OZYMANDIAS

Percy Bysshe Shelley · 1818 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

A boast survives in perfect condition and the thing it describes has gone.

Power needs somebody to look at it. Shelley removes every witness and leaves the command still being issued to an empty desert.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **COMPETITION PIECE.** Written against Horace Smith in 1817 — they each wrote a sonnet on the same subject. Shelley's is the one anybody remembers.
- **THE BUST WAS COMING.** A colossal head of Ramesses II was being shipped to the British Museum as he wrote. Everybody knew about it.
- **HE MEANT BRITAIN.** A king losing his mind, a regent building palaces. Shelley moved the target three thousand miles so he could say it.

STRUCTURE

- **A BROKEN SONNET.** Fourteen lines, but the rhyme scheme belongs to no standard form. A sonnet that does not hold together, about something that did not.
- **FOUR REMOVES.** Shelley → a traveller → a sculptor → the king. The boast reaches us fourth-hand and belongs to nobody.
- **THE TURN COMES LATE.** Line 12. "Nothing beside remains" lands after the boast, not before it.

LANGUAGE

- **THE SCULPTOR WINS.** He "well those passions read". The only person in the poem who understood the king is the one whose work survived.
- **IRONY, SET UP CAREFULLY.** "despair" meant one thing to Ozymandias and means the opposite now.
- **"SNEER OF COLD COMMAND."** Three words of character assessment, carved by a man who had to look at him all day.
- **THE SOUND OF EMPTINESS.** "boundless and bare", "lone and level sands" — flat vowels, nothing to catch on.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone"
"sneer of cold command"
"the hand that mock'd them, and the heart that fed"
"Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
"Nothing beside remains"
"The lone and level sands stretch far away"

FROM SMILE TO THE SEVEN STEPS

Annotate with SMILE. Answer with the seven steps. They are not two methods — one is what you do to the poem, the other is what you do to the page.

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SMILE HAS NO W. Why did the writer choose it — that is ④, and it is the step that moves a 5 to a 7.

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THE SEVEN STEPS

① **POINT —** answer the question on the paper.
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ONE CYCLE = ONE PARAGRAPH. FOUR CYCLES = A FULL ANSWER.

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Power presented as temporary.
2 Art outlasting the powerful.
3 The sculptor as the real survivor.
4 The desert given the last word.

COMPARE WITH

- **MY LAST DUCHESS.** Two powerful men and the artwork that outlived both. Browning's Duke still owns his; Ozymandias owns nothing.
- **LONDON.** Power as one man versus power as a whole system.
- **TISSUE.** Both about what lasts and what does not, and both decide in favour of the fragile thing.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **IT IS NOT ABOUT EGYPT.** Egypt is the setting. The subject is power.
- **OZYMANDIAS IS NOT THE SPEAKER.** He gets five words, carved, at fourth hand.
- **FORGETTING THE SCULPTOR.** He is the hero of the poem and most answers never mention him.
- **IGNORING THE FRAME.** If you do not deal with who is telling you, you have missed the method.

LONDON

William Blake · 1794 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

Power has got into the language itself.

A charter grants liberty. Blake uses the word twice in two lines to mean the exact opposite — the streets are owned, and so is a river that cannot be.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **SONGS OF EXPERIENCE, 1794.** The paired volume to Songs of Innocence. This is the dark half.
- **REVOLUTION AND REPRESSION.** France had executed its king the year before. Britain was arresting people for printing things.
- **HE LIVED THERE.** Blake walked these streets daily. This is not a tour; it is where he lived.

STRUCTURE

- **FOUR QUATRAINS, ABAB.** Relentless, regular, no release anywhere in it.
- **"EVERY" FIVE TIMES IN STANZA TWO.** The repetition is not emphasis. It is a system with no exceptions.
- **THE WORST IS LAST.** The poem gets darker stanza by stanza and ends on an infant and a hearse.

LANGUAGE

- **"CHARTER'D" × 2.** Government vocabulary turned inside out — far more dangerous than complaining.
- **"MIND-FORG'D MANACLES."** The chains are made in the mind and worn by choice. The single most important phrase in the poem.
- **INSTITUTIONS NAMED AND CONDEMNED.** Church "blackning", Palace walls running with a soldier's blood.
- **THE FINAL OXYMORON.** "Marriage hearse" — a wedding and a funeral in two words.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

"I wander thro' each charter'd street"
"marks of weakness, marks of woe"
"The mind-forg'd manacles I hear"
"Every blackning Church appalls"
"the hapless Soldiers sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls"
"blights with plagues the Marriage hearse"

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Power as something inside the language.
2 The institutions named and indicted.
3 The damage as internal — mind-forged.
4 Passed on to the next generation.

COMPARE WITH

- **OZYMANDIAS.** A system versus a man.
- **CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY.** Both about who controls the words.
- **THE ÉMIGRÉE.** Two cities, one inescapable and one unreachable.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **LISTING THE INSTITUTIONS.** Naming Church, Palace and chimney-sweeper is not analysis. What does Blake DO to them?
- **MISSING "MIND-FORG'D".** It is the whole argument and it gets left out constantly.
- **CALLING IT A WALK.** The wandering is a device, not a plot.
- **THE SOLDIER IS NOT AT WAR.** He is sighing outside a palace. That is the point.

EXTRACT FROM THE PRELUDE

William Wordsworth · 1798–1850 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

A boy takes a boat that is not his, and the landscape answers back.

The guilt is in the poem before the mountain appears — look at line two.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN VERSE.** Subtitled "the growth of a poet's mind". He worked on it for fifty years and it was published after he died.
- **THE LAKE DISTRICT.** Real places, a real boy, a real stolen boat.
- **NATURE AS TEACHER.** The Romantic position: nature instructs, and the instruction is not always kind.

STRUCTURE

- **BLANK VERSE, ONE MOVEMENT.** No stanzas, no rhyme — it runs like memory rather than like a poem.
- **THE TURN IS THE PEAK.** Confidence for twenty lines, then it rises, and everything after it is aftermath.
- **A THIRD OF IT IS CONSEQUENCE.** What happens afterwards is longer than what happened. That is the design.

LANGUAGE

- **GUILT ARRIVES EARLY.** "an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure" — he knows, before anything happens.
- **THE PEAK PERSONIFIED.** It "upreared its head" and "strode after me". Nothing has moved. He has.
- **CONFIDENCE IN THE VERBS.** "lustily I dipped my oars", the boat going "like a swan" — then "trembling oars".
- **WHAT IS LEFT.** "no familiar shapes", "a trouble to my dreams". The landscape has been emptied of comfort.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

"an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure"
"lustily I dipped my oars into the silent lake"
"She was an elfin pinnace"
"a huge peak, black and huge"
"with trembling oars I turned"
"a trouble to my dreams"

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Nature as a teacher with a hard lesson.
2 Guilt made physical.
3 The shift from confidence to fear.
4 What it leaves behind afterwards.

COMPARE WITH

- **STORM ON THE ISLAND.** Nature as adversary — but Heaney's islanders are prepared and this boy is not.
- **EXPOSURE.** Both make the weather the antagonist.
- **OZYMANDIAS.** Both put a human being against something much older.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **RETELLING THE BOAT TRIP.** The examiner has read the extract.
- **SAYING THE MOUNTAIN MOVED.** It is perspective. If you miss that, you have missed the poem.
- **STOPPING AT THE PEAK.** The ending is where the marks are.
- **CALLING IT A NATURE POEM.** It is a poem about conscience, set outdoors.

MY LAST DUCHESS

Robert Browning · 1842 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

The Duke condemns himself and never notices.

The poem never says he had her killed. He says it, in nine words, and moves straight on to a statue.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **A REAL DUKE.** Alfonso II d'Este of Ferrara. His first wife Lucrezia married him at fourteen and was dead at seventeen. Poison was suspected and never proved.
- **WHO HE IS TALKING TO.** An envoy negotiating his NEXT marriage. That is why the poem is terrifying.
- **DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE.** Browning's own form. One speaker, one listener who never speaks, and a reader who knows more than the speaker intends.

STRUCTURE

- **RHYMING COUPLETS YOU CANNOT HEAR.** Perfectly regular — and the enjambment runs straight over every rhyme, so the control is hidden. Like him.
- **ONE UNBROKEN SPEECH.** No stanza breaks. He does not pause and he is not interrupted.
- **IT ENDS ON ANOTHER ARTWORK.** Neptune taming a sea-horse. He has already moved on and he is telling you what he does to wives.

LANGUAGE

- **THE EUPHEMISM.** "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." Nine words, and he says them as a matter of housekeeping.
- **WHAT HE ACTUALLY OBJECTS TO.** That she was equally pleased by everything. Not infidelity — ordinary happiness.
- **THE CURTAIN.** Only he draws it. He controls who looks at her now, which he could not do while she lived.
- **"AS IF ALIVE."** Third line. The whole poem is in it.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

"Looking as if she were alive"
"She had / A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad"
"my gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name"
"I choose / Never to stoop"
"I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together"
"Notice Neptune, though, / Taming a sea-horse"

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Control, over a person and then over an image.
2 A voice that incriminates itself.
3 What he objects to, and what that reveals.
4 That he is about to do it again.

COMPARE WITH

- **OZYMANDIAS.** Two tyrants and the art that outlasted them.
- **LONDON.** Power exercised by one man versus power as a condition.
- **CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY.** Who gets to tell it, and who is painted on the wall.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **SAYING "HE MURDERED HER" FLATLY.** The poem will not say it. Your answer should be as careful as Browning is.
- **MISSING THE COUPLETS.** Regular rhyme that you cannot hear is a deliberate effect.
- **FORGETTING THE LISTENER.** A marriage is being arranged while he talks.
- **TREATING HIM AS MAD.** He is entirely rational. That is worse.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson · 1854 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

Tennyson admits it was a blunder in line twelve, and then honours them for the remaining fifty lines anyway.

The poem is not asking whether it was worth it. It is asking what you owe men who went anyway.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **BALACLAVA, 25 OCTOBER 1854.** 673 rode. 260 were killed, wounded or captured, in about twenty minutes.
- **HE WROTE IT IN WEEKS.** From W.H. Russell's report in The Times — the first war reporting of its kind. Tennyson never went anywhere near it.
- **HE WAS POET LAUREATE.** Writing officially, about an official disaster, while the inquiry was still running.

STRUCTURE

- **THE RHYTHM IS THE HORSES.** Dactylic dimeter — DUM-da-da, DUM-da-da. Say the first line aloud and you are riding.
- **A REFRAIN THAT CHANGES.** "Rode the six hundred" becomes "not the six hundred". Count them disappearing.
- **SIX STANZAS, SIX HUNDRED.** Out, through, and back — the poem's shape is the charge's shape.

LANGUAGE

- **ANAPHORA.** "Cannon to right... Cannon to left... Cannon in front." Surrounded, structurally.
- **BIBLICAL BORROWING.** "valley of Death" is Psalm 23. He is putting them in scripture.
- **THE ADMISSION.** "Someone had blunder'd" — three words, buried mid-stanza, never returned to.
- **HELL AS GEOGRAPHY.** "jaws of Death", "mouth of hell". The valley is an animal.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

"Half a league, half a league, / Half a league onward"
"Someone had blunder'd"
"Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die"
"Into the valley of Death"
"Cannon to right of them, / Cannon to left of them"
"Noble six hundred"

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 The rhythm doing the work of the charge.
2 Blame admitted, then deliberately set aside.
3 Obedience as the real subject.
4 What the poem instructs the reader to do.

COMPARE WITH

- **EXPOSURE.** Two wars, sixty years apart, and two completely opposite attitudes to the men in them.
- **BAYONET CHARGE.** Outside the charge versus inside it.
- **KAMIKAZE.** Obedience, and what it costs the one who obeys.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **"TENNYSON GLORIFIES WAR."** Then explain line twelve. If you cannot, you have not read it.
- **DESCRIBING THE RHYTHM WITHOUT NAMING IT.** "It has a beat" earns nothing.
- **FORGETTING HE NEVER WENT.** He is working from a newspaper, at a desk.
- **IGNORING THE LAST STANZA.** It is an instruction to the reader and it is where the poem lands.

EXPOSURE

Wilfred Owen · winter 1917–18 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

Four of the eight stanzas end with the same four words: BUT NOTHING HAPPENS.

The words never change and the meaning changes completely. The change is not in the words. It is in the forty lines between them.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **OFFICER.** Owen was responsible for these men. That is why the poem says WE and never THEY.
- **AGAINST THE PAPERS.** In the newspapers, things happened. For most men most of the time, war was waiting in bad weather.
- **KILLED 4 NOVEMBER 1918,** one week before the Armistice. The only biographical fact that changes how the last stanza reads.

STRUCTURE

- **EIGHT STANZAS, FIVE LINES.** Regular, relentless, going nowhere.
- **THE SHORT FIFTH LINE.** Every stanza builds for four lines and is cut off before it arrives. A rising line, stopped flat.
- **THE REFRAIN CLOSES HALF.** The others end on a question or on something worse. Not quite a pattern — which is worse than a pattern.

LANGUAGE

- **PARARHYME.** KNIVE US / NERVOUS. SILENT / SALIENT. The rhyme arrives where a rhyme should be and does not close. Nothing resolves, including the sounds.
- **WEATHER PERSONIFIED.** Winds KNIVE. Dawn MASSES IN HER MELANCHOLY ARMY and ATTACKS. The enemy is never German. It is the air.
- **THE BROKEN WORD.** KNIVE is not a word. He spelled the other four hundred correctly, so it is a decision. The language getting frostbite.
- **COLOUR.** Almost none — then one burst of warmth in stanza six, which turns out to be a hallucination and is taken away.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

"merciless iced east winds that knive us"
"Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous"
"What are we doing here?"
"dawn massing in the east her melancholy army"
"On us the doors are closed"
"All their eyes are ice"

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Suffering as a condition that never resolves.
2 The weather, not the enemy, as the cause.
3 Suffering reaching past the body into belief.
4 Suffering unrecorded, and therefore continuing.

COMPARE WITH

- **STORM ON THE ISLAND.** Heaney's islanders brace for something. Owen's men brace for nothing, because there is nothing to brace for.
- **REMAINS.** Owen stuck in a present that will not move; Armitage stuck in a past that will not stay put.
- **THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.** Tennyson gives war a shape, a direction and six hundred heroes. Owen gives it weather.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **"IT'S ABOUT THE WEATHER."** It is about what weather does to men who cannot go indoors. Nature is the agent, not the subject.
- **TOO MUCH OWEN.** A full biography earns nothing. Two facts beat a paragraph of dates.
- **TECHNIQUE SPOTTING.** "This is a metaphor" and then nothing.
- **THE CLEVER WRONG ANSWER.** That the men are imagining it because they are exhausted. It quietly moves the killing out of the world and into their heads.

STORM ON THE ISLAND

Seamus Heaney · 1966 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

They have prepared for everything, and the thing that attacks them is empty air.

Look at the first eight letters of the title. STORMONT. Heaney published this two years before the Troubles began.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **1966, DEATH OF A NATURALIST.** His first collection. He was thirty.
- **COUNTY DERRY.** Heaney grew up on a farm in Northern Ireland and knew exactly what a bare landscape costs.
- **TWO YEARS EARLY.** Whether the political reading was intended is argued about. The military vocabulary is not in doubt.

STRUCTURE

- **NINETEEN LINES, NO STANZA BREAKS.** One solid block, like the squat houses. There is nowhere in the poem to shelter either.
- **BLANK VERSE.** Unrhymed iambic pentameter — steady, practical, conversational. A man explaining something.
- **THE TURN IS "BUT".** Everything before it is preparation. Everything after it is the thing they could not prepare for.

LANGUAGE

- **MILITARY VOCABULARY THROUGHOUT.** Bombarded, exploding, strafes, salvo, wind dives. A storm described entirely as an assault.
- **THE ABSENT COMFORTS.** No stacks, no stooks, no trees — the poem lists what is missing before it lists what comes.
- **THE OXYMORON AT THE END.** A "huge nothing" that they fear. Nothing, given size.
- **"WE" FROM START TO FINISH.** A community speaking. Never "I".

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

This poem is still in copyright, so the lines are not reprinted here.

Choose six short quotations from the anthology and write them in. Pick one for each of the four points below, plus two for structure.

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1 Preparation, and the limit of it.
2 The military register turning weather into war.
3 Nature as an active enemy.
4 Fear of a nothing that has weight.

COMPARE WITH

- **EXPOSURE.** Both make the air the enemy and both end on an absence.
- **THE PRELUDE.** Nature punishing — but Wordsworth's boy is alone and guilty, and these islanders have done nothing.
- **BAYONET CHARGE.** Both use the vocabulary of war; only one is about a war.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **CALLING IT A NATURE POEM.** Then explain the word "salvo".
- **MISSING "WE".** It is communal from the first word.
- **STOPPING AT THE STORM.** The last line is the poem.
- **OVERSELLING STORMONT.** Mention it once, as a reading. Do not build the whole answer on it.

BAYONET CHARGE

Ted Hughes · 1957 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

It begins mid-sentence, mid-run, with a man who has no name and no reason.

Stanza two stops time completely. That is where the poem actually happens.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **HIS FATHER SURVIVED GALLIPOLI.** One of seventeen from his regiment. Hughes grew up with a man who did not talk about it.
- **1957, THE HAWK IN THE RAIN.** His first collection, published when he was twenty-seven.
- **HE WAS NEVER THERE.** Written forty years after, by a man imagining his father's war.

STRUCTURE

- **IN MEDIAS RES.** "Suddenly he awoke and was running" — no introduction, no orders, no context. You are already in it.
- **THREE STANZAS: ACT, THINK, ACT.** One and three are motion. Two is suspended — time stops and the ideas collapse.
- **ENJAMBMENT AND DASHES.** The lines will not sit still. The punctuation is out of breath.

LANGUAGE

- **"AWOKE" IS THE KEY WORD.** He was asleep inside the patriotism and the running wakes him out of it.
- **PATRIOTISM DEMOTED.** The grand abstractions are dropped like luggage — one of them is called a "luxury".
- **THE HARE.** The only other living thing in the poem, in agony, and nobody can help it. It is him.
- **MACHINERY IMAGERY.** Stars and nations described as clockwork. He is a component.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 The opening, and what withholding context does.
2 Ideals collapsing into instinct.
3 The hare as the poem's one piece of pity.
4 A man reduced to a mechanism.

COMPARE WITH

- **THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.** Tennyson outside it, honouring. Hughes inside it, terrified. Same subject, opposite poems.
- **EXPOSURE.** Both strip the glory out; Owen does it with stillness and Hughes with speed.
- **REMAINS.** Both about a soldier who cannot get out of a moment.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **IGNORING THE HARE.** It is the emotional centre and it is routinely skipped.
- **MISSING THAT STANZA TWO STOPS.** The whole structure turns on it.
- **TREATING HIM AS A CHARACTER.** He has no name on purpose.
- **"IT'S FAST-PACED."** Say HOW — enjambment, dashes, present participles.

REMAINS

Simon Armitage · 2008 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

The tense changes, and the dead man stops being somewhere the speaker went and becomes somewhere the speaker is.

Nothing about the incident changes. The preposition does.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **FROM REAL TESTIMONY.** Written from interviews with veterans for a television documentary, The Not Dead. The voice is borrowed and kept ordinary on purpose.
- **NOT A WAR POEM.** It is an aftermath poem. Most of it happens at home.
- **PTSD.** The poem is describing it without ever using the word.

STRUCTURE

- **SEVEN QUATRAINS, THEN A COUPLET.** The couplet is where it lands, and it is shorter than everything before it.
- **THE TENSE SHIFT.** Past-tense narration until it stops being able to be past tense. That is the hinge.
- **NO RHYME, COLLOQUIAL RHYTHM.** It is a man talking. The form gets out of the way.

LANGUAGE

- **THE ORDINARY REGISTER.** Pub vocabulary, slang, an anecdote's rhythm. An elevated voice would have made it literature instead of evidence.
- **THE REPEATED UNCERTAINTY.** A line about whether the man was armed comes back. It is the uncertainty, not the killing, that does the damage.
- **VIOLENCE WITHOUT STYLE.** Blunt, flat, unglamorous. Nothing is made beautiful.
- **"REMAINS" IS THREE WORDS AT ONCE.** A body, what is left over, and a verb meaning it stays.

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 The ordinary voice, and what it buys.
2 Uncertainty as the real wound.
3 The tense shift as the structural turn.
4 Guilt that does not finish happening.

COMPARE WITH

- **WAR PHOTOGRAPHER.** Both about carrying images home; one chooses to look, one cannot stop.
- **EXPOSURE.** Owen stuck in a present that will not move; Armitage stuck in a past that will not stay put.
- **KAMIKAZE.** Both about a man punished for something nobody can undo.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **CALLING IT A WAR POEM.** Over half of it is at home.
- **MISSING THE TENSE CHANGE.** It is the single most important technique in it.
- **QUOTING THE VIOLENCE AND STOPPING.** The violence is not the subject.
- **TIDYING UP THE VOICE.** Its roughness is the technique. Do not call it simple language and move on.

POPPIES

Jane Weir · 2009 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

The war is never shown. The entire poem is a mother's hands, a doorway and a house that has gone quiet.

And the poem will not tell you whether he is dead. That refusal is deliberate.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **WRITTEN TO ORDER, 2009.** One of a group of poems commissioned about contemporary conflict — Iraq and Afghanistan, not 1914.
- **SHE IS A TEXTILE DESIGNER.** The fabric vocabulary is not decoration. It is her trade.
- **ARMISTICE SUNDAY.** The poem opens three days before it, which fixes the date and nothing else.

STRUCTURE

- **FOUR UNEVEN STANZAS, FREE VERSE.** No rhyme, no pattern — grief does not come in quatrains.
- **TIME SLIPS.** She is at the door and in his childhood in the same sentence. There is no signpost when it happens.
- **THE POEM LEAVES THE HOUSE.** Stanzas three and four follow her out, to the church, to the memorial. She is looking for him.

LANGUAGE

- **TEXTILE VOCABULARY THROUGHOUT.** Binding, blockade, bias, sellotape, gelled — a mother holding a boy together with the tools she owns.
- **DOMESTIC DETAIL AS GRIEF.** Smoothing a collar, picking off cat hairs. She is not allowed to say anything, so she tidies him.
- **THE RELEASE IMAGERY.** A songbird, a dove, the open door. She lets him go three times in the poem.
- **TOUCH THAT IS NOT PERMITTED.** She wants to run her hands through his hair and does not. That restraint is the poem.

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 The war kept entirely offstage.
2 Textile vocabulary as a mother's language.
3 Chronology slipping as memory does.
4 The repeated act of letting go.

COMPARE WITH

- **KAMIKAZE.** Both told by the family rather than the soldier.
- **EXPOSURE.** One is all event and no feeling; the other all feeling and no event.
- **WAR PHOTOGRAPHER.** Both about somebody at home who cannot reach the thing.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **DECIDING HE IS DEAD.** The poem refuses to say. Your answer should too.
- **MISSING HER TRADE.** The fabric words are professional, not poetic decoration.
- **CALLING IT A FIRST WORLD WAR POEM.** It is a modern poem that uses the imagery deliberately.
- **IGNORING THE TIME SHIFTS.** They are the structure.

WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

Carol Ann Duffy · 1985 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

He performs a ritual with great care for people who will not care by Monday.

The last stanza stops looking at him and looks at you.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **SHE KNEW THEM.** Duffy was friends with working war photographers and wrote this out of what they told her.
- **NOT ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER.** It is about the distance between an image and the person eating breakfast beside it.
- **1985.** Written when a Sunday supplement was how most people saw a war.

STRUCTURE

- **FOUR SIX-LINE STANZAS, REGULAR RHYME.** As ordered as the rows of film in the first line. The form is a man coping by keeping things in rows.
- **THE TURN IS THE LAST STANZA.** Three stanzas of him working, then the editor, the reader, and the aeroplane.
- **HE LEAVES AT THE END.** The last image is him looking down from a plane at people who "do not care".

LANGUAGE

- **RELIGIOUS REGISTER.** The darkroom as a church, the photographer as a priest, the ordered rows as a Mass. Devotion without belief.
- **PLACES REDUCED TO NAMES.** A list of conflict zones, given no more space than a list. That is how they arrive at a breakfast table.
- **THE ONE IMAGE THAT SURVIVES.** A single photograph develops and becomes a person with a widow. Only one, out of a hundred.
- **"HE HAS A JOB TO DO."** Flat, professional, and the poem's way of refusing to make him a hero.

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Professional ritual emptied of hope.
2 Order as a coping mechanism.
3 Places reduced to a list.
4 The reader identified and indicted.

COMPARE WITH

- **REMAINS.** Both carry an image home; one chose to take it.
- **POPPIES.** Both about the distance between a war and a living room.
- **CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY.** Both about who decides what gets seen.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **MAKING IT ABOUT HIS FEELINGS ONLY.** The last stanza is about ours.
- **MISSING THE RELIGIOUS IMAGERY.** It runs the whole length of the poem.
- **IGNORING THE RHYME.** Strict form in a poem about chaos is the point.
- **CALLING HIM COLD.** He is the only person in the poem who is doing anything.

TISSUE

Imtiaz Dharker · 2006 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

Everything that controls a life is made of paper, and paper is the weakest thing there is.

The last line turns the whole poem onto the human body — which is also tissue.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **BORN LAHORE, RAISED GLASGOW.** Dharker has described herself as a Scottish Muslim Calvinist. The poem sits between places on purpose.
- **2006, THE TERRORIST AT MY TABLE.** The collection's title tells you the politics it was written inside.
- **PAPER RUNS EVERYTHING.** Maps, holy books, receipts, architects' plans, birth records. Her list is deliberate.

STRUCTURE

- **TEN UNRHYMED QUATRAINS — THEN ONE LINE ALONE.** The final line is left without its stanza, which is the structural point of the whole poem.
- **OPEN FORM, LOTS OF WHITE SPACE.** The page itself is doing the work. Light gets through it.
- **NO FULL CLOSURE.** Enjambment across stanzas keeps it moving, like paper in air.

LANGUAGE

- **LIGHT THROUGH PAPER.** The controlling image — what we can see through, we can see past.
- **THE LIST OF PAPERS.** Koran, maps, receipts, grocery slips, plans. Sacred and trivial, given the same weight.
- **BUILDINGS MADE OF TISSUE.** The conditional — IF buildings were paper. She is proposing it, not describing it.
- **"TURNED INTO YOUR SKIN."** The last line. Human tissue. The most fragile paper of all and the only one that matters.

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Paper as the instrument of power.
2 Impermanence argued as a good thing.
3 What paper records, and who decides.
4 The human body as the final tissue.

COMPARE WITH

- **OZYMANDIAS.** Both about what lasts; both choose the fragile thing.
- **LONDON.** Both about systems that control a life — one from inside, one from above.
- **THE ÉMIGRÉE.** Both built out of light.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **THINKING IT IS ABOUT PAPER.** Paper is the vehicle. Power and impermanence are the subject.
- **MISSING THE LAST LINE.** It reframes everything and it is routinely ignored.
- **IGNORING THE FORM.** The white space is an argument.
- **TREATING IT AS RELIGIOUS.** The Koran is one item in a list that includes a grocery receipt.

THE ÉMIGRÉE

Carol Rumens · 1993 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

The city is never named, and it may no longer exist in the form she remembers.

Every stanza ends on the word SUNLIGHT. It is the only fixed thing in the poem.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **DELIBERATELY UNPLACEABLE.** Rumens gives no country, no language, no date. Any reader can put their own city in it.
- **1993.** Written during the Balkan wars, when a great many people were watching their cities change on television.
- **ÉMIGRÉE IS FEMININE.** The French spelling marks the speaker as a woman. It also marks her as still foreign.

STRUCTURE

- **THREE STANZAS, EACH ENDING "SUNLIGHT".** A refrain that does not change while everything round it does.
- **STANZA THREE TURNS.** The first two are memory. The third brings in a present tense with a threat in it.
- **FREE VERSE, LOOSE AND SPOKEN.** No rhyme scheme — memory does not come in patterns.

LANGUAGE

- **LIGHT VERSUS DARK.** Her memory is sunlit; the present is shadowed, and the shadow is the thing that follows her at the end.
- **THE CITY PERSONIFIED.** She holds it, combs its hair — it is a child, or a lover. Her relationship to it is physical.
- **LANGUAGE AS A POSSESSION.** The tongue she was given is the one thing nobody can confiscate, and it is also what marks her out.
- **"BRANDED BY AN IMPRESSION OF SUNLIGHT."** Branded — marked, permanently, possibly against her will.

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1 Memory preserving something that may be gone.
2 The unnamed city, and why it is unnamed.
3 Language as the last portable home.
4 The threat in the present tense.

COMPARE WITH

- **LONDON.** One city inescapable, one unreachable.
- **CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY.** Both about identity held in language.
- **TISSUE.** Both built out of light, and both about something that will not last.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **TRYING TO IDENTIFY THE CITY.** Not naming it is the technique.
- **MISSING THE REFRAIN.** Three stanzas, three sunlights.
- **CALLING IT NOSTALGIC.** Stanza three has men with guns in it.
- **IGNORING "THEY".** Who are they? The poem will not say, and that is worse.

CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY

John Agard · 2007 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

Two histories, two rhythms, two shapes on the page — and you can SEE the argument before you read a word.

The non-standard spelling is not a mistake. It is the speaker refusing to use the voice he was taught in.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **BORN GUYANA, 1949.** Agard came to Britain in 1977. He was taught British history in a British colony.
- **THE FIGURES ARE REAL.** Toussaint L'Ouverture, Nanny of the Maroons, Mary Seacole — all historical, all absent from the curriculum he was given.
- **MARY SEACOLE WAS AT BALACLAVA.** The same battle as The Charge of the Light Brigade. She is in the anthology; in his history lessons she was not.

STRUCTURE

- **TWO FORMS, ALTERNATING.** British history in short, rhymed, nursery-rhyme bursts. Black history in free verse, italic, indented, unrhymed.
- **THE INDENTATION IS THE ARGUMENT.** One kind of history is boxed in and the other is given room on the page.
- **NO PUNCTUATION.** He will not accept the rules of the written form either.

LANGUAGE

- **TRIVIALISING BY ASSOCIATION.** Dick Whittington and the cow jumping over the moon sit beside 1066. Nursery rhyme and fact, given equal status, which is what the lesson did.
- **LIGHT IMAGERY FOR THE RECLAIMED FIGURES.** A healing star, a yellow sunrise, a fire-woman, a beacon — the ones he was not taught are the ones that shine.
- **"DEM TELL ME", REPEATED.** An accusation, over and over, with no subject named.
- **PHONETIC SPELLING AS ASSERTION.** Not dialect for flavour. A refusal.

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FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 Two forms doing the argument.
2 British history trivialised by what it is placed beside.
3 Reclamation through light imagery.
4 Identity as the final purpose.

COMPARE WITH

- **LONDON.** Both about who controls the words.
- **THE ÉMIGRÉE.** Both about identity carried in language.
- **MY LAST DUCHESS.** Both about who gets to tell the story, and who is left on the wall.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **CALLING THE SPELLING INCORRECT.** It is a deliberate act and the whole poem turns on it.
- **DESCRIBING CONTENT AND IGNORING FORM.** The layout is the argument. Say so.
- **TREATING IT AS ANGRY ONLY.** The last two lines are about construction, not complaint.
- **MISSING SEACOLE'S LINK.** She was at Balaclava. The anthology has put her next to Tennyson on purpose.

KAMIKAZE

Beatrice Garland · 2013 · Power and Conflict

THE ONE THING

He turned back — and his family killed him anyway, by never speaking to him again.

The poem is told by his daughter, and in the last two stanzas she takes the voice over completely.

CONTEXT — THREE FACTS, NO MORE

- **THEY WERE SHAMED.** Kamikaze pilots who returned were treated as having dishonoured their families. Some were ignored for the rest of their lives.
- **2013.** A modern British poet writing about a Japanese story — at a deliberate distance.
- **ONE-WAY FUEL.** A kamikaze aircraft carried enough to reach the target and no more. Turning back was a decision with no way to hide it.

STRUCTURE

- **SEVEN STANZAS OF SIX LINES, THEN TWO IN ITALICS.** The italics are the daughter, speaking directly. The frame drops away.
- **THIRD PERSON, THEN FIRST.** "He" for most of it, then "we learned" — she has been there all along.
- **NO RHYME, LONG FLOWING SENTENCES.** It reads like something remembered and retold, which is what it is.

LANGUAGE

- **THE SEA MAKES HIM TURN.** Fishing boats, a tuna, his brothers on the sand — the memory of being alive is what defeats the mission.
- **"THE DARK PRINCE."** The tuna, described as something magnificent and dangerous. A life worth coming back for.
- **SILENCE AS PUNISHMENT.** Nobody shouts at him. His wife stops speaking. The children learn to. It takes years.
- **THE LAST QUESTION.** She wonders which death he would have chosen. The poem will not answer.

WORTH KNOWING BY HEART

This poem is still in copyright, so the lines are not reprinted here.

Choose six short quotations from the anthology and write them in. Pick one for each of the four points below, plus two for structure.

FROM SMILE TO THE SEVEN STEPS

Annotate with SMILE. Answer with the seven steps. They are not two methods — one is what you do to the poem, the other is what you do to the page.

S **Structure** → ① Point and ③ Explain. The shape of it.

M **Meaning** → ① Point. Not what happens — what it is ARGUING.

I **Imagery** → ② Evidence. The words themselves, nothing else.

L **Language** → ② Evidence, then ⑤ Language. Find it, then name it.

E **Effect on reader** → ⑥ Reader. Same move, same step, new name.

SMILE HAS NO W. Why did the writer choose it — that is ④, and it is the step that moves a 5 to a 7.

ONE ANNOTATION = ONE PARAGRAPH. Pick your best four and you have the four points below.

THE SEVEN STEPS

① **POINT —** answer the question on the paper.
② **EVIDENCE —** the words. Just the words.
③ **EXPLAIN —** what they do.
④ **INTENTION —** why the writer chose them.
⑤ **LANGUAGE —** name it, then say what it does.
⑥ **READER —** what it does to you, sat there, now.
⑦ **LINK —** say the question's words back.

ONE CYCLE = ONE PARAGRAPH. FOUR CYCLES = A FULL ANSWER.

The trap: naming the technique at ② instead of ⑤. Evidence is the words. Nothing else lives there.

FOUR POINTS FOR A FULL ANSWER

1 The turn, and what caused it.
2 Memory and family as the forces that beat duty.
3 Punishment delivered as silence.
4 The daughter telling it, and what that costs.

COMPARE WITH

- **POPPIES.** Both told by family rather than by the soldier.
- **REMAINS.** Both about a man punished long after the event, by himself or by others.
- **THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.** Obedience honoured; obedience refused.

WHAT GOES WRONG EVERY YEAR

- **THINKING HE DIED.** He comes home. That is the entire poem.
- **MISSING THE NARRATOR.** It is his daughter. The italics are hers.
- **CALLING IT A WAR POEM.** There is no battle in it anywhere.
- **IGNORING THE SEA.** It occupies four stanzas and it is the reason for everything.