet herself. Ewing recounts various aspects of her mother and father's lives as young adults and how they met. She goes on to explore the nature of love, comparing this to a comic book.	"met at the Greyhound bus station / in the mid-eighties in Chicago." "my mother, all thick glass and afro puff" "my father, all sleeveless and soft eye" "love is like a comic book. it's fragile." "love is paper."	• The poem was published in 2017 at a time of a growing understanding of the need to celebrate and record the lived experiences of Black people. • Comics are cheaply bought and widely disposed of once they had been read. • Ewing has written several Marvel comic titles.