

Love and Relationships Poetry Knowledge Organiser

	Content and key concepts	Context	Language	Structure	Key quotations	Vocabulary
When We Two Parted – Byron	The speaker unhappily addresses a former lover. He keeps his pain a secret as the relationship was an affair. The poem conveys how the persistent pain of a broken heart is similar to that of bereavement. It reflects on the inevitability of painful separation in romantic relationships.	The poem may be an autobiographical account of one of Byron's affairs. It is one-sided and may unfairly portray the woman's behaviour. Byron was a Romantic poet (a 19 th century group of artists interested in emotions and nature) who believed that "man was born free" but "is everywhere in chains". "Chains" included the social expectations which haunt the poem.	Imagery of death – presents the break-up as being comparable to bereavement. Pathetic fallacy – creates a melancholic tone. Archaic diction – emphasises the long duration of his heartbreak.	Plural 1st person and 2nd person – attempts to be close to his former lover. Consistent ABAB rhyme scheme – effect of fate and certainty that the relationship was doomed. Circular structure emphasises the persistence of suffering.	1. "Half broken-hearted, / To sever for years." 2. "In silence and tears" 3. "They name thee before me, / A knell to my ear."	A. Disillusion: disappointment B. Melancholic: sorrowful, sad
Love's Philosophy – Shelley	The speaker tries to seduce his listener, emphasising that nothing in nature is single – so they shouldn't be single either. Whilst the poem could be interpreted as a playful attempt seduce a lover, it could equally be a reflection on the unscrupulous actions of a man focussed purely on sexual enjoyment.	Shelley was a well-known atheist. Therefore the religious references in the poem are interpreted as an attempt to manipulate the listener. Like Byron, Shelley was a romantic poet. He wanted to liberate society from its "chains", and this led him to the concept of natural instinct : follow your desires, ignoring society's expectations.	Personification of nature shows the naturalness of sexual passion. Religious diction suggests physical love is God's will – manipulative. Rhetorical Qs and imperative verbs pressure the listener. Increasing repetition of "kiss" – speaker's increasing frustration.	ABAB rhyme scheme contains some half rhymes , reflecting a sense of discord and frustration. 2nd person perspective – creates a conversation with the listener. Shift in tone – from caring words ("clasp") to words with more sexual connotations.	4. "All things by a law divine / In one another's being mingle" 5. "The sunlight clasps the earth" 6. "What are all these kissings worth, / If thou kiss not me?"	C. Unscrupulous: lacking morality or integrity D. Unrequited love: love that is not returned
Porphyria's Lover – Browning	The speaker describes a stormy night when he strangled his lover – Porphyria – so that she would be with him forever. This poem reveals the dangers posed by possessive and obsessive love.	Porphyria is a disease that can result in insanity. Browning may compare love to madness. In the Victorian period, women were supposed to be pure and innocent. But Porphyria is portrayed as seductive. This could be the untrustworthy speaker justifying the murder.	Pathetic fallacy – sombre mood. Sexual diction to describe Porphyria's actions. Juxtaposition of the speaker's evil with Porphyria's trust. Repetition shows possessiveness.	Dramatic monologue – narrative by one person. As we never hear Porphyria's version the speaker may be an unreliable narrator . Asymmetrical rhyme scheme (ABABB) conveys instability.	7. "The rain set early in tonight." 8. "I knew Porphyria worshipped me." 9. "That moment she was mine, mine fair"	E. Possessive: desire to own something. F. Transgress: to crossing a boundary
Sonnet 29 – Browning	A declaration of passionate love. Browning conveys how unrequited longing for a lover can lead to impatience. She challenges an assumption of patriarchal cultures: that women should not have the freedom to articulate sexual desire.	Browning wrote this as a private poem for her husband. However, Browning's husband encouraged her to publish it and so it was included in a book entitled "Sonnets from the Portuguese". The title aimed to protect Browning's reputation within a moral and judgemental society.	Extended metaphor of the lover as a tree – sexual desire is natural. Imperative verbs and euphemisms show her control. Direct address emphasises the speaker's desire to strengthen her relationship with her lover.	Sonnets have 14 lines and are often about romance. Sonnets have a volta (shift in tone) after line 8 – yet here it comes early in line 7, suggesting the speaker's impatience to be with her lover. Circular structure – endless love.	10. "My thoughts do twine and bud / About thee." 11. "Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare." 12. "deep joy."	G. Urgency: strong desire H. Unconventional: not following social expectations
Neutral Tones – Hardy	The speaker cannot forget the day when his lover left him. The poem explores how the end of a relationship can lead to a loss of faith in the idea of love, and how such endings can be experienced in a similar way as grief after a bereavement.	Hardy had a number of failed relationships, one of which may have inspired the poem. Hardy lived at a time when people increasingly questioned the truth of Christianity; in the poem the speaker looks for God in nature, but can only find suffering and curses.	Pronouns ("we" to "me") – acceptance of separation. Imagery of love as a game – love hasn't been taken seriously. Colour imagery – melancholy tone. Imagery of death compares loss of love with bereavement.	Regular quatrains show calm, reflective thought, as if the speaker is returning to old ideas. The circular structure shows that the speaker will not move forward; the situation is unresolved.	13. "leaves lay on the starving sod" 14. "The smile on your mouth was the dearest thing." 15. "A pond edged with greyish leaves."	I. Bitter: unable to forgive J. Unresolved anguish: intense and lasting suffering
Letters from Yorkshire – Dooley	The speaker reflects on her monotonous urban life, and her friendship with someone living in the countryside. Despite the stark differences between the two characters' lives, the poem shows how connections to people can be maintained through the power of words.	In recent years, an increasing number of people live in cities and work in isolation, on computers or in offices. This social change has led many to feel dissatisfied with their employment and to believe that they need to get back in touch with nature.	Physical verbs – the fulfilling, yet difficult, work of living in a rural area. Juxtaposition between urban and rural, happiness and monotony. Imagery of light and air romanticises rural life.	Direct address – the effect of a personal conversation or letter. Shift from differences in stanzas 1-3, to connection in stanza 4. Continuous present tense shows that these two lives are happening simultaneously.	16. "the first lapwings return." 17. "Is your life more real because you dig and sow?" 18. "our souls tap out messages across the icy miles."	K. Monotonous: boring L. Fulfilling: leading to a sense of satisfaction and contentment
The Farmer's Bride – Charlotte Mew	A farmer marries a young girl; she tries to escape. The farmer is frustrated that he has been rejected. This poem reveals the detrimental impact of patriarchal values on men and women. When the husband's concept of marriage is not fulfilled, he becomes frustrated, but is unable to speak sensitively to his wife, leaving her marginalised by the patriarchal system.	Women are marginalised within patriarchal societies; they have few rights, being unable to choose their own husband, own property, or to file for divorce. Women are expected to conform to gender stereotypes, completing household tasks and submitting to their husband's desires. "The Farmer's Bride" was written during the Suffragette movement.	Animal imagery presents the woman as vulnerable, hunted, and more part of nature than society. Dialect – creates realism. Autumnal imagery conveys the farmer's loneliness and loss. Imagery of entrapment reveals the pressures the patriarchal system place on both men and women.	In a dramatic monologue one speaker recounts their narrative. In this poem, the husband gives his version of events, but the wife is silenced. Repetition builds towards the end of the poem, reflecting the farmer's increasing frustration.	19. "Like the shut of a winter's day / Her smile went out." 20. "We chased her, flying like a hare." 21. "The brown of her – her eyes, her hair, her hair!"	M. Dehumanising: to treat someone like an animal. N. Traumatising: causing psychological pain or distress.

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Walking Away – C Day Lewis	The speaker recalls taking his son to boarding school 18 yrs ago. He accepts that parents need to let their children go. This poem recognises the pain of separation, but counters this with the understanding that love means allowing the child to become independent.	This poem is an autobiographical reflection on the poet's experience of taking his oldest son to school. Additionally, Day Lewis had attended boarding school himself and so could appreciate the anxiety and pain from both sides of the relationship.	Semantic field of pain – father's psychological anguish and distress. Natural imagery – leaving home is a natural and inevitable process. Imagery of boundaries shows that growing up creates a division between parents and children.	1st person – personal tone. The steady ABACA rhyme scheme reflects the consistency of love. Yet the C rhyme and the circular structure suggest disharmony and continuing pain.	22. "like a satellite / Wrenched from its orbit." 23. "A half-fledged thing set free / Into a wilderness" 24. "love is proved in the letting go."	O. Apprehensive: anxious about the future P. Inevitable: an event can't be stopped
Eden Rock – Charles Causley	The speaker imagines looking across a river, where he sees his parents as a young couple. They want him to join them – perhaps in the after-life. Causley poignantly articulates the pain of separation and the longing to be reunited.	Causley's father fought in WWI, and died of lasting injuries in 1924. Causley was just 7 years old. Causley wrote "Eden Rock" late in his life, when he was meditating on approaching death.	Everyday, nostalgic language – the normality of family life. River – the mythical River Styx. Crossing it led to the after-life. Biblical allusion to the Garden of Eden – his parents are in heaven.	The regular rhythm indicates the reliable nature of the parent-child relationship. Half-ryhmes – melancholic tone. The break in the last stanza is the break between life and death.	25. "Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light" 26. "The sky whitens, as if lit by three suns." 27. "Crossing is not as hard as you might think."	Q. Idyllic: calm, peaceful R. Poignant: a profound feeling of sadness
Follower – Seamus Heaney	The speaker recalls watching his father expertly plough the family farm. As time passes, the father-son roles reverse. Heaney's speaker recalls a time before life choices separated him from his father; whilst this separation was painful, it was also inevitable.	The poem may be autobiographical; Heaney grew up helping his father on the family farm. However, in 1947, the NI Education Act opened up access to secondary and university education; Heaney took advantage of this and left the family farm to attend university.	Nautical imagery – the father's strength, but also isolation. A semantic field of expertise emphasises the son's admiration. The repetition and reversal of roles reflects the cycle of life, as the father grows older and dependent.	Steady iambic tetrameter and stanza length reflects the father's reliability and expertise. The ABAB rhyme scheme occasionally includes half-ryhmes , creating a melancholic tone and a sense of imperfection.	28. "His shoulders globed like a full sail strung." 29. "I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake" 30. "It is my father who keeps stumbling."	S. Nostalgic: longing for things of the past. T. Aspirations: ambitions.
Mother, Any Distance – Simon Armitage	The speaker's mother helps him to move into house, a symbol for independence. This poem exposes the need to renegotiate parent-child relationships as time passes. The parent's loss is countered by the young person's optimism at moving into uncharted territory.	The poem was published in a collection called <i>Book of Matches</i> . The poems in this book are all short enough to be read in the time it takes a single match to burn. The image of the burning match represents how these moments of life disappear quickly.	Spatial imagery hyperbolises the house's daunting size. The tape measure (umbilical cord?) shows a lasting connection. The mother is an anchor (security or restriction). The son is a kite , flying free, but remaining connected to safety.	The poem follows a modified sonnet structure , showing the son's desire for freedom from restrictions and patterns. The poem shifts from "you" to "I" – increasing independence.	31. "the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors." 32. "I space-walk through the empty bedrooms." 33. "An endless sky / to fall or fly."	U. Renegotiating relationships: a change in a relationship. V. Uncharted territory: unfamiliar space.
Before you were Mine – Carol Ann Duffy	The speaker describes her mother's life before children, reflecting on how the arrival of a baby meant a loss of freedom. Duffy explores the treatment of women who didn't conform to 1950s gender stereotypes, as well as reflecting on the child's admiration for their parent. The poem shows the strength of familial love.	The poem depicts working-class life in 1950s Glasgow, when young women were supposed to obey their parents, focus on their work, and save themselves for their future husband. The speaker's mother refuses to conform, and so the poem exposes the tensions this creates in the family.	A semantic field of excitement + " red shoes " – youthful exuberance. Marilyn symbolises glamour, fame, and pushing the boundaries. The child's " possessive yell " – a shift to adult responsibilities. The " wrong pavement " indicates the mother's unwillingness to conform.	Free verse (no rhyme or rhythm), and enjambment (run-on line) suggests a refusal to conform. It also creates a conversational tone. The use of 2nd person and Qs shows the child's desire to maintain family bonds.	34. "The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh?" 35. "Those high-heeled red shoes, relics" 36. "you sparkle and waltz and laugh."	W. Idealised: to show something as being perfect. X. Exuberance: energy, enthusiasm.
Winter Swans – Owen Sheers	A couple walk by a lake after two days of arguments. The sight of two swans reminds them of their love and commitment. Sheers explores the feeling of helplessness and loss when a relationship runs into difficulties, as well as how true love means that relationships can be healed. Perhaps having survived difficulties can make a relationship stronger?	This poem was published in a collection entitled "Skirrid Hill", which is a Welsh name meaning "shattered mountain". The collection deals with the themes of separation, and so the mountain symbolises problems and divisions in romantic relationships.	Pathetic fallacy – arguments. The " waterlogged earth " - their love is saturated with problems. The lake symbolises their problems – they skirt the edge of it, unwilling to deal with these issues directly. The swans symbolise everlasting love. The hands like " wings settling " show healing of the relationship.	Tercets (3 line stanzas) with no rhyme, reflect the disharmonious nature of the relationship. There is a volta or shift in line 14, where the poem moves from considering relationship difficulties, to healing. The final couplet shows a return to balance and harmony.	37. "The water-logged earth / gulping for breath." 38. "Our hands, that had somehow / swum the distance between us." 39. "like a pair of wings settling after flight."	Y. Turbulent: violent feelings or emotions, unsettled Z. Reconciliation: coming to an agreement, ending an argument
Singh Songl – Daljit Nagra	Recently married, the speaker leaves work in his parents' shop to spend time with his new bride in the upstairs flat. The magic of love can be more important than the monotony of work. Nagra reveals the challenges unconventional women face.	Nagra depicts 1st-generation immigrants as having a disciplined work ethic and traditional beliefs in gender roles. The 2nd-generation immigrants are in conflict with their parents, as they strive for freedom from expectations and seek to become integrated in British culture.	A semantic field of love emphasises genuine sexual and emotional passion. The wife is presented using rebellious diction , showing conflict. Plural 1st person pronouns - unity. A semantic field of magic reflects the excitement of the marriage.	A song-like structure creates a celebratory atmosphere. The increasingly flexible use of rhyme and rhythm reflects the speaker's carefree attitude. The lack of full stop at the end – their love will continue.	40. "she wear a Tartan sari" 41. "vee cum down the whispering stairs / and sit on my silver stool." 42. "Is priceless baby–"	AA. Irreverent: lacking respect BB. Melodious: musical
Climbing my Grandfather – Waterhouse	The speaker uses the extended metaphor of mountaineering to describe how he gets to know his grandfather. Developing relationships may require persistence and hard work, but that they lead to great rewards.	Imagery of old wounds suggest the grandfather's painful memories and life experiences that the child doesn't understand. The oxymoron "warm ice" indicates the challenges of building a relationship. Imagery of birds – the rewards of the relationship – freedom.	The single stanza represents the mountain. The use of free verse (no rhyme or rhythm) link with the idea of climbing "free", without a safety harness, suggesting that relationships involve risk. The present tense adds to the sense of immediacy.	43. "the glassy ridge of a scar" 44. "climbing has its dangers." 45. "the slow pulse of his good heart."	CC. Dependable: reliable DD. Resolute: focussed, determined	