

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>War Photographer</i></p> <p>Subject and theme: photographer as conscience and recorder of truth. Contrast between “rural England” and scenes of war, between first-hand experience and sanitized version in colour supplements. Photographer moves between two worlds but belongs wholly to neither. Explain last couplet: who are “they” and why do they not care? Idea of duty to telling truth.</p> <p>Structure: conventional stanzas (rhymed iambic lines); each ends with couplet, as if to conclude argument. Poem moves from series of observations to a clear conclusion.</p> <p>Key images: photographer as a priest (darkroom like church, he teaches us how fragile we are, as in Isaiah’s “All flesh is grass”). “Fields which don’t explode”: suggests landmines that do explode under children’s feet. Photographer, who can’t speak the language, seeking “approval” to record man’s death</p> <p>Ambiguity: “solutions”, “ghost”, “black-and-white”; bathos: “prick/with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers”; contrast: “he earns his living...they do not care”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>In Mrs. Tilscher’s Class</i></p> <p>Subject and theme: about rites of passage, the transition from childhood to the adult world, from security of childhood to dangers outside school gates, symbolized by sexual knowledge. Child’s view of the world – school is “better than home”, thinking that the teacher loves you. Poem ends with child wanting to move on, as teacher endorses the “rough” boy’s account of sex, but will not say it directly. Treatment of tadpoles hints at the cruelty in the adult world.</p> <p>Structure: oddly written in the second person, so reader identifies with “you” of poem, who could be poet or any child at school. A mix of narration and description but with chronological movement – ends with leaving primary school for good.</p> <p>Key images: many details of inside of school, which is likened to a “sweet shop”; “good gold star” (a transferred epithet: the child who receives it is <i>good</i>); tadpoles described as punctuation marks, which children learn to write; “Brady and Hindley”, the dangers of the adult world; weather and electricity to suggest mood – “thunderstorm” for the onset of puberty.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Valentine</i></p> <p>Subject and theme: challenges ideas of “normal” Valentine card or present. First-person speaker addresses lover in second person (“you”). Universal, as sex of lover and beloved is not stated.</p> <p>Structure and form: no clear argument, but a series of observations linked by their common theme. Not written in sentence forms throughout – uses disjointed phrases or even a single word.</p> <p>Images: onion both the real present and the central extended metaphor. Physical resemblance to moon (why?) but moon is also associated with love songs and sexuality. Makes you cry (scent) as love does sometimes, and distorts reflection (“wobbling photo”) as love may distort. Taste of onion supplies metaphor of kiss, which “will stay”. Onion rings likened to wedding ring. Poem not clearly conclusive but ends with implied threat – kitchen knife may become a weapon for a jealous lover.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Stealing</i></p> <p>Subject and theme: poet explores psychology of an anti-social character (who appears to be male, though this is not stated). His attempt to explain himself (to whom, in what situation?) shows how far removed he is from the “normal” reader. We can sympathise in seeing his viewpoint, but he remains an unpleasant character. Poem contrasts those who make things and those who only destroy them. Thief wants to do things to escape boredom but hasn’t the self-discipline to do them (like learning the guitar).</p> <p>Structure and form: uses first person, written as monologue, a quite well organized narrative with speaker’s comments.</p> <p>Key images: the snowman – children built it, but the thief cannot make it look the same, so destroys it; the bust of Shakespeare – contrasts creative and social with destructive and anti-social.</p> <p>Sound effects: “slice of ice”; “I sigh like this – <i>Aah</i>.”</p> <p>Ambiguity: Last line of poem.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Before You Were Mine</i></p> <p>Subject and theme: a tribute to the poet’s mother – the title suggests a love poem, and the parent-child roles are reversed. The child becomes the carer, asks mother who gave her the love bites and calls her “sweetheart”. Contrast of youthful promise (hints of “movies” and stardom, reference to Marilyn Monroe in polka dot skirt) and domestic duty, which takes away freedom.</p> <p>Structure: looks from both past and present viewpoints, but does not make clear which is which. Leads to a kind of conclusion about the mother’s sacrifice, and what she gave up for the responsibility of motherhood.</p> <p>Images: the three friends in the photograph; the red high-heeled shoes; the sparks (“stars”) from the mother’s shoes; “the thousand eyes” of the glitter ball and the mother as a “ghost”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Writing about the poems together</p> <p>Subjects and themes: these include Duffy’s own life/experience; other people (photographer, thief, mother); time: past/present; love: romantic or maternal; relationships; duty/ responsibility.</p> <p>Viewpoints: poems are written with first, second or third-person view; poet writing as herself alone, as herself but representing others (as a lover or child at school), as another person (a thief).</p> <p>Structure and form: poems are written in regular stanzas, with rhyme scheme and regular metre, or variations on these.</p> <p>Images and other language effects: explain metaphor and simile (what is compared to what, and why?), transferred epithets, sound effects, different kinds of grammatical structure – sentences, phrases or single words.</p> <p>Make a judgement: briefly give an opinion about each poem – refer to things you like about it. Make comparisons within and between the poems you choose to write about.</p>