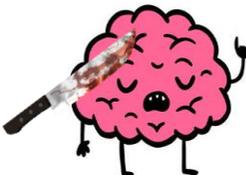
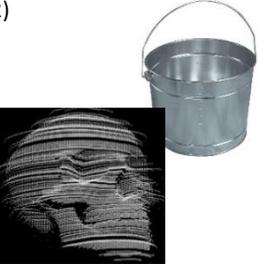


Conflict Poetry Knowledge Organiser – Physical Conflict

<u>POEM SUMMARIES</u>	<u>Links to context (AO3)</u>
<p>‘The Destruction of Sennacherib’ by Lord Byron (1815): a narrative poem that retells the story of how God destroyed King Sennacherib’s Assyrian army as they attacked the city of Jerusalem. It starts by describing the aggressive and powerful looking Assyrian army, with their rich clothing and weapons. However, the couplets in the second stanza indicate the stark contrast between that image and the image of the destroyed army, using natural imagery to juxtapose “Summer” and “Autumn.” The change of tone comes in stanza three when God intervenes in the army’s attack, sending the “Angel of Death” to destroy the soldiers and horses. The pace slows in stanza five as Byron vividly describes the destroyed Assyrian army with bodies “distorted and pale.” The final line of the poem reminds us of the power of “the glance of the Lord!”</p>	<p>Written by Byron in 1815, this poem tells the story from the Bible’s ‘Second Book of Kings’. Sennacherib was the Emperor of Assyria from 750 BC to 681 BC and his militaristic, aggressive army laid siege to Judea, the historic land of the Jews. The God who sends “the Angel of Death” is wrathful and reflects the vengeful God from the Old Testament. The poem could also have an undertone of criticism towards the British government, who Byron thought was becoming increasingly tyrannical.</p>
<p>‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ by Lord Tennyson (1854): from the third line of the poem, we know that the soldiers are not going to be victorious and we have no hope for them when the officer exclaims their commands in stanza one. Stanza two hints that the soldiers knew the command was not a good one yet their job was not to question but just “do”. The next two stanzas use vivid imagery to describe the battle in which the soldiers are “bold” but ride back with less than half of the Brigade. The rest of the poem celebrates the bravery of the “horse and hero” and questions “When can their glory fade?” indicating that their memory will live on despite their deaths due to their heroism.</p>	<p>As Poet Laureate, Tennyson writes this poem after hearing of the “blunder” in ‘The Times’ in 1854; the article described a military disaster in the Crimean War in which 600 British soldiers were given an order that instructed them to head straight towards the Russian army. Tennyson does not dwell on this but instead glamorises war and encourages celebration of the bravery of the soldiers.</p>
<p>‘Exposure’ by Wilfred Owen (1917): we immediately understand that Owen wants to be the voice for soldiers, using the collective pronoun “Our” at the start of the poem indicates the persona is speaking from first hand experience. The use of ellipsis in stanzas one and three build tension as the reader hears of the “silence” at the front line “But nothing happens.” This shortened line, used at the end of four of the eight stanzas, has an anti-climatic effect. The lack of fighting action and repeated use of verbs such as “watching” indicate apathy and passivity, making the soldiers victims to nature. In stanza six, the soldiers think or dream of their empty homes: “Slowly our ghosts drag home.” This metaphor could be referring to the spirits of the soldiers longing for home, the physical bodies of the dead returning, or the actual soldiers who return as “ghosts” of the former selves due to being exhausted, physically harmed or suffering from PTSD. Lastly, the last line of stanza seven and the first line of stanza eight sound bitter towards the idea of fighting for the “love of God” linking to the futility of war.</p>	<p>Owen, an officer in the trenches during WW1, stated: “Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War and the pity of War. The Poetry is the Pity.” He wanted to reveal the truth of the horrendous conditions soldiers had to suffer in the trenches to those at home, which contradicted the Propaganda that promoted the nobility and heroism of fighting. ‘Exposure’ exposes the truth about the reality of the war, only focuses on the passivity and futility of the war opposed to any heroic actions or exciting drama. Inspired by Romantic poets, Owen focuses on nature, describing the effects the horrendous weather had on the soldiers.</p>
<p>‘War Photographer’ by Carole Satyamurti (1987): this poem is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker seems to be confessing before moving into past tense to remember his/her crimes. “Seek out” and “finger pressed” present the photographer as a predator who comes to realise the “absurd[ity]” of her actions; she takes a picture of the little girl holding the baby in the middle of the bombing, which gets published in a newspaper at home to celebrate the “human spirit.” In reality, the “small girl” “dropped her burden” (a baby) in an attempt to run free from the devastation around her. Although an appalling image for readers, use of adjectives such as “small” and “little” to describe the girl make us feel sympathy for her; being only a child herself, can we really blame her for trying to stay alive. What we do end up questioning is how much of what we see in the news is the true reality.</p>	<p>Written in 1987, at the time of several major conflicts including: the Iran/Iraq war, the various wars in South Africa, the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland, the Lebanon War, the Sri Lankan civil war and the 2nd Sudanese civil war. The poem draws on the experience of modern warfare and the arbitrary nature of suffering, <i>not a specific conflict</i>. A modern moral dilemma is proposed: the photographer’s images can distort the truth so he should stop but if he does, the images would never be seen by the wider world.</p>
<p>‘Belfast Confetti’ by Ciaran Carson (1990): this poem begins in-media-res (in the middle of the action) and is first person narration. The metaphoric use of punctuation reflects the different effects of the Belfast riots. At the start, the Catholics’ shouts as they are attacked and ruthlessly killed can be heard (“exclamation marks”) followed by the image of the shrapnel being thrown by the Protestants, “Nuts, bolts, car-keys.” The “stops and colons” in the speaker’s way reflect the “Dead ends” he is faced with in the familiar streets of his hometown due to debris or bodies, but also reflects his own inability to articulate the horror he is faced with. The second stanza’s use of rhetorical questions not only highlights his panic as he can no longer recognise the streets he loves but also indicates him questioning his identity and the futility of the conflict.</p>	<p>Born and raised in Belfast, Carson had first-hand experience of the troubles in Northern Ireland (1968-1998): a conflict between the Protestants (wanted to remain part of the UK) and the Catholics (fighting for independence). The conflict happened on the streets of Belfast, turning the city into a conflict zone. Thousands of people were killed and injured. Belfast Confetti was the name given to home-made bombs which included various metal items, such as nails, nuts and bolts and car keys. Carson himself felt confused about his identity during The Troubles, as his identity is both Protestant and Catholic – Ciaran is a Catholic name while Carson is Protestant.</p>

Conflict Poetry Knowledge Organiser – Physical Conflict

Picture	Quotation	Explanation	Picture	Quotation	Explanation
1) 	“The Assyrians came down like a wolf on the fold.” (‘The Destruction of Sennacherib’ by Lord Byron)	This simile compares the Assyrian army to a vicious, quick and powerful enemy. A wolf hunts its prey with no compassion, reflecting the Assyrian’s attack on Judea. Wolves also move in packs, similar to the huge numbers of the Assyrians together.	6) 	“Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us...” (‘Exposure’ by Wilfred Owen)	The collective pronouns “our” and “us” reflect the individual sharing in the collective suffering, Owen is being the voice of the soldiers. “Ache” reveals the soldiers are in physical pain but the fact it is their “brains” implies this pain is also psychological. The personification of the “merciless” winds that “knife” the soldiers is not what we expect; Owen is highlighting that nature is the most dangerous enemy, not the Germans.
2) 	“And there lay the rider distorted and pale.” (‘The Destruction of Sennacherib’ by Lord Byron)	Despite maintain the rhythm from the start of the poem, the words in this line force readers to slow down and imagine the grotesque image of the broken bodies of the destroyed Assyrian army. The adjectives “distorted and pale” give readers the image of a battlefield strewn with destroyed corpses that no longer have any signs of life, the result of a wrathful God from the Old Testament.	7) 	“Instinct prevailing, she dropped her burden/... began to run...” (‘War Photographer’ by Carole Satyamurti)	Referring to a baby as a “burden” sits uncomfortably with readers but they quickly feel sympathy for the “small girl” as she is forced into a horrific life or death situation. Blaming her actions on “instinct” indicate that she is faced with life or death as well as highlighting her youth and the fact that she is far too young to have the responsibility of looking after another. The “burden” is probably a younger sibling she tries to protect but could also be a metaphor for weight of the responsibility she has to carry to survive.
3) 	“into the valley of Death” (‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ by Lord Tennyson)	Metaphor to highlight there was little to no chance of survival for the soldiers; if this was a “blunder” made today, the incompetence of the officer would be highlighted more. The image of a “valley” is used to indicate the British soldiers were in a vulnerable position and surrounded on all sides. The image is evocative to Christians as it is referenced in the Psalms.	8) 	“champagne giggles.../...mouth too small for her dark scream...” (‘War Photographer’ by Carole Satyamurti)	Satyamurti uses juxtaposition to make the conditions of war sound more horrific. In comparison to the luxurious and carefree “giggles” the girls have at Ascot, the “small girl” affected by the conflict sounds unjust and inhumane. Her “dark scream” connotes pain and anguish and the fact that her mouth is “too small” to even emit the sound indicates she is far too young to be impacted in this way, thus highlighting the cruelty of war.
4) 	“Volley’d and thunder’d;/ Storm’d at with shot and shell” (‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ by Lord Tennyson)	The onomatopoeic effect of the assonance in “volley’d”, “thunder’d” and “storm’d” all have very high energy and evoke sounds of anger, of aggression, of war. The use of sibilance makes the reader hear the sounds of the firing bullets, immersing them in the viciousness of the attack.	9) 	“...an asterisk on the map.” (‘Belfast Confetti’ by Ciaran Carson)	The metaphor of an asterisk resembles the bombs that were going off in Belfast, sending buildings, shrapnel and bodies flying. This sentence is also much shorter than many others, forcing the reader to pause and contemplate the bigger picture, in which Belfast is nothing but a blur of chaos. Carson is therefore questioning the point of the conflict.
5) 	“But nothing happens.” (‘Exposure’ by Wilfred Owen)	The repetition of this refrain at the end of four of the eight stanzas emphasises the agony of waiting, a different image that promoted in the Propaganda of the time. There is a sense of hopelessness and despair where the soldiers see their deaths as inevitable. The connective “But” acts as an anti-climax to the tension built previously, deliberately provoking and upsetting the reader.	10) 	“What is/ My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I going?” (‘Belfast Confetti’ by Ciaran Carson)	The use of rhetorical questions at the end of the poem indicate that Carson is unsure of his own identity: is he Catholic or Protestant? It also reflects the confusion caused by the chaos of the conflict, which would force inhabitants to question their existence and place in the world as their community is destroyed around them. The use of enjambment also adds pace to the questioning, indicating panic and desperation for peace.