

# GCSE

## The Edexcel anthology for GCSE in English

Modern poetry glossary

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# Introduction

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The publishers of this glossary have written it to help students read the selected poems with understanding. It will **not** tell the reader what to think about the poems generally, or how to answer questions in an exam. But it will enable anyone to find a way into the meaning of the texts, which otherwise might be barred by the way language has changed over time, or by the specific and technical language choices of the writers.

## How can this glossary help teachers?

If you are a teacher, these explanations of the language should help you present the poems to your students.

You can use them as they are presented here, or copy and adapt them into your own study support materials. The rest of this introductory guidance is written for the learner, but should help you as a teacher to think about how you might adapt and use it. This introductory text explains some of the ideas that have gone into creating the glossary.

## How can this glossary help students?

If you are a student looking for ways to understand the poems and make judgements about them, these explanations of the language should give you a way in. If you are thinking of studying English language or English language and literature on an Advanced course, this glossary can show you some kinds of approach that are appropriate in these subjects.

This glossary should **help you to help yourself**. The readings of the poems here are **not** all that you need to answer questions in an exam – you should use them together with the support materials that are available from Edexcel, as the awarding body, and the guidance that your teachers give you.

The guidance that follows is not strictly necessary – you can go straight to the entries for individual poems, or you may find this introductory comment to be useful **after** you have looked at the comments on some of the poems.

## Suggestions for students in using the glossary

- Use the entries (explanations of words) to make your own commentaries on language in the poems. You can do these in such a way that they will help with you with typical questions from exams.
- A good way to learn things is to listen to them. You can make your own spoken commentaries and record these using digital audio software. You can use your computer to play these back to you, or convert into mp3 format, and store the recordings on a portable mp3 player.
- If you would like to know more about the origins of words you should use an etymological dictionary. There is one online at [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)
- For proper nouns or words that refer to other times and cultures, an encyclopaedic dictionary is helpful.

## What kind of glossary is this?

It is not a dictionary, though some of the information here will also appear in dictionaries. It will give you information about the meaning and use of words that have changed or dropped out of common use in the last century or more recently. And it will show you some of the ways in which the poets use language that belongs very specifically to some other context of use – for example the language of horseracing enthusiasts before the Second World War. When you look at two poems from wartime, Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est* and W.H. Auden's *Refugee Blues*, the language may help you understand the quite different approaches in the poems: Owen was a soldier, an infantry officer who writes in his own person of things he did or saw directly. And he also expects the reader to understand some special language that soldiers use among themselves. Auden was an English civilian, living in Britain. In *Refugee Blues* he speaks from the viewpoint of a European Jew threatened by Nazism. He could, perhaps, have used some expressions typical of Jewish speakers, but in fact he uses a language that does not belong to any place or time. At least, that is one possible interpretation of the poem – this glossary will not make that interpretation, but will give you a detailed account of some of the writer's language, so that you can make up your own mind from an informed position.

## Common and different cultures

Once upon a time it was possible for writers and readers of poetry in Britain to assume that they lived in, and understood, the same world in the same way. (This was never really true – the dominant view, even in past times, tended to reflect the outlook of men, those with power, those with money and the educated.) Today we are aware that human society includes enormous variety – and culture, including literature, shows that. The three headings in the Edexcel Anthology attempt to introduce a sense of that variety, even in this small selection of poems.

If the reader does not share a common culture with the writer, then he or she may need some help in finding the poem's meaning. We could perhaps understand much of Moniza Alvi's *An Unknown Girl* without knowing what all the words mean. But our experience will be richer if we know that 'bazaar' is an eastern (originally Persian) noun and that the 'rupee' is the currency of India, if we know what 'hennaing' is, or what a 'kameez' looks like.

Sometimes the difference comes from place, but it may also come from time. A dictionary may tell you that a 'fieldglass' is a 'binocular telescope for outdoor use' (Pocket Oxford, 1975 edition), but not whether this was a commonly used noun when Philip Larkin wrote *At Grass*, or fifteen years earlier (the time to which the poem looks back). Perhaps to the modern reader, the word simply seems outdated; to the contemporary reader, the word would carry a strong sense of its belonging to the special language (or register) of horse-racing, or of country sports more generally.

## Language archaeology

Archaeologists study the material evidence of the past – from which they may learn about people in earlier times. But language can also tell us many things, including much of which the author may not even have been conscious, or which become more interesting or significant with the passing of time.

## Register and code-breaking

When we speak a second language (or fail to) we may become aware of how language becomes either a way for us to understand things or a barrier to understanding. Much of the time when we use our first language, we are not aware of this potential barrier – but it may still be there. For example, we may be able to read the obvious surface meaning of a poem, in terms, say, of something that happened; but we may miss what the poet shows us (deliberately or unintentionally) about what he or she feels or thinks in relation to that subject. In *At Grass*, Philip Larkin is aware that some of the words he wants to use will strike his readers as special or unusual, so he begins them with capital letters. When you read the poem, you may wonder why he does not do this for other words.

In this way, language becomes a kind of code – not for plain and direct meanings, but for attitudes to culture and society, to the arts, to anything, even. The English noun 'meat' shows this. Originally it was the general or standard noun for any kind of food (sometimes, by extension, for a wider range of things). The related noun, 'mat', still has this meaning in Norwegian, and we find it in 'mincemeat' (the sort used in the sweet pies we eat at Christmas), 'sweetmeat' and the (usually metaphorical) phrase 'meat and drink'. Over many centuries the diet of English people changed so that it included more and more animal flesh. Since 'meat' was the term people used to refer to their food, the usage came to mean what the people thought of most importance in their diet. By the 20th century this had become an attitude (widespread in the developed world) that a diet including animal flesh is normal. We distinguish the minority who do not do this as 'vegetarians' or 'vegans'.

When we read a poem from another time or culture, we may need help in breaking this code. In *The Darkling Thrush*, Thomas Hardy refers to frost as grey as a 'spectre' (a ghost) and to haunting. If we do not understand the code of language that has changed, we may think (but we would be wrong to do so) that since Hardy wrote this poem a long time ago, he believed in the reality of ghosts. Hardy was, in fact, sceptical (disbelieving or doubtful) about the existence of anything supernatural (and this poem is one of several in which he writes about this). But he wrote for a readership who would be very familiar with ghosts in fiction, for whom 'spectre' and 'haunted' would be familiar as part of the register of the ghost story and Gothic fiction – a fashion that became popular in Britain a century before Hardy wrote the poem, but which has lasted, long after Hardy's time, to the present day.

## Allusions and reference

There was once a time, too, when writers would assume (even if they were wrong) that they could refer to events from the past, to the sayings of historic people, to passages in classic literature, to the Bible, and to other familiar things in a **common culture** – and that their readers would understand these references (they would know them, or find out from someone else who did). Most of these things were part of the education that children received in Britain for many decades, but now that does not happen. These things may be essential clues or keys to understanding a passage or whole poem. It is not fair to expect you to work out what they mean – and it is not even possible to do so, without some magical powers.

In *The Horses*, for example, Edwin Muir uses a series of words and phrases that appear in the Old Testament of the Bible, especially its first book, *Genesis*. Once you know this you can begin to think about how to interpret the poem, asking yourself, for example, whether you think that this is deliberate, and if so, what effect Mr. Muir is trying to achieve here. You can also see that the poet, either deliberately or inadvertently, assumes a cultural viewpoint that includes knowing some passages from the Bible. But there is no way that you could see any of this until you knew, to begin with, that various phrases in the poem are in the Bible – there is nothing in the phrase 'on the second day' that could tell you that. A good poet can perhaps avoid such problems in writing for his or her contemporaries – but it is almost inevitable that some things will be lost on readers of the future.

In his last novel, *1984*, George Orwell invents a society with an all-powerful ruler (who may or may not be a real person, since he never appears directly in the story), known only as Big Brother. Big Brother is supposed to be watching what all the people do all of the time, and they are encouraged to admire, even to love him. For more than half a century, the phrase 'Big Brother' suggested to educated readers in the west, the ideas of a powerful leader or dictator, and of a state where the authorities spy on the citizens. In 21st century Britain, for most young people Big Brother means something quite different – a TV show where contestants live together under constant surveillance. (There is a link to Orwell's novel, in that the contestants in the TV show sometimes have 'meetings' with an unseen authority figure also called Big Brother. But in everyday language, most young people use the phrase most commonly to name the show – which embraces the activities of the participants, and may have only a very marginal connection to the character for whom the show is named, and even less to the novel in which he figures.)

### **Pronouns, person and viewpoint**

Poetry (like novels and plays) has developed in terms of **conventions** – standard ways of doing things. Sometimes a poem is presented as if it were a conversation (usually, but not always, giving only one half of it). At other times it may be a monologue, a description or an argument. We may not know how far the poet may have thought of a specific kind of reader. But we can look for clues in the text – and the pronouns can be very helpful here: does the poet appear in the first-person pronouns and adjectives (I/me/my/mine)? Does he or she address, or refer to, a supposed reader or readers with the words 'you' and 'your'?

And does the poet adjust himself or herself, and/or the reader to other things in the poem, by use of such things as an appeal, a question, an instruction or command?

Poems (like novels, but unlike plays) usually maintain viewpoint through the use of the first or third person. (Perhaps poets, especially modern writers, use the first person rather more than writers of prose fiction. That may be another way of noting how useful the third person is for narrating, where it is less versatile in lyrics and argument.) But these are very broad generalizations – and, anyway, a writer of a poem or a novel can use one, two or all three grammatical persons in the same piece. In *The Send-off* Wilfred Owen writes in the third person mainly, but switches to the first person; in *Dulce et Decorum Est*, he starts in the first person and ends with an assertion in the second person.

The grammar of pronouns can also show you whether the writer has an individual or collective viewpoint – so we see that the poets in the Anthology may use either singular 'I/me' or plural 'we/us'. This glossary will have explanations of the use of person to show viewpoint.

### **A note about the conventions of this glossary**

Quoted text appears in inverted commas, like this: 'Dragon Management'.

In print publications this may sometimes be represented by use of italics – but the inverted commas here should help you to remember to use this punctuation feature when you write answers in an exam.

Names of literary works appear in italics, like this: *The Send-Off, At Grass, An Unknown Girl*.

Special terms from grammar, linguistics or literary criticism appear in bold type, like this: **Noun phrase, pragmatics, transferred epithet**.

You do not need to know these terms, but you should try to learn about some of the ideas that they express.

Bold type is also used for emphasis.

Andrew Moore

## *In Such a Time as This*

### Lucozade

#### Title Lucozade

Titles can be more or less explanatory in form. This one is a single lexical word. It has a meaning on its own (the name of a brand of drink) – this is its **reference meaning** or **denotation**. But it may also have associations or **connotations**: ideas that the reader already has about Lucozade.

The poet uses the **proper noun** with an apparent assumption that the reader will know it.

Only after reading the whole poem do we have a wider context for connecting the title to what follows. We see that the poet writes more about her mother than about Lucozade, for example.

Since the poem was published, advertisers have sought to reposition the brand as a health drink for athletes; here it is seen more as a medicinal drink, for people who are ill or recovering from illness.

#### 1 My mum

The poet identifies the subject of the poem by her relationship to herself, rather than by her name or other aspect of her identity.

This familiar form of address has been popular in speech for many years, but would be comparatively rare in literature (other than passages of dialogue) until recently (the poem was published in 1998). The Longman Corpus Network identifies 'mum' as one of the 1,000 most commonly spoken English words, and one of the 2,000 most commonly written words. It is also a distinctively British form, the US equivalent being 'mom'.

#### 1 Next to the sad chrysanthemums

This phrase manages at once both to be a **transferred epithet** and to illustrate the **pathetic fallacy**. First, the poet transfers to the chrysanthemums the sadness that is really felt by a person (the poet, her mother, or anyone else concerned about the mother's health, perhaps). The flowers do not literally experience sadness, but the poet **associates** (connects) them with sadness, and may lead the reader to do the same. The pathetic fallacy is the technical name given to the tendency, in describing nature, to credit it with the feelings of the human observer, as when we associate rain or bleak weather with sorrow or negative emotions.

There is a long history of such phrases – in Shakespeare's play, *Twelfth Night*, there is a song about 'sad cypress' (an evergreen tree).

#### 5 Nods off

This is another example of informal or **colloquial** style – writing as one might speak.

#### 7 Orange nostalgia

This phrase combines a literal property of the drink with an idea that it represents for the poet's mother. While the poet uses colloquial language, her mother here uses a **metaphor** of the sort that we might think 'poetic'. This may encourage us to think about whether the poet is recording her mother's exact speech, or, using the convention sometimes known as **poetic licence** (a licence, or freedom, to tell general truths while changing details). In this case it gives us Jackie Kay's interpretation of what her mother said, but not in the precise words.

12 **Don't bring magazines, too much about size**

This line illustrates some of the things explained by the linguistic theory of **pragmatics** – it takes for granted all sorts of ideas that are not stated, and that rely on the reader's own use of language and ability to infer things about the mother.

What Jackie Kay does record is the mother's request not to bring magazines (such as *Woman's Own*, mentioned in the previous line) and her reason for this. That's all that the line says.

- First, we complete the speech that is grammatically incomplete (a minor sentence), to make it read something like: 'They (the magazines) say too much about size.'
- Next, we have to guess **what** kind of thing they might say about size – and we can find this in prevailing social attitudes (and, if we are really keen to know, in back copies of the magazines). That is, perhaps, that they contain articles that express disapproval of fatness, or that recommend losing weight.

If this is the real reason why the mother does not want the magazines, then that may also imply something about her own attitude to weight – maybe that she has no grounds to dispute what is in the magazine, which leads her to wish to avoid it. But we don't know that it is the real reason – she may use a familiar argument to justify a wish that has other grounds, or none at all.

*Size* also helps illustrate the concept of register. For some language users it may be a fairly neutral noun that applies to a great variety of things. For women especially it is something far more precise, in such **collocations** as 'dress size' (but also in 'shoe size', 'waist size' and 'bra size'). Women, of course, use dress size when they buy clothes. But often the term is used as a simple way to indicate fatness or slimness.

15 **Brandy, gin, Bloody Mary**

Drinks, like clothes, are subject to fashions that reveal things about the historical period or the social class of the drinker. The drinks listed here were fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1999 they might be the choice of an older person. That the mother identifies them as luxuries may reflect something about her social class and aspirations, or perhaps about her attitudes to drinking – there is a suggestion that she would not normally have them.

The Bloody Mary is a cocktail, a drink made by mixing vodka, tomato juice, Worcester Sauce and Tabasco. 'Bloody Mary' was originally the nickname of Queen Mary Tudor, in whose reign (1553-1558) many people were executed for their religious beliefs. The cocktail takes its name from the red colour of the tomato juice, which resembles the colour of blood. The nickname uses 'bloody' as a description of colour, so it does not carry its taboo sense. (Where 'bloody hell' is considered to be swearing, 'Bloody Mary' is accepted in polite conversation.)

17 **I've never tasted a Bloody Mary**

Neither will many younger readers of the poem have tasted one – not necessarily because drinking alcohol is forbidden them, but because the fashions change. Actually, drinking **may** be forbidden to many readers. The poet writes from a viewpoint where drinking is normal, even if the drinks named are luxuries to her mother. (The writer may suppose that the reader will share the sense that luxury can be attained in terms of food and drink. A Muslim or Methodist might read these lines differently.)

The Bloody Mary is a drink that belongs to an earlier decade, or, today, that is associated with older drinkers. One could test this by looking for references to it, if there are any, in contemporary drama on TV or in film.

19 **Grapes have no imagination**

Literally this is true, but it is another transferred epithet. The speaker means that the **person** who gives them lacks imagination. Moreover she represents imagination as the capacity to choose presents that will please and surprise the recipient.



21 **Ward 10B, Stobhill Hospital**

Jackie Kay writes of this as if the reader knows the hospital. We don't (unless we happen to know the area of Springburn in Glasgow). The reference can be explained in terms of pragmatics. The poet **could** give more information, but, since the reader is not trying to use the services of the hospital, it makes sense to write about it as if we already knew it. In reading the poem we perhaps think of some other hospital that we do know, while having a sense of the events in the poem as having really happened.

26 **Dandelion hours**

This phrase is not related by standard grammar to the sentence where it appears. So even if we think we know what 'dandelion hours' are, we do not know whose idea this is (the poet's, her mother's, someone else's). Nor do we know what it has to do with the first half of the line.

The phrase seemingly refers to the children's game of telling the time with a dandelion 'clock' — blowing away seeds from a dandelion after it has flowered and gone to seed, and reckoning each puff as an hour.

# Identity

## Miracle on St. David's Day

### Title Miracle

A 'miracle' is a marvellous event, an object of wonder or a sign of God's power. Here the miracle seems to occur naturally. The title indicates that it happens on the day of the patron saint of Wales. Gillian Clarke does not tell us directly that it also happens in Wales, but there is one clue that hints at this.

### 2 Daffodils

These yellow flowers have two strong cultural associations. The daffodil is the national emblem of Wales (some Welsh people use the alternative symbol of the leek). It is also famous as the subject of one of the most famous lyric poems in English, by William Wordsworth (1770-1850). Gillian Clarke quotes part of this at the head of her poem. The poem begins: 'I wandered, lonely as a cloud...' *The Daffodils* is not Wordsworth's title. He gives it merely as Number XII of his *Poems of the Imagination*, noting that he wrote it in 1804 and published it in 1807.

### 2 Sun treads the path

Gillian Clarke represents the sun as like a person that can walk on a path. She is not the first to write of the sun **anthropomorphically** (like a person). In the ancient Biblical book of Psalms (number 19), the sun is likened to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and a strong man running a race. You may think of this as **personification**, though this usually means representing something abstract (like hope or fear), rather than a celestial body, as a person.

### 4 Country house

This phrase is more than the sum of its parts. A 'country house' is a house in the country, but not just any such house – the phrase usually refers to a large house with extensive grounds, the home of a wealthy or important person. It also has a sense of traditional elegance and good taste – as reflected in books and television series about Victorian or Edwardian country houses.

### 6 Insane

This **adjective** and the related **noun** 'insanity' are officially used in UK law (in the Mental Health Act, the Criminal Cases Review Act and two Criminal Procedure Acts). They come from a Latin origin, where 'sane' refers to **any** kind of health, bodily or mental.

### 8 Buckets of coal

Linguists sometimes explain how conversation succeeds or fails, by a series of rules, or **conversational maxims**, one of which is the **maxim of relevance**. It is perfectly possible that Gillian Clarke (who lives on a smallholding in North Wales) **would** have a use for buckets of coal. But the reader knows that making such an offer is not an appropriate response to make to the public reading of poetry, since it is not relevant – or in any way connected – to hearing the reading. Because the response is so unexpected, we may find it amusing. Yet the modern reader may also have a strong sense that mental illness is never a suitable subject for humour, so we censor any feeling of amusement that we experience.

### 10 Schizophrenic

This adjective comes from the **technical lexicon** of mental health care, though it is used inaccurately in popular speech. A 'schizophrenic' is someone whose mental functions are disrupted. The term means being split off from reality. (It is a popular mistake to suppose that a schizophrenic is someone with a split or multiple personality – but this is simply wrong.) Gillian Clarke does not make it clear whether the 'good day' is seen from the point of view of the schizophrenic or of the carers in the home where she is reading to the 'insane'.

14 **Absent**

This appears to be the poet's judgement. Assuming that she is not a mental health expert, then it may be that she has learned this from those who are, and who care for the woman. Where she is confident enough earlier to use the technical noun 'schizophrenic', in this latter case she either chooses not to, or does not know it. (The description might fit some disorders of the autistic spectrum.)

20 **Dumb**

The younger reader, especially those familiar with North American English usage, may think this offensive, and suppose that Mrs. Clarke is describing the labouring man as stupid. (This is the sense of 'dumb' in the title of the comic film *Dumb and Dumber*.) But the poet (who was born in 1937) uses it, apparently, in its older, British English, sense of 'mute' (unable to speak), which is preserved in the phrase 'deaf and dumb', and in gospel stories where Jesus restores speech to those who lack it.

29 **Ten thousand**

This phrase makes sense as it appears in the poem. But Mrs. Clarke perhaps expects some readers to recognize it as a detail from Wordsworth, who claims to have seen 'ten thousand (daffodils) at a glance'. This is plausible if he can estimate the length of sides needed for a square of a hundred by a hundred flowers.

31 **Valleys**

Here the poet assumes that the reader will know to which area she refers. The 'Valleys', with a capital V, is the area of the Rhondda Valley in South Wales – the plural form comes from the fact that it is a two-pronged system, as the river branches into the Great Rhondda and the Little Rhondda. 'The Valleys' is the more local name.

32 **By rote**

This is learning by the mechanical routine of repeating aloud – as with poetry or the multiplication tables. Critics of the method rightly point out that rote learning does not bring understanding. They wrongly overlook the way that it fixes the information that one can then learn to understand, and that much of what is learned does not necessarily require understanding.

# Nature

## The Horses

### 1 Twelvemonth

This seems like a traditional word, though 'year' comes from Old English and is as old as the language. It gives a sense of the length of the year, as the 'seven days' of the next line gives a sense of how long a week is. Fourteen days or nights make a fortnight — a **noun** that is commonly used in modern English.

### 2 Put...to sleep

In modern spoken English this is a **euphemism** for the humane killing of a sick animal. In the poem it expresses both the ideas of death and of sleeping, in the ending of a technologically advanced civilization.

The poem is a version of a narrative that recurs in all kinds of fiction throughout the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, where a catastrophic war wipes out advanced civilization (and most of the people) leaving a small remnant to make a fresh start. The Third World War that Edwin Muir feared in 1952 has not come, and seems less likely in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than it did when he wrote.

### 4 Had made our covenant

A 'covenant' is a solemn agreement, made between two parties. The Bible tells of God's covenants with various characters, but especially with Moses on behalf of the people of Israel. In *The Horses* it is one of a number of **phrases** that echo the language of the Bible in English translation.

### 7/9 On the second/third day

These **phrases** are used by the writer of the Biblical book of *Genesis*, referring to the days of the creation of the world. In this poem, they may suggest the creation of a new world (in the destruction of the old one).

### 8 Turned the knobs

Older radio receivers, and other electrical appliances, used manual controls that typically operated by the rotation of a knob or the depressing of a button. Modern electronic devices may still have such controls, but may instead have sliders or remote controls. In the poem, turning the 'knobs' probably means changing the frequency in the search for a broadcast signal. It is a non-technical way of describing how one might try to locate a broadcast, using an older radio receiver.

### 11/ Thereafter nothing

12 This is a **minor sentence**. It lacks a **main verb**, and 'nothing' could be **subject** or **object** of any verb we supply. The sense seems to be: 'Thereafter nothing happened' or 'Thereafter we heard nothing'. 'Thereafter' (meaning 'after that') is an archaic word, associated with formal writing.

### 19 Quick

This is another Biblical reference. It has nothing to do with speed, and qualifies 'children' not 'swallowed'. It comes from Old English 'cwicu' (meaning 'alive') and refers to the children that the 'bad old world' swallowed alive. This meaning of 'quick' is preserved in the phrase 'the quick and the dead' (this appears in the prayer called the Apostles' Creed) and in words like 'quicklime', 'quicksand' and 'quicksilver'.

26 **Sea-monsters**

In *Paradise Lost*, Book 1, John Milton describes the Philistine god, Dagon, as a 'sea-monster, upward man and downward fish'. Edwin Muir, a Scot, may be thinking here of tales of strange creatures like the supposed Loch Ness Monster. But the comparison may tell us more about how he sees tractors. We know at least what these look like, and can imagine how they might look at evening. But since he tells us of the sea-monsters only that they are dank (which would tend to follow from being in the sea), then we have no way of knowing if he thinks of the Biblical Leviathan, a sea-serpent, the Kraken, the Loch Ness Monster, or something else that might look a bit like a crouching and waiting tractor. In 1952 even the most modern of tractors did not have a cab, and the driver sat on a seat rather like the saddle of a bike.

42 **Fabulous steeds**

'Fabulous' is a word that is today often used loosely as a general term of approval. Here Edwin Muir uses it in its older and more literal sense – which comes from the noun 'fable'. The horses here may resemble heroic horses in a fable, but to the people whom they come to serve, they are real. (As readers, however, we may note that the whole of Muir's poem is a modern fable, of a familiar type, concerned with a catastrophic war and a rejection of advanced technology.)

'Steed' comes from the Old English 'steda' (meaning 'stallion'). The noun has associations of great strength and courage, as well as service of the rider – often we see this in such phrases as 'trusty steed' or 'faithful steed'.

45 **As if they had been sent**

This is the suggestion of the speaker in the poem. He (or she) does not say whether he thinks they have been sent, only that it might look like that. The poet, on the other hand, in including this suggestion clearly **does** want the reader to consider such a possibility – though he manages to have it both ways: since whether we think the horses really have been sent, or just look that way to someone in the poem, the narrative is unaffected.

Edwin Muir also raises a question about who or what might have sent them. 'By an old command' suggests the possibility that the horses have been waiting for vast ages – ready for the point where the machines break, and man needs help – as if this is all foreseen in the creation of the world.

51 **Wilderness**

This could just refer to wild and undeveloped land, but it is a noun many readers will connect with stories in the Bible.

52 **Eden**

Eden is the name of the garden where the first man and woman live in the creation narratives of the biblical book of *Genesis*. Here in the poem is the suggestion of a second creation for the strange horses.

55 **Free servitude**

This is a paradox of the sort called an **oxymoron** (an apparent contradiction in terms). The explanation is that the horses are free to choose, but make a free choice to serve. They retain their general freedom of choice, but use it to do the things that their human masters need help with. Since these are good and constructive tasks (pulling ploughs and carrying loads) that the horses are well suited to doing, there is no conflict here.