

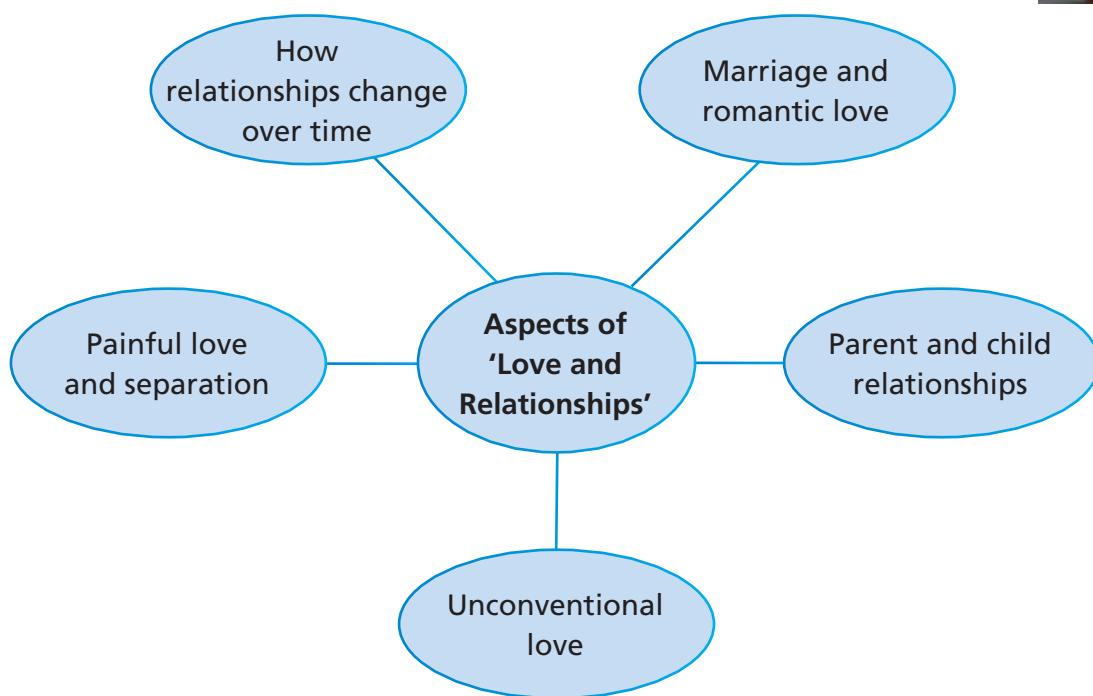
# Cluster Overview: Love and Relationships

## Overview of Poetry Anthology Cluster: Love and Relationships

- The poems in the 'Love and Relationships' cluster focus on the various aspects of love and relationships between people.
- Marriage and romantic love, and the social and **cultural** pressures that impact on love, are the focus of some poems, whilst others consider the strong bonds between parent and child.
- Some of the poems consider how relationships change over time, or how a relationship – or even one moment that crystallised an aspect of a relationship – can change our **perceptions** of ourselves and others for ever.
- The pain of love, possessive love and love as 'letting go' are also depicted, as are the themes of separation and desire in relationships.
- Certain poems highlight unconventional love, or look at how reconciliation may be possible when a relationship is failing.

### Key Point

The poems in the 'Love and Relationships' cluster focus on different types of love and relationships between people.



## Approaching Older Poetry

- Some of the poems, such as *Sonnet 29* by Barrett Browning, *When We Two Parted* by Byron, *Love's Philosophy* by Shelley and *Porphyria's Lover* by Browning, were written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They may present attitudes towards love which seem very different to the way people think about relationships today. Other examples are *Neutral Tones* by Hardy and *The Farmer's Bride* by Mew.
- Older poems also deal with ideas and concepts that are universal, and that speak to us across the years.
  - In *Love's Philosophy*, Shelley is trying to persuade a woman to be his lover;
  - In *Sonnet 29* the speaker thinks of ways she can be close to her lover, even when they are apart.

### Key Point

Understanding the context in which older poems were written can offer you a better understanding of their content.

## Relationships Flavoured by an Era

- Some poems in the cluster are from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and carry strong images of a particular time in evoking a relationship. In *Before You Were Mine*, Duffy captures the glamour of the late 1940s to the early 1950s, whilst *Eden Rock* provides a sharply detailed picture of life between World War 1 and World War 2.

## A Focus on Complexities and Difficulties

- Several of the poems focus on the complexities of parent-child and family relationships.
  - In *Mother, any distance*, Armitage talks about his relationship with his mother, as does Duffy in her poem *Before You Were Mine*.
  - In *Climbing My Grandfather*, Waterhouse explores the relationship between a young child and his grandfather.
  - In *Follower*, Heaney considers his feelings for his father as a young child and then later as an adult.
  - In *Walking Away*, Day Lewis starts with a remembered moment with his young son and develops his thoughts on what parental love means.

### Key Words

Cultural Perceptions



## When We Two Parted

- 1 What has happened to the poet? Tick the correct answer.
- A He has been reminded of an old love affair.
- B His lover has left the country.
- C He has heard his lover is dead.
- D His former lover has married someone else.
- 2 What two things did the other person do to offend the poet? [2]
- 3 Find three examples of repeated words in the poem. [3]
- 4 What rhyme scheme is used in the poem? [1]
- 5 Complete the sentence: The poet uses repetition of the phrase 'silence and tears' to show ... [2]
- 6 Find three words or phrases that convey cold, lack of life and lack of colour. What do these words suggest about the relationship? [4]
- 7 How does the poet indicate 'then' and 'now'? [1]
- 8 a) Which syllables in these lines are stressed? Underline them. [4]
- Thy vows are all broken,  
And light is thy fame;  
I hear thy name spoken,  
And share in its shame.
- b) Why do you think the poet chose to stress these words? [1]
- 9 Complete the sentence: As we learn more about the poet's feelings, the tone of the poem changes from sadness to ..... [1]
- 10 Identify one word that tells you how the poet feels when he hears the other person's name. [1]

## Love's Philosophy

1 Why do you think the poet ends each verse with a rhetorical question?

[1]

2 Name three natural things that the speaker mentions in the first verse.

[3]

3 Which two repeated verbs indicate a change of tone in the second verse?

[1]

4 How does the speaker widen the scope of the argument in the second verse?

[1]

5 What does the speaker mean by 'a law divine' (6)? How does it add to the argument?

[2]

6 What is the effect of the repeated 'And' at the start of lines 10, 13 and 14 in the second verse?

[1]

7 How does the poet's use of punctuation add impact to the speaker's argument?

[1]

8 Which of these best describes the speaker's tone? Circle the correct answer.

[1]

tentative

assertive

quiet

tense

doubtful

9 What particular characteristics of Romantic poetry does this poem exhibit?

[2]

10 Does the speaker give a convincing argument to the object of his love, or not?  
Give your reasons.

[2]

# Poem Overviews 2: Neutral Tones

'chidden' means told off or rebuked. The image is of God being so annoyed with the sun that he has stripped it of all its colour.

The earth itself lacks life and fertility in winter and seems to be 'starving'.

Smiles usually indicate happiness, but this one is dead. It turns into a grin that is so sour that Hardy likens it to a bird that appears when something bad is going to happen ('ominous').

The repetition of 'pond' from the first line brings the poem full circle, but with no forward movement.

## Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;  
— They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

5 Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles of years ago;  
And some words played between us to and fro  
On which lost the more by our love.

10 The smile on your mouth was the deadliest thing  
Alive enough to have strength to die;  
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
Like an ominous bird a-wing....

15 Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me  
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,  
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

'Neutral' describes both the winter scene, drained of bright colour, and the relationship, drained of hope and love. 'Tones' can refer to colour and to mood.

The relationship has been 'tedious' (dull, boring) for some time.

The speaker is remembering this moment by the pond as the end of a relationship. It happened some time ago, but the memory is still very painful.

'curst' means 'cursed' and echoes 'chidden' in line 2.

### Key:

Alliteration

Imagery

Oxymoron

Assonance

Repetition

## About the Poem

- The poem was written by Thomas Hardy in 1867, when he was 27 years old.
- It is a **lyric poem**, but is bitter in tone, about the ending of a love affair.
- The poem explores the poet's pain and despair as he remembers how a relationship in the past had been over for some time before it actually ended. The speaker is probably Hardy himself.

## Ideas, Themes and Issues

- Sterility and death:** The poem opens with a pond, trees and leaves and it ends in exactly the same place. However, where the start was 'we' (two people in a relationship), the ending is two people apart.
  - There are several images of sterility, such as the leaves, the earth, the sun and even the water in the poem (a pond, not a flowing river or stream). They all carry overtones of stagnancy.
  - Everything in the poem is drained of colour and life, and the natural surroundings mirror the sterility and bitterness of the relationship, which is also dead. The poet's ex-lover's smile is 'the deadliest thing' (9).
- Bitter disappointment:** The poet looks back on this scene which, over time, has come to represent bitter disappointment for him.
  - Although this happened some time ago, ('Since then' (13)) whenever he has been let down, or disappointed by love affairs, he has recalled this moment by the pond.
  - The feelings he had at this moment have crystallised into a recurring memory for him.

## Form, Structure and Language

- Antithesis** runs through the poem, both literal in the **oxymoron** 'Alive enough to have strength to die' (10) and implied (the sun should equal warmth and gold, but instead is 'white' (2) and 'God-curst' (15); the smile that should be happy is bitter and ominous).
- The poem uses highly patterned language with many echoes and repetitions.
- The **alliteration** in 'wrings with wrong' (14) and 'God-curst sun' (15) give a harsh sound, that makes the poet sound cold and almost sneering, but full of pain also.
- The way the poem comes full circle, repeating the pond, tree and leaves from the first verse brings it to a desolate close.



### Key Words

Lyric poem  
Antithesis  
Oxymoron  
Alliteration

### Quick Test

- What words would you use to describe the poet's mood in the poem?
- How does the title reflect the content of the poem?
- How does the structure of the poem reflect the poet's emotions?

## Porphyria's Lover

- 1 How does Porphyria take control of the situation when she arrives at the cottage?  
..... [2]
- 2 What is the effect of the repeated 'and' in the poem? What does it suggest about the speaker?  
..... [2]
- 3 Comment on how the poet uses the structure of the poem to indicate something about the speaker's state of mind.  
..... [1]
- 4 What does the use of enjambment suggest about the speaker's state of mind?  
..... [1]
- 5 Where has Porphyria come from to visit the cottage?  
..... [1]
- 6 'No pain felt she;/I am quite sure she felt no pain' (41–42). Why do you think this is important to the speaker?  
..... [1]
- 7 Which two lines in the poem tell you that the speaker thinks love means possession?  
..... [2]
- 8 What is the name given to this kind of poem, where the words are spoken by a character to a silent listener?  
..... [1]
- 9 What justification does the speaker give for his action of murder?  
..... [1]
- 10 How does the scene described at the end of the poem mirror and differ from the one when Porphyria arrives at the cottage?  
..... [2]

**Sonnet 29 – ‘I think of thee!’**

**1** What is the significance of the words ‘Yet’ in line 5 and ‘Because’ in line 12?

[2]

**2** Which of these best describes the love described in the poem? Tick the correct answer.

[1]

A motherly love

C sisterly love

B romantic love

D unrequited love

**3** What do the images of a) wild vines and b) palm trees represent in the poem?

[2]

**4** Does the speaker change her point of view as the poem develops? Explain how.

[2]

**5** What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help you divide the poem up?

[2]

**6** What is a sestet?

[1]

**7** Why does the poem contain so many repetitions of the word ‘thee’?

[1]

**8** What does the speaker mean by the line ‘I will not have my thoughts instead of thee’ (6)?

[1]

**9** Which two words tell you that the speaker feels very passionately about her lover?

[1]

**10** Why does the speaker use exclamations to convey her feelings?

[1]

# Mixed Exam-Style Questions

**Note:** In the exam, each question will only refer to one poem. You will need to choose the other poem. For the purposes of these exam-style questions, a poem has been suggested (in brackets) to make the comparison with. This is shown in the answer section at the back of the book.

- ## 1 When We Two Parted (Compare with *The Farmer's Bride*)

Compare how poets present ideas about a failed relationship in 'When We Two Parted' and in **one** other poem from 'Love and Relationships'.

*Continue your answer on a separate piece of paper.*

30 marks

- ## **2** Love's Philosophy (Compare with Sonnet 29)

Compare how poets use nature to present ideas about love in 'Love's Philosophy' and in **one** other poem from 'Love and Relationships'.

*Continue your answer on a separate piece of paper.*

30 marks

### **3** *Porphyria's Lover* (Compare with *Singh Song!*)

Compare how poets use voice to present a relationship in 'Porphyria's Lover' and in one other poem from 'Love and Relationships'.

*Continue your answer on a separate piece of paper.*

30 marks

#### **4** Walking Away (Compare with *Eden Rock*)

Compare how poets present ideas about love between parent and child in 'Walking Away' and in one other poem from 'Love and Relationships'.

*Continue your answer on a separate piece of paper.*

30 marks