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TOWARDS A WORLD UNKNOWN

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TOWARDS A WORLD UNKNOWN

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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.

This anthology was updated to widen the diversity of works that English Literature students can engage with. Five poems have been replaced in each thematic cluster. This revised anthology is available for first teaching from 2022, with first assessment in 2024. For more information, please visit www.ocr.org.uk/english.

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This is the section of the anthology that students will study for their GCSE English Literature.

Conflict

Papa-T

For Reginald Messiah

- 1 When Grandad recited the Tennyson learned at sea,
I saw companies of redcoats tin-soldiering it
Through rugged country, picked off one by one
By poison-tipped blow-darts or arrows from nowhere:
5 Their drums' panicky rattle, their bugler's yelp,
Musket-clap and popping cannons, smoke everywhere.

- He'd cut short to shout, *If yu all don't pay me mind,*
I goin ge yu a good lickin an sen yu to bed, resuming
As he breathed in, his consonants stretched past recall,
10 Into a whales' crying place, beginning polyp kingdoms,
Shipwrecked into Amerindian care for months. We'd sit tight,
All eyes on our sweet seasalter, for that last-line-sound,

- Someone mistimed once, making him start again.
These days the perfect-lined face of a blank page,
15 Startles at first, like Papa-T's no-nonsense recitals;
It has me itching to bring him reeling-off in that tongue –
Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred: to hear, to disobey.

FRED D'AGUIAR
(b. 1960)

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)

Songs for the People

- 1 Let me make the songs for the people,
Songs for the old and young;
Songs to stir like a battle-cry
Wherever they are sung.
- 5 Not for the clashing of sabres,
For carnage nor for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of men
With more abundant life.
- Let me make the songs for the weary,
- 10 Amid life's fever and fret,
Till hearts shall relax their tension,
And careworn brows forget.
- Let me sing for little children,
Before their footsteps stray,
- 15 Sweet anthems of love and duty,
To float o'er life's highway.
- I would sing for the poor and aged,
When shadows dim their sight;
Of the bright and restful mansions,
- 20 Where there shall be no night.
- Our world, so worn and weary,
Needs music, pure and strong,
To hush the jangle and discords
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.
- 25 Music to soothe all its sorrow,
Till war and crime shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown tender
Girdle the world with peace.

FRANCES E. W. HARPER
(1825–1911)

We Lived Happily during the War

1 And when they bombed other people's houses, we

protested

but not enough, we opposed them but not

enough. I was

5 in my bed, around my bed America

was falling: invisible house by invisible house by invisible house –

I took a chair outside and watched the sun.

In the sixth month

of a disastrous reign in the house of money

10 in the street of money in the city of money in the country of money,
our great country of money, we (forgive us)

lived happily during the war.

ILYA KAMINSKY

(b. 1977)

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)

Colonization in Reverse

1 What a joyful news, Miss Mattie;
Ah feel like me heart gwine burs –
Jamaica people colonizin
Englan in reverse.

5 By de hundred, by de tousan,
From country an from town,
By de ship-load, by de plane-load,
Jamaica is Englan boun.

Dem a pour out a Jamaica;
10 Everybody future plan
Is fi get a big-time job
An settle in de motherlan.

What a islan! What a people!
Man an woman, ole an young
15 Jussa pack dem bag an baggage
An tun history upside dung!

Some people doan like travel,
But fi show dem loyalty
Dem all a open up cheap-fare-
20 To-Englan agency;

An week by week dem shippin off
Dem countryman like fire
Fi immigrate an populate
De seat a de Empire.

25 Oonoo se how life is funny,
Oonoo see de tunabout?
Jamaica live fi box bread
Out a English people mout.

For when dem catch a Englan
30 An start play dem different role
Some will settle down to work
An some will settle fi de dole.

Jane seh de dole is not too bad
Because dey payin she
35 Two pounds a week fi seek a job
Dat suit her dignity.

Me seh Jane will never fine work
At de rate how she dah look
For all day she stay pon Aunt Fan couch
40 An read love-story book.

What a devilment a Englan!
Dem face war an brave de worse;
But ah wonderin how dem gwine stan
Colonizin in reverse.

LOUISE BENNETT
(1919–2006)

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)

Thirteen

- 1 You will be four minutes from home
when you are cornered by an officer
who will tell you of a robbery, forty
minutes ago in the area. *You fit*
5 *the description of a man?* – You'll laugh.
Thirteen, you'll tell him: you're thirteen.

You'll be patted on the shoulder, then, by another fed
whose face takes you back to Gloucester Primary School,
a Wednesday assembly about *being little stars*.

- 10 This same officer had an horizon in the east
of his smile when he told your class that
you were all *supernovas*,
the biggest and brightest stars.

- You will show the warmth of your teeth
15 praying he remembers the heat of your supernova;
he will see you powerless – plump.
You will watch the two men cast lots for your organs.

Don't you remember me? you will ask.
You gave a talk at my primary school.

- 20 While fear condenses on your lips,
you will remember that Wednesday, after the assembly,
your teacher speaking more about supernovas:
how they are, in fact, dying stars
on the verge of becoming black holes.

CALEB FEMI
(b. 1990)

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
30 what I am out here,
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)

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

Support materials for Towards a World Unknown will also be available at www.ocr.org.uk

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