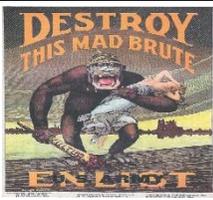
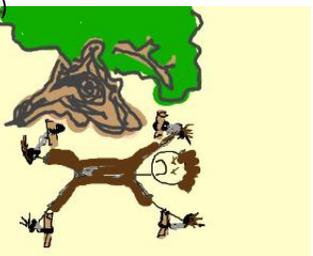
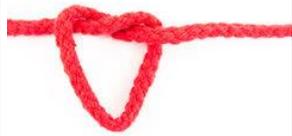
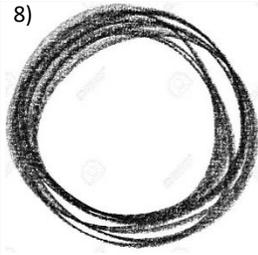


## Conflict Poetry Knowledge Organiser – Relationships

<u>POEM SUMMARIES</u>	<u>Links to context (AO3)</u>
<p><b>‘A Poison Tree’ by William Blake (1794):</b> This simple story is told in first person from a speaker who describes how his untold anger grew and grew until it killed the enemy. This is contrast to when he is angry with his friend, tells him, and the “wrath” passes. The use of anaphora and sibilance in stanza two demonstrate his continuous anger that is ever growing because he tries to suppress the natural emotion. Romantics promoted the need to embrace one’s emotions and the dangers of not doing so, thus events such as the French Revolution over the water. Stanza three describes an apple growing on a tree, drawing Biblical imagery with the reference to the Genesis story in which temptation leads to the fall of man, similar to the consequences to the “foe” who ends up “outstretched” under the tree at the end.</p>	<p>Blake was a Romantic poet who was very critical of the British society in which he lived. Although Britain was one of the wealthiest and most successful Empires in the world, the gap between the rich and the poor was extortionate and the Industrial Revolution meant rural communities were being disbanded as the young moved to the overpopulated and polluted cities for work. This could be represented in the “Poison Tree” from the title of Blake’s poem. A tree is meant to provide life and beauty but if one considers the tree to be the British government or church which was supposed to support society, it is “poison[ed]” as it is perceived to be corrupt and hypocritical.</p>
<p><b>‘Cousin Kate’ Christina Rossetti (1860):</b> Rossetti adopts the voice of a simple country girl through a dramatic monologue. She has been seduced by the Lord of the manor and then rejected in favour of her own cousin – Cousin Kate of the title, to whom she directly addresses in the poem. Rossetti gives us a strong sense of the community looking on and judging these events as she lives with and becomes pregnant by the Lord of the manor but they never marry. Instead, she is cast aside in favour of her “pure” cousin, whom the Lord marries. This enrages the speaker and her only mollification is that Kate seems unable to conceive an heir, which ironically, the speaker was able to provide, albeit illegitimately.</p>	<p>This poem takes the form of a traditional ballad, making the narrative timeless opposed to placing it in a specific time. The speaker is presented by a Fallen Woman, an example of the hypocrisy rife in patriarchal societies. The Lord is able to get away with such egregious behaviour due to his high social status and being a man. Rossetti’s mother had a very strong Christian faith and as Rossetti become older, her works became increasingly religious in tone and subject matter. She herself volunteered for ten years at St Mary Magdalene's penitentiary for prostitutes and unmarried mothers in Highgate.</p>
<p><b>‘The Man He Killed’ by Thomas Hardy (1902):</b> This dramatic monologue is told from the point of view of a working class man who joined the army who seems to be telling an anecdote about a man he killed in warfare. It seems the conversation is happening in an “ancient inn”, a juxtaposition to the battlefield in which he met another infantry soldier and “staring face to face” shot at each other. In stanza three, the speaker tries to explain why he shot the man but methods such as repetition and the use of a hyphen suggests the speaker knows being a “foe” is not a justified reason for taking someone’s life. The speaker goes on to identify all of the similarities he probably had with the man he killed, highlighting the flaws with warfare and presenting a profoundly anti-war poem.</p>	<p>Hardy wrote this poem in 1902 when the Second Boer War in South Africa was being fought. The Boers did not want to be subsumed in the British Empire which Hardy supported, believing the British were motivated by gold and diamond mines in South Africa and were meddling in the affairs of independent settlers. The repetition of “foe” is repeated in a way that suggests these are not the words of the speaker himself but the words from the propaganda that persuaded men like him to do their ‘patriotic duty’. “How curious and quaint war is” epitomises the anti-war tone, with the working class soldier unable to articulate his purpose on the Front line.</p>
<p><b>‘Catrin’ by Gillian Clarke (1978):</b> The poem starts with the speaker looking back at the memory of Catrin’s birth and is set in the delivery room and the final stanza is written when she grows older, probably at the family home. At the start, the baby is dependent on her mother whilst the second stanza shows the desire for independence and freedom that many teenagers feel. “The red rope of love” that is physically pulled taught during childbirth is an image continued into the second stanza as the strain becomes more emotional and physical as Catrin’s “defiant glare” reflects the tensions and conflict many mothers could relate to.</p>	<p>Clarke’s own daughter is called ‘Catrin’ so she is directly describing her own relationship with her daughter as well as reflecting typical mother/daughter relationships. From her own experience, Clarke remembers the pain of childbirth that causes women to scream and shout so uses a metaphor of writing: “I wrote/ All over the walls...” As Catrin grows up, she want to push her mother’s boundaries and asks to skate out in the dark for a while longer: the speaker is faced with emotions of love and conflict as feels the need to protect whilst needing to allow her teenage to grow, a conflict faced by all parents.</p>
<p><b>‘Poppies’ by Jane Weir’ (2005):</b> The speaker is a mother who is speaking directly to her son who is taking leave of his mother. The mother pins a poppy on her son’s lapel and says goodbye at the door, describing domestic activities such as using sellotape to remove cat hair’s from his uniform. She wants to run her hands through his hair and rub noses, as she did when he was a child but restrains her natural instincts and controls her emotions so as to not embarrass her grown son. As he leaves, he is “intoxicated”, excited at the prospect of his adult life, opposed to his mother who wants to protect him at home. Flooded with memories of his childhood, she goes to her son’s bedroom and metaphorically releases a “song bird”; she is then led to the local churchyard by a dove and the poem ends with the mother gazing at the war memorial, thinking of her son.</p>	<p>Weir was commissioned to write this poem during the Iraq War Enquiry. In an interview she said: “I wrote...from a woman’s perspective, which is quite rare...As the mother of two sons, I tried to put across how I might feel if they were fighting in a war zone.” Although we are told it is three days before Armistice Sunday, no specific time or war is presented, which gives the poem a universal quality (although Armistice Sunday has only been commemorated since 1918). Although this could be read to describe a young soldier, it could also be describing any young man who grows (going to secondary school or work) and a mother who has to control her emotions and allow him to leave and enter the “treasure chest” of the world.</p>

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Picture	Quotation	Explanation	Picture	Quotation	Explanation
1) 	“And I sunned it with smiles...” (‘A Poison Tree’ by William Blake)	The use of sibilance in this line indicates the hypocritical actions of the speaker who is hiding their true emotions and appearing good, despite wishing evil onto their “foe”. Links could be drawn to British politics and the church, which Blake is highly critical of, who claim to offer support and assistance but are actually self-indulgent.	6) 	“I shot him dead <b>because</b> - / <b>Because</b> he was my <b>foe</b> ” (‘The Man He Killed’ by Thomas Hardy)	The use of repetition of “because” ensures readers understand that the line justifying the soldier’s actions and killing of the other soldier “Because he was my foe” is not one he believes but one he has been taught to regurgitate as part of the propaganda that encouraged young men to join the war efforts: it is a lie Hardy is mightily against.
2) 	“My <b>foe</b> <b>outstretch’d</b> beneath the tree.” (‘A Poison Tree’ by William Blake)	Being the last line of the poem, we are left with an image of destruction as the result of oppressing emotions, something Romantics warned against. Additionally, Biblical references could be made to Jesus on the cross, indicating the hypocrisy of the Church. The tree could be symbolic of nature which stands tall whilst man causes its own self-destruction, a notion a Romantic such as Blake would have been familiar with during the Industrial Revolution.	7) 	“the <b>tight/ Red rope of love...</b> ” (‘Catrin’ by Gillian Clarke)	This extended metaphor is referenced throughout the poem to highlight the eternal connection between mother and daughter but also the constant struggle between the two. It could be a metaphor in the first stanza for the umbilical cord physically connecting mother and daughter at childbirth. However, it is referred to as the “old rope,/ Tightening about my life” in the second stanza to describe the emotional strain between the mother and teenager. It is interesting to note that a “rope” is strong and unlikely to snap.
3) 	“He <b>changed me like a glove</b> ” (‘Cousin Kate’ by Christina Rossetti)	This simile compares the speaker to a glove, an item of clothing that is easily disposed of and changed by the wealthy Lord, much like herself. Additionally, it is an interesting choice for the simile as a glove prevents someone touching another, suggesting that although their relationship was physical, it lacked intimacy, thus why the Lord never married her and chose her Cousin Kate instead.	8) 	“With the <b>wild, tender circles/ Of our struggle to become/ Separate.</b> ” (‘Catrin’ by Gillian Clarke)	The circles are “wild” because of the pain of childbirth and bringing up a newborn, reinforced by the use of “tender”. The scribbled “circles” may be a foretaste of Catrin in a few months’ time and her first attempts with a crayon or they may be a hint that the mother’s language became colourful during the pain of childbirth. The poet positions “separate” on a separate line, reinforcing the internal struggle of both mother and daughter as they want to be separate but connected.
4) 	“Even so I sit and howl in <b>dust/ You sit in gold and sing.</b> ” (‘Cousin Kate’ by Christina Rossetti)	There is clear juxtaposition here, comparing the speaker’s position in “dust” due to being a “outcast” opposed to her cousin who sits in “gold” as she married the Lord. The use of sibilance in these two lines intimates the speaker’s bitterness, which we know is directed at her cousin, who she directly addresses through “you”. The use of a long vowel sound in “howl” replicates the speaker’s pain at being treated thus, also drawing links to a wounded animal.	9) 	“...the world <b>overflowing/ like a treasure chest.</b> ” (‘Poppies’ by Jane Weir)	This simile compares the world to a treasure chest which would excite and enthuse any young man. However, the verb “overflowing” makes us think of excess and reminds us that one must be careful as an overindulgence in “treasures” can be dangerous. Whether the speaker’s son is going to war or just growing up in his next phase of development is ambiguous but the idea of a both excitement and apprehension by a mother as her child moves on to the next steps is universal.
5) 	“And <b>staring face to face...</b> ” (‘The Man He Killed’ by Thomas Hardy)	The repetition of “face” forces readers to imagine the individual faces of the two soldiers who had to look each other in the eyes before following orders and killing one another. The verb “staring” intimates hesitation and highlights that the two men are not too dissimilar, presenting Hardy’s anti-war sentiments.	10) 	“I listened, <b>hoping to hear/ your playground</b> voice catching on the wind.” (‘Poppies’ by Jane Weir)	This is another quotation that would universally connect with mothers: one of nostalgia and longing to hear from their grown up children. The connotations of a “playground” are childish and carefree, which have been left behind by the speaker’s grown son. The idea that the mother is hoping to hear her son’s voice on the wind implies she maybe doesn’t speak to him as much as she’d hope.



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