

OCR

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

**TOWARDS A WORLD UNKNOWN**

**UPDATED EDITION: SEPTEMBER 2020**

OXFORD



**OCR**

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

# **TOWARDS A WORLD UNKNOWN**

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations)  
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA  
© Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organisation. This book must not be circulated in any other binding or cover and this same condition must be imposed on any acquirer.

ISBN 978 019 834090 4

Designed and produced by Oxford University Press

Printed by Rotolito SpA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for permission to reprint the following copyright material in this anthology.

**John Agard:** 'Flag' from *Half-caste and Other Poems* (Hodder Children's Books, 2004), copyright © John Agard 2004, reproduced by permission of the publishers, an imprint of Hachette Children's Books, 338 Euston Road, London NE1 3BH.

**Sujata Bhatt:** 'Partition' from *Augatora* (Carcanet, 2000), reproduced by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd.

**Kate Clanchy:** 'Love' from *Newborn: poems on Motherhood* (Picador, 2004), copyright © Kate Clanchy 2004, reproduced by permission of Pan Macmillan, a division of the Macmillan Publishing Group.

**Gillian Clarke:** 'Lament' and 'Cold Knap Lake' from *Collected Poems* (Carcanet, 1997), reproduced by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd.

**Imtiaz Dharker:** 'Honour Killing' from *I Speak for the Devil* (Bloodaxe, 2001), reproduced by permission of Bloodaxe Books.

**Emily Dickinson:** "There's a certain slant of light", poem J258/F320 from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* edited by Thomas H Johnson (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, reproduced by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College.

**Carol Ann Duffy:** 'Warming Her Pearls' from *The Other Country* (Anvil, 1990), copyright © Carol Ann Duffy 1990, reproduced by permission of Anvil Press Poetry.

**James Fenton:** 'In Paris With You' from *Out of Danger* (Penguin, 1993), copyright © James Fenton 1993, reproduced by permission of United Agents, on behalf of James Fenton.

**Robert Frost:** 'Out Out' from *The Poetry of Robert Frost* edited by Edward Connery Lathem (Jonathan Cape, 1972), reproduced by permission of The Random House Group Ltd.

**Thom Gunn:** 'Baby Song' from *Collected Poems* (Faber, 1993), reproduced by permission of Faber & Faber Ltd.

**Tony Harrison:** 'Long Distance II' from *Collected Poems* (Penguin, 1984), reproduced by permission of the author.

**Seamus Heaney:** 'Punishment' from *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966-1996* (Faber, 2013), reproduced by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd.

**Jackie Kay:** 'Dusting the Phone' from *Darling: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, 2007), reproduced by permission of Bloodaxe Books.

**Yusef Komunyakaa:** 'Venus's-flytraps' from *Pleasure Dome: New and Collected Poems* (Wesleyan University Press, 2001), copyright © Yusef Komunyakaa 2001, reproduced by permission of Wesleyan University Press.

**Philip Larkin:** 'An Arundel Tomb' from *The Complete Poems* (Faber, 2012), reproduced by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd.

**Denise Levertov:** 'What Were They Like' from *Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, 1986), reproduced by permission of Bloodaxe Books.

**Liz Lochhead:** 'I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine' from *Dreaming Frankenstein and Collected Poems 1967-1984* (Polygon, 2003), copyright © Liz Lochhead 2003, reproduced by permission of Polygon, an imprint of Birlinn Ltd ([www.birlinn.co.uk](http://www.birlinn.co.uk)).

**Sharon Olds:** 'My First Weeks' from *The Wellspring* (Jonathan Cape, 1996), reproduced by permission of The Random House Group Ltd.

**Sylvia Plath:** 'Morning Song' and 'You're' from *Collected Poems* (Faber, 1981), reproduced by permission of Faber & Faber Ltd.

**Anne Sexton:** 'Red Roses' from *The Complete Poems* (Houghton Mifflin, 1981), copyright © Anne Sexton 1981, reproduced by permission of SLL/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.

**Jo Shapcott:** 'Phrase Book' from *Her Book: Poems 1988-1998* (Faber, 2000), reproduced by permission of Faber & Faber Ltd.

**Owen Sheers:** 'Farther' from *Skirrid Hill* (Seren, 2004), copyright © Owen Sheers 2004, reproduced by permission of the author c/o Rogers Coleridge & White Ltd, 20 Powis Mews, London W11 1JN.

**Derek Walcott:** 'Love After Love' from *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (Faber, 1992), copyright © Derek Walcott 1986, reproduced by permission of Faber & Faber Ltd.

We have made every effort to trace and contact all copyright holders before publication. If notified, the publisher will rectify any errors or omissions at the earliest opportunity.

# Introduction

*Towards a World Unknown* is OCR's poetry anthology designed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum Programme of Study and of the Department for Education Subject Criteria for GCSE English Literature, for first teaching from September 2015.

There are three themed poetry clusters to choose from in the anthology, each comprising 15 literary heritage and modern poems as well as poems from around the world. The poems have been carefully selected to provide a balanced and diverse collection for study.

## **Using *Towards a World Unknown* with the OCR J352 GCSE English Literature specification**

### **Component J352/02 Exploring poetry and Shakespeare**

For the poetry section of the exam, candidates choose one themed poetry cluster for study from:

- Love and Relationships
- Conflict
- Youth and Age

Students will also need to read poetry more widely related to their chosen theme, to prepare for a comparison task based on a poem they have studied in *Towards a World Unknown* and a thematically linked unseen poem.

Detailed information can be found in the OCR specification and support materials at [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk).

There will be creative, digital teacher resources to accompany *Towards a World Unknown*, also at [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk).

This anthology was updated in 2020 so that all poems align with the editions provided on page 2. No poems have been added or removed in this update.



# Contents

## Love and Relationships

A Song	Helen Maria Williams	7
Bright Star	John Keats	8
Now	Robert Browning	8
Love and Friendship	Emily Brontë	9
A Broken Appointment	Thomas Hardy	9
Fin de Fête	Charlotte Mew	10
The Sorrow of True Love	Edward Thomas	10
An Arundel Tomb	Philip Larkin	11
Love After Love	Derek Walcott	12
Morning Song	Sylvia Plath	12
Long Distance II	Tony Harrison	13
I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine	Liz Lochhead	14
In Paris With You	James Fenton	15
Warming Her Pearls	Carol Ann Duffy	16
Dusting the Phone	Jackie Kay	17

## Conflict

A Poison Tree	William Blake	18
Envy	Mary Lamb	19
Boat Stealing (from 1799 Prelude)	William Wordsworth	20
The Destruction of Sennacherib	Lord Byron	21
There's a Certain Slant of Light	Emily Dickinson	22
The Man He Killed	Thomas Hardy	22
Anthem for Doomed Youth	Wilfred Owen	23
Vergissmeinnicht	Keith Douglas	24
What Were They Like?	Denise Levertov	25
Lament	Gillian Clarke	26
Punishment	Seamus Heaney	27
Flag	John Agard	28
Phrase Book	Jo Shapcott	28
Honour Killing	Imtiaz Dharker	30
Partition	Sujata Bhatt	31

## Youth and Age

Holy Thursday	William Blake	32
When I have fears that I may cease to be	John Keats	33
The Bluebell	Anne Brontë	34
Midnight on the Great Western	Thomas Hardy	35
Spring and Fall: to a Young Child	Gerard Manley Hopkins	36
Ode	Arthur O'Shaughnessy	36
Out, Out-	Robert Frost	37
Red Roses	Anne Sexton	38
Baby Song	Thom Gunn	39
You're	Sylvia Plath	40
Cold Knap Lake	Gillian Clarke	40
My First Weeks	Sharon Olds	41
Venus's-flytraps	Yusef Komunyakaa	42
Love	Kate Clanchy	43
Farther	Owen Sheers	44





# Love and Relationships

## A Song

I

1 No riches from his scanty store  
My lover could impart;  
He gave a boon I valued more —  
He gave me all his heart!

II

5 His soul sincere, his generous worth,  
Might well this bosom move;  
And when I asked for bliss on earth,  
I only meant his love.

III

But now for me, in search of gain  
10 From shore to shore he flies;  
Why wander riches to obtain,  
When love is all I prize?

IV

The frugal meal, the lowly cot  
If blest my love with thee!  
15 That simple fare, that humble lot,  
Were more than wealth to me.

V

While he the dangerous ocean braves,  
My tears but vainly flow:  
Is pity in the faithless waves  
20 To which I pour my woe?

VI

The night is dark, the waters deep,  
Yet soft the billows roll;  
Alas! at every breeze I weep —  
The storm is in my soul.

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS  
(1761–1827)

## Bright Star

- 1 Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,  
5 The moving waters at their priestlike task  
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,  
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
No – yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,  
10 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever – or else swoon to death.

JOHN KEATS  
(1795–1821)

## Now

- 1 Out of your whole life give but a moment!  
All of your life that has gone before,  
All to come after it, – so you ignore  
So you make perfect the present, – condense,  
5 In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,  
Thought and feeling and soul and sense –  
Merged in a moment which gives me at last  
You around me for once, you beneath me, above me –  
Me – sure that despite of time future, time past, –  
10 This tick of our life-time's one moment you love me!  
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet –  
The moment eternal – just that and no more –  
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core  
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

ROBERT BROWNING  
(1812–1889)

## Love and Friendship

1 Love is like the wild rose-briar,  
 Friendship like the holly-tree—  
 The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms  
 But which will bloom most constantly?

5 The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,  
 Its summer blossoms scent the air;  
 Yet wait till winter comes again  
 And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now  
 10 And deck thee with the holly's sheen,  
 That when December blights thy brow  
 He still may leave thy garland green.

EMILY BRONTË  
 (1818–1848)

## A Broken Appointment

1 You did not come,  
 And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb.  
 Yet less for loss of your dear presence there  
 Than that I thus found lacking in your make  
 5 That high compassion which can overbear  
 Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake  
 Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,  
 You did not come.

You love not me,  
 10 And love alone can lend you loyalty;  
 – I know and knew it. But, unto the store  
 Of human deeds divine in all but name,  
 Was it not worth a little hour or more  
 To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came  
 15 To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be  
 You love not me.

THOMAS HARDY  
 (1840–1928)

## Fin de Fête

- 1 Sweetheart, for such a day  
    One mustn't grudge the score;  
Here, then, it's all to pay,  
    It's Good-night at the door.
- 5 Good-night and good dreams to you,—  
    Do you remember the picture-book thieves  
Who left two children sleeping in a wood the long night through,  
    And how the birds came down and covered them with leaves?
- So you and I should have slept,—But now,  
10 Oh, what a lonely head!  
With just the shadow of a waving bough  
    In the moonlight over your bed.

CHARLOTTE MEW  
(1869–1928)

## The Sorrow of True Love

- 1 The sorrow of true love is a great sorrow  
And true love parting blackens a bright morrow:  
Yet almost they equal joys, since their despair  
Is but hope blinded by its tears, and clear
- 5 Above the storm the heavens wait to be seen.  
But greater sorrow from less love has been  
That can mistake lack of despair for hope  
And knows not tempest and the perfect scope  
Of summer, but a frozen drizzle perpetual
- 10 Of drops that from remorse and pity fall  
And cannot ever shine in the sun or thaw,  
Removed eternally from the sun's law.

EDWARD THOMAS  
(1878–1917)

## An Arundel Tomb

1 Side by side, their faces blurred,  
 The earl and countess lie in stone,  
 Their proper habits vaguely shown  
 As jointed armour, stiffened pleat,  
 5 And that faint hint of the absurd—  
 The little dogs under their feet.

Such plainness of the pre-baroque  
 Hardly involves the eye, until  
 It meets his left-hand gauntlet, still  
 10 Clasped empty in the other; and  
 One sees, with a sharp tender shock,  
 His hand withdrawn, holding her hand.

They would not think to lie so long.  
 Such faithfulness in effigy  
 15 Was just a detail friends would see:  
 A sculptor's sweet commissioned grace  
 Thrown off in helping to prolong  
 The Latin names around the base.

They would not guess how early in  
 20 Their supine stationary voyage  
 The air would change to soundless damage,  
 Turn the old tenantry away;  
 How soon succeeding eyes begin  
 To look, not read. Rigidly they

25 Persisted, linked, through lengths and breadths  
 Of time. Snow fell, undated. Light  
 Each summer thronged the glass. A bright  
 Litter of birdcalls strewed the same  
 Bone-riddled ground. And up the paths  
 30 The endless altered people came,  
 Washing at their identity.  
 Now, helpless in the hollow of  
 An unarmorial age, a trough  
 Of smoke in slow suspended skeins  
 35 Above their scrap of history,  
 Only an attitude remains:

Time has transfigured them into  
 Untruth. The stone fidelity  
 They hardly meant has come to be  
 40 Their final blazon, and to prove  
 Our almost-instinct almost true:  
 What will survive of us is love.

PHILIP LARKIN  
 (1922–1985)

## Love After Love

1 The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror,  
5 and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
  
and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
  
10 all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
15 Sit. Feast on your life.

DEREK WALCOTT  
(b. 1930)

## Morning Song

1 Love set you going like a fat gold watch.  
The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry  
Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.  
5 In a drafty museum, your nakedness  
Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother  
Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow  
Effacement at the wind's hand.

10 All night your moth-breath  
Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:  
A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral  
In my Victorian nightgown.  
15 Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try  
Your handful of notes;  
The clear vowels rise like balloons.

SYLVIA PLATH  
(1932–1963)

## Long Distance II

1 Though my mother was already two years dead  
Dad kept her slippers warming by the gas,  
put hot water bottles her side of the bed  
and still went to renew her transport pass.

5 You couldn't just drop in. You had to phone.  
He'd put you off an hour to give him time  
to clear away her things and look alone  
as though his still raw love were such a crime.

He couldn't risk my blight of disbelief  
10 though sure that very soon he'd hear her key  
scrape in the rusted lock and end his grief.  
He knew she'd just popped out to get the tea.

I believe life ends with death, and that is all.  
You haven't both gone shopping; just the same,  
15 in my new black leather phone book there's your name  
and the disconnected number I still call.

TONY HARRISON  
(b. 1937)

## I Wouldn't Thank You for a Valentine

- 1 I wouldn't thank you for a Valentine.  
I won't wake up early wondering if the postman's been.  
Should 10 red-padded satin hearts arrive with sticky sickly saccharine  
Sentiments in very vulgar verses I wouldn't wonder if you meant them.
- 5 Two dozen anonymous Interflora red roses?  
I'd not bother to swither over who sent them!  
I wouldn't thank you for a Valentine.

- Scrawl SWALK across the envelope  
I'd just say ' Same Auld story
- 10 I canny be bothered deciphering it –  
I'm up to hear with Amore!  
The whole Valentine's Day Thing is trivial and commercial,  
A cue for unleashing clichés and candyheart motifs to  
which I personally am not partial.'
- Take more than singing Telegrams, or pints of Chanel Five, or sweets,
- 15 To get me ordering oysters or ironing my black satin sheets.  
I wouldn't thank you for a Valentine.

- If you sent me a solitaire and promises solemn,  
Took out an ad in the *Guardian* Personal Column  
Saying something very soppy such as 'Who Loves Ya, Poo?
- 20 I'll tell you, I do, Fozzy Bear, that's who!  
You'd entirely fail to charm me, in fact I'd detest it  
I wouldn't be eighteen again for anything, I'm glad I'm past it.  
I wouldn't thank you for a Valentine.

- If you sent me a single orchid, or a pair of Janet Reger's  
in a heart-shaped box and declared your Love Eternal
- 25 I'd say I'd not be caught dead in them they were  
politically suspect and I'd rather something thermal.
- If you hired a plane and blazed our love in a banner across the skies;  
If you bought me something flimsy in a flatteringly wrong size;  
If you sent me a postcard with three Xs and told me how you felt  
I wouldn't thank you, I'd melt.

LIZ LOCHHEAD  
(b. 1947)



## In Paris With You

1 Don't talk to me of love. I've had an earful  
And I get tearful when I've downed a drink or two.  
I'm one of your talking wounded.  
I'm a hostage. I'm marooned.  
5 But I'm in Paris with you.

Yes I'm angry at the way I've been bamboozled  
And resentful at the mess I've been through.  
I admit I'm on the rebound  
And I don't care where are we bound.  
10 I'm in Paris with you.

Do you mind if we do not go to the Louvre,  
If we say sod off to sodding Notre Dame,  
If we skip the Champs Elysées  
And remain here in this sleazy  
15 Old hotel room  
Doing this and that  
To what and whom  
Learning who you are,  
Learning what I am.

20 Don't talk to me of love. Let's talk of Paris,  
The little bit of Paris in our view.  
There's that crack across the ceiling  
And the hotel walls are peeling  
And I'm in Paris with you.

25 Don't talk to me of love. Let's talk of Paris.  
I'm in Paris with the slightest thing you do.  
I'm in Paris with your eyes, your mouth,  
I'm in Paris with... all points south.  
Am I embarrassing you?  
30 I'm in Paris with you.

JAMES FENTON  
(b. 1949)

## Warming Her Pearls

1 Next to my own skin, her pearls. My mistress  
bids me wear them, warm them, until evening  
when I'll brush her hair. At six, I place them  
round her cool, white throat. All day I think of her,

5 resting in the Yellow Room, contemplating silk  
or taffeta, which gown tonight? She fans herself  
whilst I work willingly, my slow heat entering  
each pearl. Slack on my neck, her rope.

She's beautiful. I dream about her  
10 in my attic bed; picture her dancing  
with tall men, puzzled by my faint, persistent scent  
beneath her French perfume, her milky stones.

I dust her shoulders with a rabbit's foot,  
watch the soft blush seep through her skin  
15 like an indolent sigh. In her looking-glass  
my red lips part as though I want to speak.

Full moon. Her carriage brings her home. I see  
her every movement in my head... Undressing,  
taking off her jewels, her slim hand reaching  
20 for the case, slipping naked into bed, the way

she always does... And I lie here awake,  
knowing the pearls are cooling even now  
in the room where my mistress sleeps. All night  
I feel their absence and I burn.

CAROL ANN DUFFY  
(b. 1955)

## Dusting the Phone

1 I am spending my time imagining the worst that could happen.  
I know this is not a good idea, and that being in love, I could be  
spending my time going over the best that has been happening.

The phone rings heralding some disaster. Sirens.

5 Or it doesn't ring which also means disaster. Sirens.  
In which case, who would ring me to tell? Nobody knows.

The future is a long gloved hand. An empty cup.  
A marriage. A full house. One night per week  
in stranger's white sheets. Forget tomorrow,

10 You say, don't mention love. I try. It doesn't work.  
I assault the postman for a letter. I look for flowers.  
I go over and over our times together, re-read them.

This very second I am waiting on the phone.  
Silver service. I polish it. I dress for it.

15 I'll give it extra in return for your call.

Infuriatingly, it sends me hoaxes, wrong numbers;  
or worse, calls from boring people. Your voice  
disappears into my lonely cotton sheets.

I am trapped in it. I can't move. I want you.

20 All the time. This is awful – only a photo.  
Come on, damn you, ring me. Or else. What?

I don't know what.

JACKIE KAY  
(b. 1961)

# Conflict

## A Poison Tree

- 1 I was angry with my friend:  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe:  
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
- 5 And I watered it in fears,  
Night and morning with my tears;  
And I sunned it with smiles,  
And with soft deceitful wiles.
- And it grew both day and night,  
10 Till it bore an apple bright.  
And my foe beheld it shine.  
And he knew that it was mine,
- And into my garden stole  
When the night had veiled the pole;  
15 In the morning glad I see  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

WILLIAM BLAKE  
(1757–1827)

## Envy

1 This rose-tree is not made to bear  
 The violet blue, nor lily fair,  
     Nor the sweet mignonet:  
 And if this tree were discontent,  
 5 Or wished to change its natural bent,  
     It all in vain would fret.

And should it fret, you would suppose  
 It ne'er had seen its own red rose,  
     Nor after gentle shower  
 10 Had ever smelled its rose's scent,  
 Or it could ne'er be discontent  
     With its own pretty flower.

Like such a blind and senseless tree  
 As I've imagined this to be,  
 15 All envious persons are:  
 With care and culture all may find  
 Some pretty flower in their own mind,  
     Some talent that is rare.

MARY LAMB  
 (1764–1847)

## Boat Stealing

- 1 I went alone into a Shepherd's boat,  
 A skiff, that to a willow-tree was tied  
 Within a rocky cave, its usual home.  
 The moon was up, the lake was shining clear
- 5 Among the hoary mountains; from the shore  
 I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again  
 In cadence, and my little boat moved on  
 Just like a man who walks with stately step  
 Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth
- 10 And troubled pleasure. Not without the voice  
 Of mountain echoes did my boat move on,  
 Leaving behind her still on either side  
 Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
 Until they melted all into one track
- 15 Of sparkling light. A rocky steep uprose  
 Above the cavern of the willow-tree,  
 And now, as suited one who proudly rowed  
 With his best skill, I fixed a steady view  
 Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
- 20 The bound of the horizon – for behind  
 Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
 She was an elfin pinnace; twenty times  
 I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
 And as I rose upon the stroke my boat
- 25 Went heaving through the water like a swan –  
 When from behind that rocky steep, till then  
 The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,  
 As if with voluntary power instinct,  
 Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,
- 30 And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff  
 Rose up between me and the stars, and still,  
 With measured motion, like a living thing  
 Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned,  
 And through the silent water stole my way
- 35 Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.  
 There in her mooring-place I left my bark,  
 And through the meadows homeward went with grave  
 And serious thoughts; and after I had seen  
 That spectacle, for many days my brain
- 40 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
 Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts  
 There was a darkness – call it solitude,  
 Or blank desertion – no familiar shapes  
 Of hourly objects, images of trees,
- 45 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,  
 But huge and mighty forms that do not live  
 Like living men moved slowly through my mind  
 By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH  
 (1770–1850)

*From 1799 Prelude*

## The Destruction of Sennacherib

1 The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
 And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
 And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
 When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

5 Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,  
 That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
 Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,  
 That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
 10 And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;  
 And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,  
 And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
 But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;  
 15 And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  
 With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:  
 And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
 20 The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
 And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  
 And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

LORD BYRON  
 (1788–1824)

## There's a Certain Slant of Light

1 There's a certain Slant of light,  
Winter Afternoons –  
That oppresses, like the Heft  
Of Cathedral Tunes –

5 Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –  
We can find no scar,  
But internal difference,  
Where the Meanings, are –

None may teach it – Any –  
10 'Tis the Seal Despair –  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the Air –

When it comes, the Landscape listens –  
Shadows – hold their breath –  
15 When it goes, 'tis like the Distance  
On the look of Death –

EMILY DICKINSON  
(1830–1886)

## The Man He Killed

1 “Had he and I but met  
By some old ancient inn,  
We should have set us down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin!

5 “But ranged as infantry,  
And staring face to face,  
I shot at him as he at me,  
And killed him in his place.

“I shot him dead because –  
10 Because he was my foe,  
Just so: my foe of course he was;  
That's clear enough; although

“He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  
Off-hand like – just as I –  
15 Was out of work – had sold his traps –  
No other reason why.

“Yes; quaint and curious war is!  
You shoot a fellow down  
You'd treat, if met where any bar is,  
20 Or help to half a crown.”

THOMAS HARDY  
(1840–1928)



## Anthem for Doomed Youth

- 1 What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?  
    Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
    Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
    Can patter out their hasty orisons.
- 5 No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,  
    Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –  
    The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
    And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

- What candles may be held to speed them all?  
10 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes  
    Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.  
    The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;  
    Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
    And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

WILFRED OWEN  
(1893–1918)

## Vergissmeinnicht

1 Three weeks gone and the combatants gone  
returning over the nightmare ground  
we found the place again, and found  
the soldier sprawling in the sun.

5 The frowning barrel of his gun  
overshadowing. As we came on  
that day, he hit my tank with one  
like the entry of a demon.

Look. Here in the gunpit spoil  
10 the dishonoured picture of his girl  
who has put: Steffi. Vergissmeinnicht.  
in a copybook gothic script.

We see him almost with content,  
abased, and seeming to have paid  
15 and mocked at by his own equipment  
that's hard and good when he's decayed.

But she would weep to see today  
how on his skin the swart flies move;  
the dust upon the paper eye  
20 and the burst stomach like a cave.

For here the lover and killer are mingled  
who had one body and one heart.  
And death who had the soldier singled  
has done the lover mortal hurt.

KEITH DOUGLAS  
(1920–1944)

## What Were They Like?

- 1 Did the people of Viet Nam  
use lanterns of stone?  
Did they hold ceremonies  
to reverence the opening of buds?
- 5 Were they inclined to quiet laughter?  
Did they use bone and ivory,  
jade and silver, for ornament?  
Had they an epic poem?  
Did they distinguish between speech and singing?
- 10 Sir, their light hearts turned to stone.  
It is not remembered whether in gardens  
stone lanterns illumined pleasant ways.  
Perhaps they gathered once to delight in blossom,  
but after their children were killed
- 15 there were no more buds.  
Sir, laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.  
A dream ago, perhaps. Ornament is for joy.  
All the bones were charred.  
It is not remembered. Remember,
- 20 most were peasants; their life  
was in rice and bamboo.  
When peaceful clouds were reflected in the paddies  
and the water buffalo stepped surely along terraces,  
maybe fathers told their sons old tales.
- 25 When bombs smashed those mirrors  
there was time only to scream.  
There is an echo yet  
of their speech which was like a song.  
It was reported their singing resembled
- 30 the flight of moths in moonlight.  
Who can say? It is silent now.

DENISE LEVERTOV  
(1923–1997)

## Lament

1 For the green turtle with her pulsing burden,  
in search of the breeding ground.  
For her eggs laid in their nest of sickness.

For the cormorant in his funeral silk,  
5 the veil of iridescence on the sand,  
the shadow on the sea.

For the ocean's lap with its mortal stain.  
For Ahmed at the closed border.  
For the soldier with his uniform of fire.

10 For the gunsmith and the armourer,  
the boy fusilier who joined for the company,  
the farmer's sons, in it for the music.

For the hook-beaked turtles,  
the dugong and the dolphin,  
15 the whale struck dumb by the missile's thunder.

For the tern, the gull and the restless wader,  
the long migrations and the slow dying,  
the veiled sun and the stink of anger.

For the burnt earth and the sun put out,  
20 the scalded ocean and the blazing well.  
For vengeance, and the ashes of language.

GILLIAN CLARKE  
(b. 1937)

# Punishment

1 I can feel the tug  
of the halter at the nape  
of her neck, the wind  
on her naked front.

5 It blows her nipples  
to amber beads,  
it shakes the frail rigging  
of her ribs.

I can see her drowned  
10 body in the bog,  
the weighing stone,  
the floating rods and boughs.

Under which at first  
she was a barked sapling  
15 that is dug up  
oak-bone, brain-firkin:

her shaved head  
like a stubble of black corn,  
her blindfold a soiled bandage,  
20 her noose a ring

to store  
the memories of love.  
Little adulteress,  
before they punished you

25 you were flaxen-haired,  
undernourished, and your  
tar-black face was beautiful.  
My poor scapegoat,

I almost love you  
30 but would have cast, I know,  
the stones of silence.  
I am the artful voyeur

of your brain's exposed  
and darkened combs,  
35 your muscles' webbing  
and all your numbered bones:

I who have stood dumb  
when your betraying sisters,  
cauled in tar,  
40 wept by the railings,

who would connive  
in civilized outrage  
yet understand the exact  
and tribal, intimate revenge.

SEAMUS HEANEY  
(1939–2013)

## Flag

1 What's that fluttering in a breeze?

It's just a piece of cloth  
that brings a nation to its knees.

What's that unfurling from a pole?

5 It's just a piece of cloth  
that makes the guts of men grow bold.

What's that rising over a tent?

It's just a piece of cloth  
that dares the coward to relent.

10 What's that flying across a field?

It's just a piece of cloth  
that will outlive the blood you bleed.

How can I possess such a cloth?

Just ask for a flag, my friend.

15 Then blind your conscience to the end.

JOHN AGARD

(b. 1949)

## Phrase Book

1 I'm standing here inside my skin,  
which will do for a Human Remains Pouch  
for the moment. Look down there (up here).  
Quickly. Slowly. This is my own front room

5 where I'm lost in the action, live from a war,  
on screen. I am an Englishwoman. I don't understand you.  
What's the matter? You are right. You are wrong.  
Things are going well (badly). Am I disturbing you?

TV is showing bliss as taught to pilots:

10 Blend, Low silhouette, Irregular shape, Small,  
Secluded. (Please write it down. Please speak slowly.)  
Bliss is how it was in this very room

when I raised my body to his mouth,  
 when he even balanced me in the air,  
 15 or at least I thought so and yes the pilots say  
 yes they have caught it through the Side-Looking

Airborne Radar, and through the J-Stars.  
 I am expecting a gentleman (a young gentleman,  
 two gentlemen, some gentlemen). Please send him  
 20 (them) up at once. This is really beautiful.

Yes they have seen us, the pilots in the Kill Box  
 on their screens and played the routine for  
 getting us Stealthed, that is, Cleansed, to you and me,  
 Taken Out. They know how to move into a single room  
 25 like that, to send in with Pinpoint Accuracy, a hundred Harms.  
 I have two cases and a cardboard box. There is another  
 bag there. I cannot open my case – look out,  
 the lock is broken. Have I done enough?

Bliss the pilots say is for evasion  
 30 and escape. What's love in all this debris?  
 Just one person pounding another into dust,  
 into dust. I do not know the word for it yet.

Where is the British Consulate? Please explain.  
 What does it mean? What must I do? Where  
 35 can I find? What have I done? I have done  
 nothing. Let me pass please. I am an Englishwoman.

JO SHAPCOTT  
 (b. 1953)

## Honour Killing

1 At last I'm taking off this coat,  
    this black coat of a country  
    that I swore for years was mine,  
    that I wore more out of habit  
5 than design.  
    Born wearing it,  
    I believed I had no choice.

I'm taking off this veil,  
    this black veil of a faith  
10 that made me faithless  
    to myself,  
    that tied my mouth,  
    gave my god a devil's face,  
    and muffled my own voice.

15 I'm taking off these silks,  
    these lacy things  
    that feed dictator dreams,  
    the mangalsutra and the rings  
    rattling in a tin cup of needs  
20 that beggared me.

I'm taking off this skin,  
    and then the face, the flesh,  
    the womb.

Let's see  
25 what I am in here  
    when I squeeze past  
    the easy cage of bone.

Let's see  
    what I am out here,  
30 making, crafting,  
    plotting  
    at my new geography.

IMTIAZ DHARKER  
(b. 1954)



# Partition

1 She was nineteen-years-old then  
and when she stood in her garden  
she could hear the cries of the people  
stranded in the Ahmedabad railway station.

5 She felt it was endless – their noise –  
a new sound added to the city.  
Her aunt, her father's sister,  
would go to the station every day  
with food and water –

10 But she felt afraid,  
felt she could not go with her aunt –  
So she stood in the garden  
listening. Even the birds sounded different –  
and the shadows cast by the neem trees

15 brought no consolation.  
And each day she wished  
she had the courage to go with her aunt –  
And each day passed with her  
listening to the cries of the people.

20 Now, when my mother  
tells me this at midnight  
in her kitchen – she is  
seventy-years old and India  
is 'fifty'. 'But, of course,

25 India is older than that,' she says,  
'India was always there.  
                    But how I wish I had  
                    gone with my aunt  
to the railway station –

30 I still feel  
                    guilty about that.'  
And then she asks me:  
'How could they  
                    have let a man

35 who knew nothing  
                    about geography  
divide a country?'

SUJATA BHATT  
(b. 1956)

# Youth and Age

## Holy Thursday

- 1 'Twas on a holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,  
The children walking two and two in red and blue and green:  
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,  
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow.
- 5 O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!  
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.  
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,  
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.
- Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,  
10 Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among:  
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor.  
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

WILLIAM BLAKE  
(1757–1827)

## When I have fears that I may cease to be

- 1 When I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,  
Before high pilèd books, in charact'ry,  
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
- 5 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,  
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
And think that I may never live to trace  
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;  
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
- 10 That I shall never look upon thee more,  
Never have relish in the faery power  
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore  
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,  
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

JOHN KEATS  
(1795–1821)

## The Bluebell

1 A fine and subtle spirit dwells  
In every little flower,  
Each one its own sweet feeling breathes  
With more or less of power.

5 There is a silent eloquence  
In every wild bluebell  
That fills my softened heart with bliss  
That words could never tell.

Yet I recall not long ago  
10 A bright and sunny day,  
'Twas when I led a toilsome life  
So many leagues away;

That day along a sunny road  
All carelessly I strayed,  
15 Between two banks where smiling flowers  
Their varied hues displayed.

Before me rose a lofty hill,  
Behind me lay the sea,  
My heart was not so heavy then  
20 As it was wont to be.

Less harassed than at other times  
I saw the scene was fair,  
And spoke and laughed to those around,  
As if I knew no care.

25 But when I looked upon the bank  
My wandering glances fell  
Upon a little trembling flower,  
A single sweet bluebell.

Whence came that rising in my throat,  
30 That dimness in my eye?  
Why did those burning drops distil –  
Those bitter feelings rise?

O, that lone flower recalled to me  
My happy childhood's hours  
35 When bluebells seemed like fairy gifts  
A prize among the flowers,

Those sunny days of merriment  
When heart and soul were free,  
And when I dwelt with kindred hearts  
40 That loved and cared for me.

I had not then mid heartless crowds  
To spend a thankless life  
In seeking after others' weal  
With anxious toil and strife.

45 'Sad wanderer, weep those blissful times  
That never may return!  
The lovely floweret seemed to say,  
And thus it made me mourn.

ANNE BRONTË  
(1820–1849)

## Midnight on the Great Western

1 In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,  
And the roof-lamp's oily flame  
Played down on his listless form and face,  
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,  
5 Or whence he came.

In the band of his hat the journeying boy  
Had a ticket stuck; and a string  
Around his neck bore the key of his box,  
That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams  
10 Like a living thing.

What past can be yours, O journeying boy  
Towards a world unknown,  
Who calmly, as if incurious quite  
On all at stake, can undertake  
15 This plunge alone?

Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,  
Our rude realms far above,  
Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete  
This region of sin that you find you in,  
20 But are not of?

THOMAS HARDY  
(1840–1928)

## Spring and Fall: to a Young Child

- 1 Margaret, are you grieving  
Over Goldengrove unleaving?  
Leaves, like the things of man, you  
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
5 Ah! as the heart grows older  
It will come to such sights colder  
By and by, nor spare a sigh  
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;  
And yet you *will* weep and know why.  
10 Now no matter, child, the name:  
Sorrow's springs are the same.  
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed  
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
It is the blight man was born for,  
15 It is Margaret you mourn for.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS  
(1844–1889)

## Ode

- 1 We are the music-makers,  
And we are the dreamers of dreams,  
Wandering by lone sea-breakers  
And sitting by desolate streams;  
5 World-losers and world-forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams:  
Yet we are the movers and shakers  
Of the world for ever, it seems.

- With wonderful deathless ditties  
10 We build up the world's great cities,  
And out of a fabulous story  
We fashion an empire's glory:  
One man with a dream, at pleasure,  
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;  
15 And three with a new song's measure  
Can trample an empire down.

- We, in the ages lying  
In the buried past of the earth,  
Built Nineveh with our sighing,  
20 And Babel itself with our mirth;  
And o'erthrew them with prophesying  
To the old of the new world's worth;  
For each age is a dream that is dying,  
Or one that is coming to birth.

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY  
(1844–1881)

## Out, Out—

- 1 The buzz-saw snarled and rattled in the yard  
 And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,  
 Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.  
 And from there those that lifted eyes could count
- 5 Five mountain ranges one behind the other  
 Under the sunset far into Vermont.  
 And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,  
 As it ran light, or had to bear a load.  
 And nothing happened: day was all but done.
- 10 Call it a day, I wish they might have said  
 To please the boy by giving him the half hour  
 That a boy counts so much when saved from work.  
 His sister stood beside them in her apron  
 To tell them 'Supper'. At the word, the saw,
- 15 As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,  
 Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—  
 He must have given the hand. However it was,  
 Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!  
 The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,
- 20 As he swung toward them holding up the hand,  
 Half in appeal, but half as if to keep  
 The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—  
 Since he was old enough to know, big boy  
 Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—
- 25 He saw all spoiled. 'Don't let him cut my hand off—  
 The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!'  
 So. But the hand was gone already.  
 The doctor put him in the dark of ether.  
 He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
- 30 And then — the watcher at his pulse took fright.  
 No one believed. They listened at his heart.  
 Little — less — nothing! — and that ended it.  
 No more to build on there. And they, since they  
 Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

ROBERT FROST  
 (1874–1963)

## Red Roses

- 1 Tommy is three and when he's bad  
his mother dances with him.  
She puts on the record,  
'Red Roses for a Blue Lady'  
5 and throws him across the room.  
Mind you,  
she never laid a hand on him,  
only the wall laid a hand on him.  
He gets red roses in different places,  
10 the head, that time he was as sleepy as a river,  
the back, that time he was a broken scarecrow,  
the arm like a diamond had bitten it,  
the leg, twisted like a licorice stick,  
all the dance they did together,  
15 Blue Lady and Tommy.  
You fell, she said, just remember you fell.  
I fell, is all he told the doctors  
in the big hospital. A nice lady came  
and asked him questions but because  
20 he didn't want to be sent away he said, I fell.  
He never said anything else although he could talk fine.  
He never told about the music  
or how she'd sing and shout  
holding him up and throwing him.
- 25 He pretends he is her ball.  
He tries to fold up and bounce  
but he squashes like fruit.  
For he loves Blue Lady and the spots  
of red red roses he gives her.

ANNE SEXTON  
(1928–1974)



## Baby Song

1 From the private ease of Mother's womb  
I fall into the lighted room.

Why don't they simply put me back,  
Where it is warm and wet and black?

5 But one thing follows on another.  
Things were different inside Mother.

Padded and jolly I would ride  
The perfect comfort of her inside.

They tuck me in a rustling bed  
10 – I lie there, raging, small, and red.

I may sleep soon, I may forget,  
But I won't forget that I regret.

A rain of blood poured round her womb,  
But all time roars outside this room.

THOM GUNN  
(1929–2004)

## You're

- 1 Clownlike, happiest on your hands,  
Feet to the stars, and moon-skulled,  
Gilled like a fish. A common-sense  
Thumbs-down on the dodo's mode.
- 5 Wrapped up in yourself like a spool,  
Trawling your dark as owls do.  
Mute as a turnip from the Fourth  
Of July to All Fools' Day,  
O high-riser, my little loaf.
- 10 Vague as fog and looked for like mail.  
Farther off than Australia.  
Bent-backed Atlas, our traveled prawn.  
Snug as a bud and at home  
Like a sprat in a pickle jug.
- 15 A creel of eels, all ripples.  
Jumpy as a Mexican bean.  
Right, like a well-done sum.  
A clean slate, with your own face on.

SYLVIA PLATH  
(1932–1963)

## Cold Knap Lake

- 1 We once watched a crowd  
pull a drowned child from the lake.  
Blue-lipped and dressed in water's long green silk  
she lay for dead.
- 5 Then kneeling on the earth,  
a heroine, her red head bowed,  
her wartime cotton frock soaked,  
my mother gave a stranger's child her breath.  
The crowd stood silent,
- 10 drawn by the dread of it.

The child breathed, bleating  
and rosy in my mother's hands.  
My father took her home to a poor house  
and watched her thrashed for almost drowning.

- 15 Was I there?  
Or is that troubled surface something else  
shadowy under the dipped fingers of willows  
where satiny mud blooms in cloudiness  
after the treading, heavy webs of swans
- 20 as their wings beat and whistle on the air?

All lost things lie under closing water  
in that lake with the poor man's daughter.

GILLIAN CLARKE  
(b. 1937)

## My First Weeks

1 Sometimes, when I wonder what I'm like, underneath,  
 I think of my first two weeks, I was drenched  
 with happiness. The wall opened  
 like liquid, my head slid through, my legs, I  
 5 pushed off, from the side, soared  
 gently, turned, squeezed out  
 neatly into the cold illuminated  
 air and breathed it. Washed off, wrapped,  
 I slept, and when I woke there was the breast  
 10 the size of my head, hard and full,  
 the springy drupelets of the nipple. Sleep.  
 Milk. Heat. Every day  
 she held me up to the window and wagged  
 my fist at my sister, down in the street, who  
 15 waved her cone back at me so  
 hard the ice cream flew through the air like a  
 butter-brickle cannonball,  
 otherwise it was sleep and milk,  
 by day my mother's, by night the nurses  
 20 would prop me with a bottle. Paradise  
 had its laws – every four hours and not  
 a minute sooner I could drink, but every four  
 hours I could have the world in my mouth.  
 Two weeks, and then home, to the end of the hall,  
 25 where at night a nurse would give me four ounces of  
 water every four hours, and in the meantime I shrieked for it.  
 They knew it would build my character,  
 to learn to give up, and I learned it – dawn  
 and the satiny breast, the burp, the boiled  
 30 sheet to be placed on where my sister couldn't touch me,  
 I lay and moved my arms and legs like  
 feelers in the light. Glorious life!  
 And it would always be there, behind those nights  
 of tap water, the whole way back,  
 35 that fortnight of unlimited ration,  
 every four hours – clock of cream  
 and flame, I have known heaven.

SHARON OLDS  
 (b. 1942)

## Venus's-flytraps

- 1 I am five,  
    Wading out into deep  
        Sunny grass,  
Unmindful of snakes  
5     & yellowjackets, out  
        To the yellow flowers  
Quivering in sluggish heat.  
    Don't mess with me  
        'Cause I have my Lone Ranger  
10 Six-shooter. I can hurt  
    You with questions  
        Like silver bullets.  
The tall flowers in my dreams are  
    Big as the First State Bank,  
15     & they eat all the people  
Except the ones I love.  
    They have women's names,  
        With mouths like where  
Babies come from. I am five.  
20     I'll dance for you  
        If you close your eyes. No  
Peeping through your fingers.  
    I don't supposed to be  
        This close to the tracks.  
25 One afternoon I saw  
    What a train did to a cow.  
        Sometimes I stand so close  
I can see the eyes  
    Of men hiding in boxcars.  
30     Sometimes they wave  
& holler for me to get back. I laugh  
    When trains make the dogs  
        Howl. Their ears hurt.  
I also know bees  
35     Can't live without flowers.
- I wonder why Daddy  
Calls Mama honey.  
    All the bees in the world  
        Live in little white houses  
40 Except the ones in these flowers.  
    All sticky & sweet inside.  
        I wonder what death tastes like.  
Sometimes I toss the butterflies  
    Back into the air.  
45     I wish I knew why  
The music in my head  
    Makes me scared.  
        But I know things  
I don't supposed to know.  
50     I could start walking  
        & never stop.  
These yellow flowers  
    Go on forever.  
        Almost to Detroit.  
55 Almost to the sea.  
    My mama says I'm a mistake.  
        That I made her a bad girl.  
My playhouse is underneath  
    Our house, & I hear people  
60     Telling each other secrets.

YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA  
(b. 1947)

## Love

1 I hadn't met his kind before.  
 His misericord face – really  
 like a joke on his father – blurred  
 as if from years of polish;  
 5 his hands like curled dry leaves;

the profligate heat he gave  
 out, gave out, his shallow,  
 careful breaths: I thought  
 his filaments would blow,  
 10 I thought he was an emperor,

dying on silk cushions.  
 I didn't know how to keep  
 him wrapped, I didn't know  
 how to give him suck, I had  
 15 no idea about him. At night

I tried to remember the feel  
 of his head on my neck, the skull  
 small as a cat's, the soft spot  
 hot as a smelted coin,  
 20 and the hair, the down, fine

as the innermost, vellum layer  
 of some rare snowcreature's  
 aureole of fur, if you could meet  
 such a beast, if you could  
 25 get so near. I started there.

KATE CLANCHY  
 (b. 1965)

## Farther

- 1 I don't know if the day after Boxing Day has a name  
but it was then we climbed the Skirrid again,  
choosing the long way round,  
through the wood, simplified by snow,  
5 along the dry stone wall, its puzzle solved by moss,  
and out of the trees into that cleft of earth  
split they say by a father's grief  
at the loss of his son to man.  
We stopped there at an altar of rock and rested,  
10 watching the dog shrink over the hill before continuing ourselves,  
finding the slope steeper than expected.  
A blade of wind from the east  
and the broken stone giving under our feet  
with the sound of a crowd sighing.  
15 Half way up and I turned to look at you,  
your bent head the colour of the rocks,  
your breath reaching me, short and sharp and solitary,  
and again I felt the tipping in the scales of us,  
the intersection of our ages.  
20 The dog returns having caught nothing but his own tongue  
and you are with me again, so together we climbed to the top  
and shared the shock of a country unrolled before us,  
the hedged fields breaking on the edge of Wales.  
Pulling a camera from my pocket I placed it on the trig point  
25 and leant my cheek against the stone to find you in its frame,  
before joining you and waiting for the shutter's blink  
that would tell me I had caught this:  
the sky rubbed raw over the mountains,  
us standing on the edge of the world, together against the view  
30 and me reaching for some kind of purchase  
or at least a shallow handhold in the thought  
that with every step apart, I'm another closer to you.

OWEN SHEERS

(b. 1974)

# Notes

# Notes



# Notes

# Notes



# TOWARDS A WORLD UNKNOWN

A fresh and diverse collection of literary heritage and modern poems based on three distinct themes.

Towards a World Unknown is for all students following OCR GCSE English Literature from September 2015.

This collection of poems is the OCR set text for the poetry section of the final examination, to be taken at the end of the two year linear OCR GCSE English Literature course.

There are three thematic poetry clusters to choose from for study in the collection, each comprising literary heritage and modern poems as well as poems from around the world.

Specimen Assessment Materials relating to the poems can be found on the OCR website at [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)

Support materials for Towards a World Unknown will also be available at [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)

## Contact information:

### OCR English support

Ask a subject expert: email [english@ocr.org.uk](mailto:english@ocr.org.uk)  
Customer Support Centre: 01223 553998  
Teacher support: [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)

### Support and FAQs

The Online Support Centre contains lots of useful links to help you get the support you need.  
Please visit [support.ocr.org.uk](http://support.ocr.org.uk)

Find us on Facebook and Twitter.



**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

### How to get in touch:

**web** [www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk](http://www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk)  
**email** [schools.enquiries.uk@oup.com](mailto:schools.enquiries.uk@oup.com)  
**tel** 01536 452620  
**fax** 01865 313472

ISBN 978-0-19-834090-4



9 780198 340904