

IGCSE

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Poetry Anthology for English Literature (4360)

For examination in May and November
2005, 2006, 2007

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Poetry Anthology

London Examinations IGCSE

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Section One: Childhood

Half-past Two

Once upon a schooltime
He did Something Very Wrong
(I forget what it was).

5 And She said he'd done
Something Very Wrong, and must
Stay in the school-room till half-past two.

(Being cross, she'd forgotten
She hadn't taught him Time.
He was too scared of being wicked to remind her.)

10 He knew a lot of time: he knew
Gettinguptime, timeyouwereofftime,
Timetogohomenowtime, TVtime,

Timeformykisstime (that was Grantime).
All the important times he knew,
15 But not half-past two.

He knew the clockface, the little eyes
And two long legs for walking,
But he couldn't click its language,

20 So he waited, beyond onceupona,
Out of reach of all the timefors,
And knew he'd escaped for ever

Into the smell of old chrysanthemums on Her desk,
Into the silent noise his hangnail made,
Into the air outside the window, into ever.

25 And then, *My goodness*, she said,
Scuttling in, *I forgot all about you.*
Run along or you'll be late.

30 So she slotted him back into schooltime,
And he got home in time for teatime,
Nexttime, notimeforthatnowtime,

But he never forgot how once by not knowing time,
He escaped into the clockless land of ever,
Where time hides tick-less waiting to be born.

U.A.Fanthorpe

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

5 In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

10 So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

D.H.Lawrence

My Parents kept Me from Children who were Rough

My parents kept me from children who were rough
And who threw words like stones and who wore torn clothes.
Their thighs showed through rags. They ran in the street
And climbed cliffs and stripped by the country streams.

5 I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron
And their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms.
I feared the salt coarse pointing of these boys
Who copied my lisp behind me on the road.

10 They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges
Like dogs to bark at our world. They threw mud
And I looked another way, pretending to smile.
I longed to forgive them, yet they never smiled.

Stephen Spender

Section Two: Love

Plena Timoris¹

The lovers looked over the parapet-stone:
The moon in its southing directly blent
Its silver with their environment.
Her ear-rings twinkled; her teeth, too, shone
5 As, his arm around her, they laughed and leant.

A man came up to them; then one more.
'There's a woman in the canal below,'
They said; climbed over; slid down; let go,
And a splashing was heard, till an arm upbore,
10 And a dripping body began to show.

'Drowned herself for love of a man,
Who at one time used to meet her here,
Until he grew tired. But she'd wait him near,
And hope, till hopeless despair began,
15 So much for love in this mortal sphere!'

The girl's heart shuddered; it seemed as to freeze her
That here, at their tryst for so many a day,
Another woman's tragedy lay.
Dim dreads of the future grew slowly to seize her,
20 And her arm dropt from his as they wandered away.

Thomas Hardy

¹*Plena timoris* (Latin): A woman full of fear and dread.

For Me From You

For days and days
your words have poured and poured
words heard before
words read before
5 of
how much love
how much care
how much sacrifice
so much how much
10 how much so much
that in my mind
i go to a market stall
and i ask how much
how much are you selling
15 how much am i buying.

After nights and nights
more of your words come
come proposing
come disposing
20 wine carrying¹ in three months
a son for you in nine
teaching job with midday break
a party for you and your friends.

In this dark room
25 without the shine of the moon without
your words come muscled, come rushing
a nice big kitchen for me from you
a little car for me from you
a trunk box of wrappers for me from you
30 a fat allowance for me from you
ALL you say, EVERYTHING you say
FOR ME FROM YOU
i go again to the market
where everything abounds
35 where everything is sold
where all can be bought.

there i see all markets i have been to
the Yoruba woman said 'KOGBA'²
the Hausa woman said 'ALA BARKA'²
40 the Igbo woman said 'MBAA O'²
so i see that some sell and others don't
And in this moonless room
i see what i am buying for me from you

and i see my tomorrow tonight
45 and i see the sister of my tomorrow
and i see the sister of the sister
of my tomorrow
days endless and uncountable
if i buy
50 my place for me from you.

Rita Anyiam St John

¹ Wine carrying is a major part of marriage rites in many parts of Nigeria. 'Wine' includes assorted drinks which are presented by the suitor to indicate his intention and finally to celebrate the marriage. The bride indicates her acceptance by searching for the bridegroom in the crowd and offering him wine on her knees.

² *Kogba*, *Ala barka*, and *Mbaa o*: words indicating refusal to sell.

Poem at Thirty-Nine

How I miss my father.
I wish he had not been
so tired
when I was
5 born.

Writing deposit slips and checks
I think of him.
He taught me how.
This is the form,
10 he must have said:
the way it is done.
I learned to see
bits of paper
as a way
15 to escape
the life he knew
and even in high school
had a savings
account.

20 He taught me
that telling the truth
did not always mean
a beating;
though many of my truths
25 must have grieved him
before the end.

How I miss my father!
He cooked like a person
dancing
30 in a yoga meditation
and craved the voluptuous
sharing
of good food.

Now I look and cook just like him:
35 my brain light;
tossing this and that
into the pot;
seasoning none of my life
the same way twice; happy to feed
40 whoever strays my way.

He would have grown
to admire
the woman I've become:
cooking, writing, chopping wood,
45 staring into the fire.

Alice Walker

Section Three: Places

In Your Mind

The other country, is it anticipated or half-remembered?
Its language is muffled by the rain which falls all afternoon
one autumn in England, and in your mind
you put aside your work and head for the airport
5 with a credit card and a warm coat you will leave
on the plane. The past fades like newsprint in the sun.

You know people there. Their faces are photographs
on the wrong side of your eyes. A beautiful boy
in the bar on the harbour serves you a drink – what? –
10 asks you if men could possibly land on the moon.
A moon like an orange drawn by a child. No.
Never. You watch it peel itself into the sea.

Sleep. The rasp of carpentry wakes you. On the wall,
a painting lost for thirty years renders the room yours.
15 *Of course.* You go to your job, right at the old hotel, left,
then left again. You love this job. Apt sounds
mark the passing of the hours. Seagulls. Bells. A flute
practising scales. You swap a coin for a fish on the way home.

20 Then suddenly you are lost but not lost, dawdling
on the blue bridge, watching six swans vanish
under your feet. The certainty of place turns on the lights
all over town, turns up the scent on the air. For a moment
you are there, in the other country, knowing its name.
And then a desk. A newspaper. A window. English rain.

Carol Ann Duffy

Geography Lesson

When the jet sprang into the sky,
it was clear why the city
had developed the way it had,
seeing it scaled six inches to the mile.

5 There seemed an inevitability
about what on ground had looked haphazard,
unplanned and without style
when the jet sprang into the sky.

When the jet reached ten thousand feet,
it was clear why the country
had cities where rivers ran
and why the valleys were populated.

10 The logic of geography –
that land and water attracted man –
15 was clearly delineated
when the jet reached ten thousand feet.

When the jet rose six miles high,
it was clear the earth was round
and that it had more sea than land.

20 But it was difficult to understand
that the men on the earth found
causes to hate each other, to build
walls across cities and to kill.
From that height, it was not clear why.

Zulfiker Ghose

Section Four: Thoughts

If

- If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
5 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
- 10 If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
15 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
- 20 If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they have gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"
- 25 If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
30 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

World! Why do you hound me?

World! Why do you hound me like this?
Do I annoy you? Really? When all I want
is to put Beauty in my Understanding?
and not my Understanding in Beauty?

- 5 I have no interest in Money and Luxury:
it gives me more satisfaction
to put Wealth in my Understanding
than my Understanding in Wealth.

- 10 A Pretty Face is soon gone:
how can I value the daily loot of Time?
or the forged crown of Luxury?

For as long as I look for Truth, I believe
it is better to unmake the vanities of Life
than to unmake my Life with vanities.

Juana Inés de La Cruz
(1648-1695)

Poem

Are you Alive, Dead or DeadAlive?
Call These Three Witnesses – and judge.

One: call Consciousness, Your Own.
Quiz yourself with your own light.

5 Two: call Consciousness, An Other's.
Quiz yourself with another's light.

Three: call Consciousness, God's.
Quiz yourself with God's light.

10 Think: you are Alive and Forever.
As Alive and Forever as God.

Think: As Alive and Forever as God
when you dare, and see his face.

Think: what is Going-to-Heaven?
A hunt for a witness to your Aliveness.

15 Think: whose evidence makes you Forever,
Alive and Forever as God?

Can you stand, unquaked, in His hereness?
When you dare you are gold, pure gold.

20 Are you only a dab of dust?
Pull your life-knot tight –

hold your speck-self tight –
and blaze it gold and Alive.

Call Alive to the stand of the Sun!
Rewhittle the old dead-habited You

25 And be new. Judge that Alive.
Or you are a smoke-ring, wasting, wasting.

Allama Mohammed Iqbal
(1875-1938)

Section Five: Death's Approach

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.

5 Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.

10 Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti

Crabbit Old Woman

What do you see, nurses,
what do you see?
Are you thinking
when you're looking at me,
5 A crabbit old woman,
not very wise,
Uncertain of habit,
with far-away eyes,
Who dribbles her food
10 and makes no reply,
When you say in a loud voice,
'I do wish you'd try',
Who seems not to notice
the things that you do,
15 And forever is losing
a stocking or shoe,
Who, quite unresisting,
lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding,
20 the long day to fill?
Is that what you're thinking,
is that what you see?
Then open your eyes,
you're not looking at me.
25 I'll tell you who I am
as I sit here so still,
As I move at your bidding,
as I eat at your will,
I'm a small child of ten
30 with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters,
who love one another;
A young girl of sixteen
with wings on her feet,
35 Dreaming that soon
a true lover she'll meet;
A bride now at twenty –
my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows
40 that I promised to keep;
At twenty-five now
I have young of my own,
Who need me to build
a secure, happy home;
45 A woman of thirty,
my young now grow fast,
Bound to each other
with ties that should last;
At forty my young sons
50 will soon all be gone,
But my man stays beside me
to see I don't mourn;
At fifty once more
babies play round my knee,

55 Again we know children,
my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me,
my husband is dead,
I look at the future,
60 I shudder with dread,
For my young are all busy
with young of their own,
And I think of the years
and the love I have known.
65 I'm an old woman now
and nature is cruel,
'Tis her jest to make
old age look like a fool.
The body it crumbles,
70 grace and vigour depart,
There now is a stone
where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass
a young girl still dwells,
75 And now and again
my battered heart swells.
I remember the joys,
I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living
80 life over again.
I think of the years
all too few – gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact
that nothing can last.
85 So open your eyes, nurses,
open and see,
Not a crabbit old woman,
look closer – see *ME*.

Phyllis McCormack

Refugee Mother and Child

No Madonna and Child could touch
that picture of a mother's tenderness
for a son she soon would have to forget.

5 The air was heavy with odours
of diarrhoea of unwashed children
with washed-out ribs and dried-up
bottoms struggling in laboured
steps behind blown empty bellies. Most
10 mothers there had long since ceased
to care but not this one: she held
a ghost smile between her teeth
and in her eyes the ghost of a mother's
pride as she combed the rust-coloured
15 hair left on his skull and then –
singing in her eyes – began carefully
to part it...In another life this
would have been a little daily
act of no consequence before his
20 breakfast and school; now she
did it like putting flowers
on a tiny grave.

Chinua Achebe

End of Anthology

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