Conflict

Belfast Confetti

Suddenly as the riot squad moved in, it was raining
exclamation marks,
Nuts, bolts, nails, car-keys. A fount of broken type. And the
explosion.
Itself – an asterisk on the map. This hyphenated line, a burst
of rapid fire…
I was trying to complete a sentence in my head but it kept
stuttering,
All the alleyways and side streets blocked with stops and
colons.

I know this labyrinth so well – Balaclava, Raglan, Inkerman,
Odessa Street –
Why can't I escape? Every move is punctuated. Crimea
Street. Dead end again.
A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon face-shields. Walkie-
talkies. What is
My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I going? A
fusillade of question-marks.

Ciaran Carson (1990)

9 Re-read *Belfast Confetti*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how the experience of conflict is presented in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- the influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 9 = 20 marks)

The poems you have studied are:

A Poison Tree – William Blake
The Destruction of Sennacherib – Lord Byron
Extract from The Prelude – William Wordsworth
The Man He Killed – Thomas Hardy
Cousin Kate – Christina Rossetti
Half-caste – John Agard
Exposure – Wilfred Owen
The Charge of the Light Brigade – Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Catrin – Gillian Clarke
War Photographer – Carole Satyamurti
Belfast Confetti – Ciaran Carson
The Class Game – Mary Casey
Poppies – Jane Weir
No Problem – Benjamin Zephaniah
What Were They Like? – Denise Levertov

Conflict

A Poison Tree

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.

And I water'd 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,
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 veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

William Blake (1794)

9 Re-read *A Poison Tree*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how anger is presented in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 9 = 20 marks)

The poems you have studied are:

A Poison Tree – William Blake
The Destruction of Sennacherib – Lord Byron
Extract from The Prelude – William Wordsworth
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Conflict

War Photographer

The reassurance of the frame is flexible
– you can think that just outside it
people eat, sleep, love normally
while I seek out the tragic, the absurd,
to make a subject.
Or if the picture's such as lifts the heart
the firmness of the edges can convince you
this is how things are

– as when at Ascot once
I took a pair of peach, sun-gilded girls
rolling, silk-crumpled, on the grass
in champagne giggles

– as last week, when I followed a small girl
staggering down some devastated street,
hip thrust out under a baby's weight.
She saw me seeing her; my finger pressed.

At the corner, the first bomb of the morning
shattered the stones.
Instinct prevailing, she dropped her burden
and, mouth too small for her dark scream,
began to run…

The picture showed the little mother
the almost-smile. Their caption read
'Even in hell the human spirit
triumphs over all.'
But hell, like heaven, is untidy,
its boundaries
arbitrary as a blood stain on a wall.

Carole Satyamurti (1987)

9 Re-read *War Photographer*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how powerful images are presented in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 9 = 20 marks)

The poems you have studied are:

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Extract from The Prelude – William Wordsworth
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Conflict

Poppies

Three days before Armistice Sunday
and poppies had already been placed
on individual war graves. Before you left,
I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals,
spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade
of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

Sellotape bandaged around my hand,
I rounded up as many white cat hairs
as I could, smoothed down your shirt's
upturned collar, steeled the softening
of my face. I wanted to graze my nose
across the tip of your nose, play at
being Eskimos like we did when
you were little. I resisted the impulse
to run my fingers through the gelled
blackthorns of your hair. All my words
flattened, rolled, turned into felt,

slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked
with you, to the front door, threw
it open, the world overflowing
like a treasure chest. A split second
and you were away, intoxicated.
After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,
released a song bird from its cage.
Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,
and this is where it led me,
skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy
making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

On reaching the top of the hill I traced
the inscriptions on the war memorial,
leaned against it like a wishbone.
The dove pulled freely against the sky,
an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear
your playground voice catching on the wind.

Jane Weir (2005)

9 Re-read *Poppies*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how conflict affects people in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 9 = 20 marks)

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Conflict

Exposure

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us…
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent…
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient…
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow…
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces —
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed,
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.
Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed,—
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Nor ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands, puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,
But nothing happens.

Wilfred Owen (1917)

2 Re-read *Exposure*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how war is presented in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 2 = 20 marks)

The poems you have studied are:

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Extract from The Prelude – William Wordsworth
The Man He Killed – Thomas Hardy
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Conflict

No Problem

I am not de problem
But I bear de brunt
Of silly playground taunts
An racist stunts,
I am not de problem
I am born academic
But dey got me on de run
Now I am branded athletic
I am not de problem
If yu give I a chance
I can teach yu of Timbuktu
I can do more dan dance,
I am not de problem
I greet yu wid a smile
Yu put me in a pigeon hole
But I am versatile

These conditions may affect me
As I get older,
An I am positively sure
I have no chips on me shoulders,
Black is not de problem
Mother country get it right
An juss fe de record,
Sum of me best friends are white.

Benjamin Zephaniah (1996)

2 Re-read *No Problem*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how a problem is presented in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 2 = 20 marks)

The poems you have studied are:

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What Were They Like? – Denise Levertov

Conflict

Cousin Kate

I was a cottage-maiden
Hardened by sun and air
Contented with my cottage-mates,
Not mindful I was fair.
Why did a great lord find me out
And praise my flaxen hair?
Why did a great lord find me out
To fill my heart with care?

He lured me to his palace-home –
Woe's me for joy thereof –
To lead a shameless shameful life,
His plaything and his love.
He wore me like a golden knot,
He changed me like a glove:
So now I moan, an unclean thing
Who might have been a dove.

O Lady Kate, my Cousin Kate,
You grew more fair than I:
He saw you at your father's gate,
Chose you, and cast me by.
He watched your steps along the lane,
Your sport among the rye:
He lifted you from mean estate
To sit with him on high.

Because you were so good and pure
He bound you with his ring:
The neighbours call you good and pure,
Call me an outcast thing.
Even so I sit and howl in dust
You sit in gold and sing:
Now which of us has tenderer heart?
You had the stronger wing.

O Cousin Kate, my love was true,
Your love was writ in sand:
If he had fooled not me but you,
If you stood where I stand,
He'd not have won me with his love
Nor bought me with his land;
I would have spit into his face
And not have taken his hand.

Yet I've a gift you have not got
And seem not like to get:
For all your clothes and wedding-ring
I've little doubt you fret.
My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride,

Cling closer, closer yet:
Your sire would give broad lands for one
To wear his coronet.

Christina Rossetti (1860)

9 Re-read *Cousin Kate*. Choose **one** other poem from the *Conflict* anthology.

Compare how strong feelings are presented in the two poems.

In your answer, you should consider the:

- poets' use of language, form and structure
- influence of the contexts in which the poems were written.

(Total for Question 9 = 20 marks)

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