**Year 9 English**

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Stevie Smith

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Jackie Kay

Robert Browning

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John Betjemen

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Carol Ann Duffy

Percy Shelley

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U. A. Fanthorpe

Simon Armitage

**Character and Voice Poetry**

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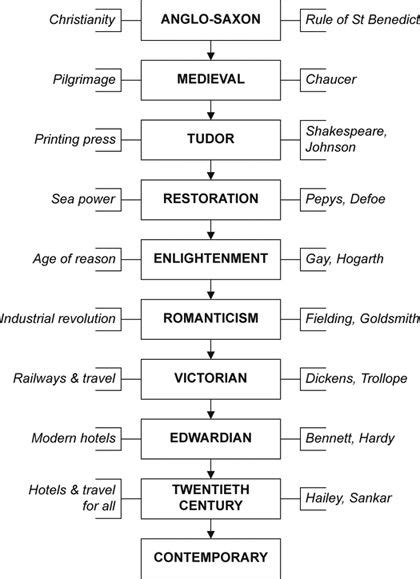
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**Timeline of English Literature**

Look at where the poems we are studying fit in to the timeline.

How might you expect the themes and ideas discussed to change as time goes on?

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*Keats, Shelley*

*Rousseau, Hume*

*Steinbeck*

1842 ‘My Last Duchess’ by Robert Browning

1818 ‘Ozymandias’ by Percy Shelley

‘On a Portrait of a Deaf Man’ by John Betjemen

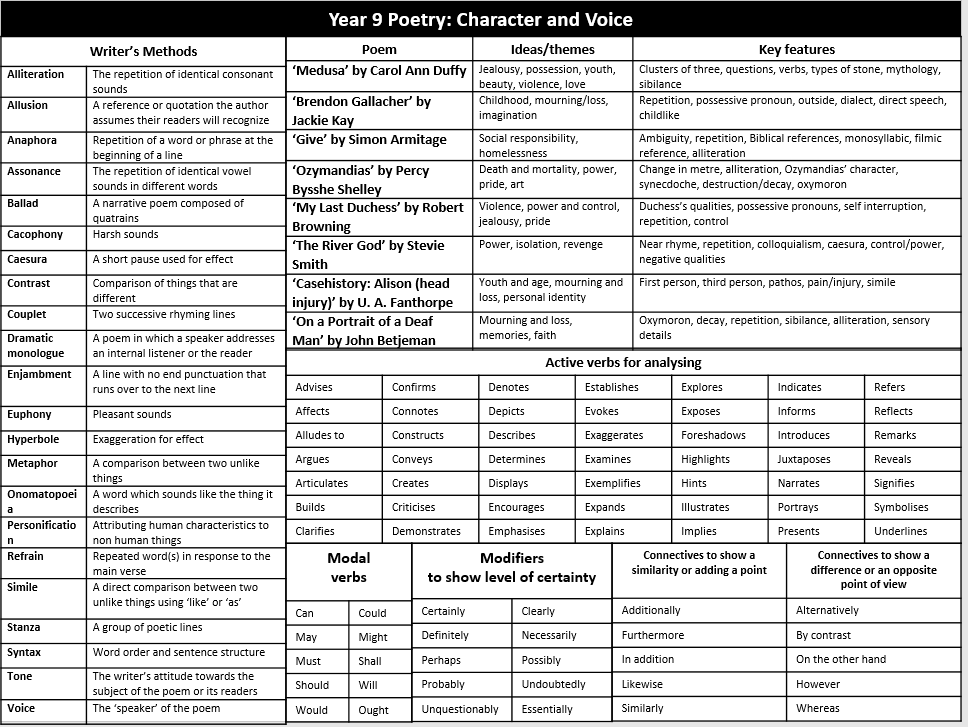
‘Casehistory: Allison [head injury]’ by U.A Fanthorpe

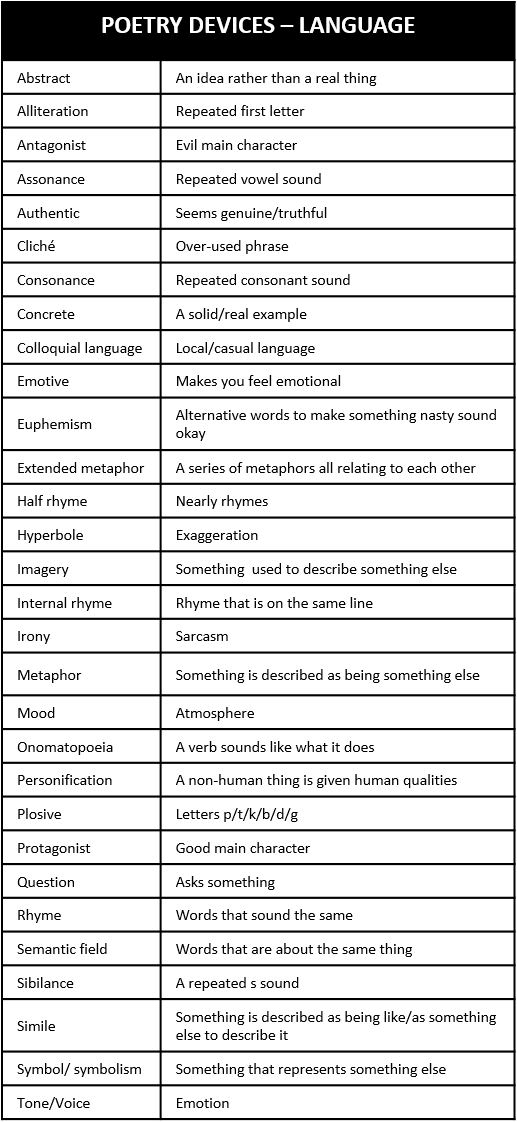
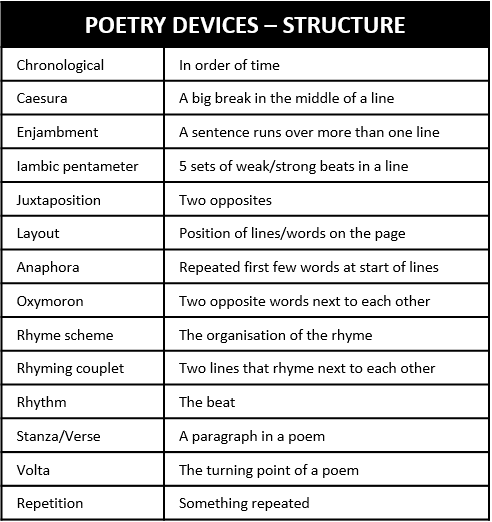
‘The River God’ by Stevie Smith

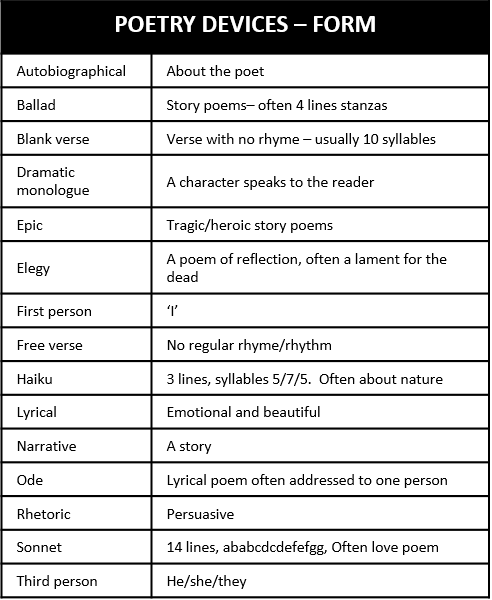
‘Medusa’ by Carol Ann Duffy

‘Brendon Gallacher’ by Jackie Kay

‘Give’ by Simon Armitage



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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Vocabulary – Can you use these words to describe the characters and voices in the poems?** | | | |
| **Word** | **Definition** | **Similar or related words** | **Which poem(s) does it relate to?** |
| amiable | having a friendly and pleasant manner | friendly, warm-hearted, good-natured, likeable, agreeable |  |
| brazen | bold and without shame | shameless,bold |  |
| brusque | abrupt or short in speech or manner | short, sharp, blunt, caustic, abrasive |  |
| clandestine | kept secret or done secretly, perhaps because it is wrong | secret, covert, furtive, stealthy, surreptitious |  |
| despot | a ruler or other person who has absolute power | tyrant, dictator, autocrat, oppressor |  |
| eloquent | fluent or persuasive when speaking or writing | persuasive, expressive, articulate, expressive |  |
| fractious | difficult to control (when describing a group or organization) | wayward, unruly, uncontrollable, disobedient |  |
| jubilant | feeling or expressing great happiness or triumph | overjoyed, exultant, rejoicing, exuberant, thrilled |  |
| morose | sullen and bad-tempered | sulky, gloomy, surly, sour, glum, moody |  |
| zenith | the time at which something is most powerful or successful | highest point, high point, top, peak |  |
|  |  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**The River God by Stevie Smith**

I may be smelly and I may be old,

Rough in my pebbles, reedy in my pools,

But where my fish float by I bless their swimming

And I like the people to bathe in me, especially women.

But I can drown the fools

Who bathe too close to the weir, contrary to rules.

And they take a long time drowning

As I throw them up now and then in the spirit of clowning.

Hi yih, yippity-yap, merrily I flow,

O I may be an old foul river but I have plenty of go.

Once there was a lady who was too bold

She bathed in me by the tall black cliff where the water runs cold,

So I brought her down here

To be my beautiful dear.

Oh will she stay with me will she stay

This beautiful lady, or will she go away?

She lies in my beautiful deep river bed with many a weed

To hold her, and many a waving reed.

Oh who would guess what a beautiful white face lies there

Waiting for me to smooth and wash away the fear

She looks at me with. Hi yih, do not let her

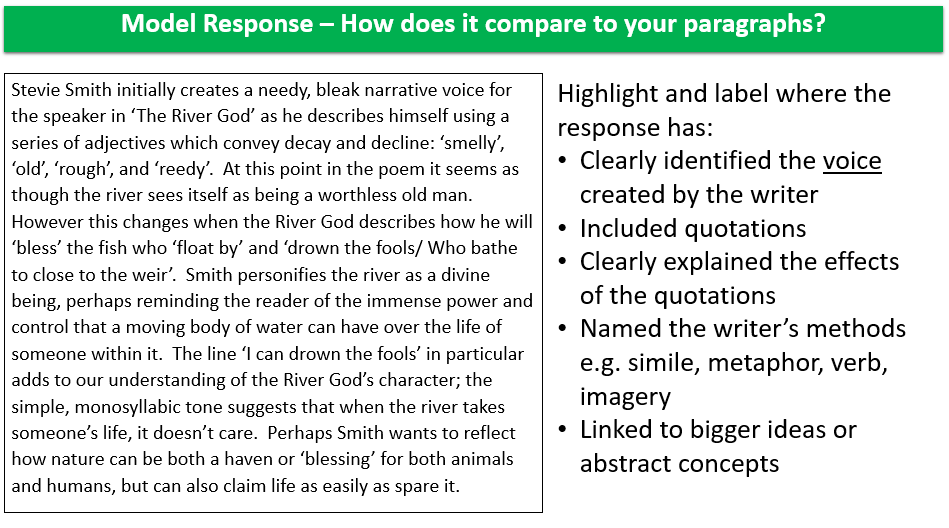
Go. There is no one on earth who does not forget her

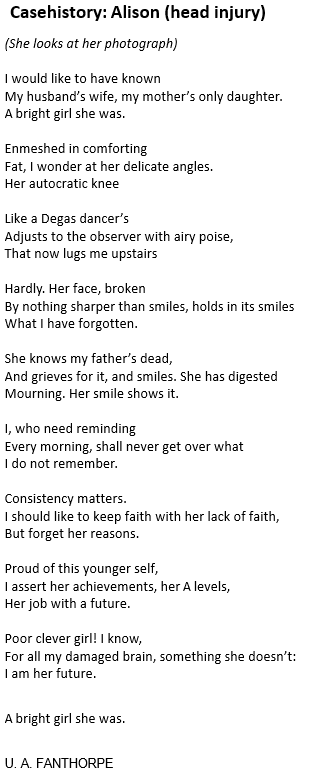
Now. They say I am a foolish old smelly river

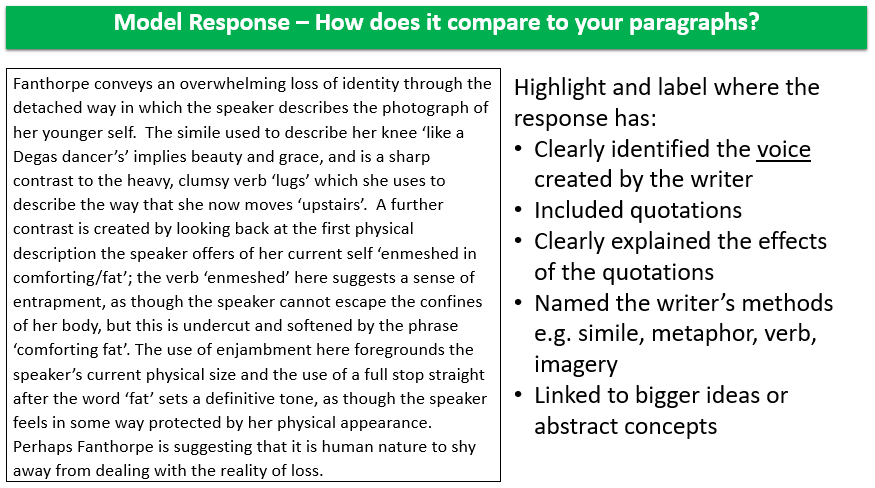
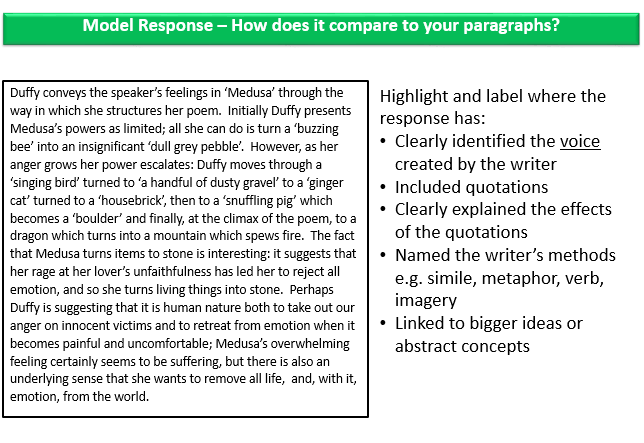
But they do not know of my wide original bed

Where the lady waits, with her golden sleepy head.

If she wishes to go I will not forgive her.







**Medusa**

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy  
grew in my mind,  
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes  
as though my thoughts  
hissed and spat on my scalp.  
  
My bride’s breath soured, stank  
in the grey bags of my lungs.  
I’m foul mouthed now, foul tongued,  
yellow fanged.  
There are bullet tears in my eyes.  
Are you terrified?  
  
Be terrified.  
It’s you I love,  
perfect man, Greek God, my own;  
but I know you’ll go, betray me, stray  
from home.  
So better by for me if you were stone.  
  
I glanced at a buzzing bee,  
a dull grey pebble fell  
to the ground.  
I glanced at a singing bird,  
a handful of dusty gravel  
spattered down.

I looked at a ginger cat,  
a housebrick  
shattered a bowl of milk.  
I looked at a snuffling pig,  
a boulder rolled  
in a heap of shit.  
  
I stared in the mirror.  
Love gone bad  
showed me a Gorgon.  
I stared at a dragon.  
Fire spewed  
from the mouth of a mountain.  
  
And here you come  
with a shield for a heart  
and a sword for a tongue  
and your girls, your girls.  
Wasn’t I beautiful  
Wasn’t I fragrant and young?  
  
Look at me now.

***Carol Ann Duffy***

**Give by Simon Armitage**

Of all the public places, dear,

to make a scene, I’ve chosen here.

Of all the doorways in the world

to choose to sleep, I’ve chosen yours.

I’m on the street, under the stars.

For coppers I can dance or sing.

For silver – swallow swords, eat fire.

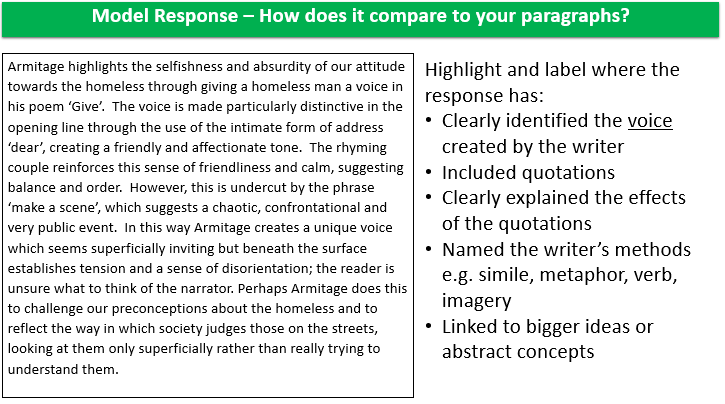
For gold – escape from locks and chains.

It’s not as if I’m holding out

for frankincense or myrrh, just change.

You give me tea. That’s big of you.

I’m on my knees. I beg of you.



**'Brendon Gallacher'**

He was seven and I was six, my Brendon Gallacher.  
He was Irish and I was Scottish, my Brendon Gallacher.  
His father was in prison; he was a cat burglar.  
My father was a communist party full-time worker.  
He had six brothers and I had one, my Brendon Gallacher.

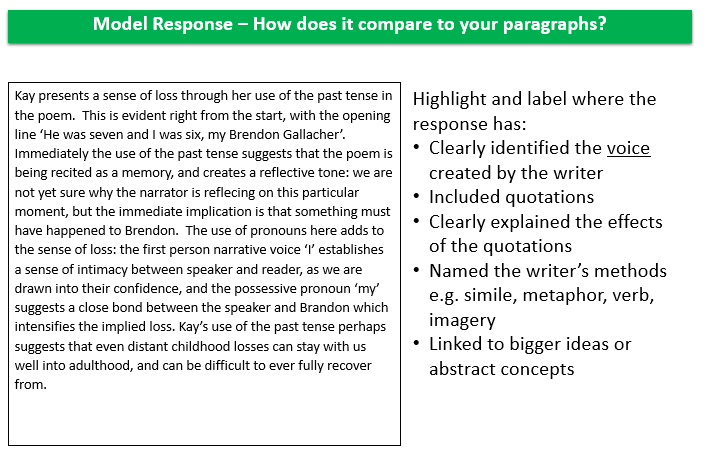
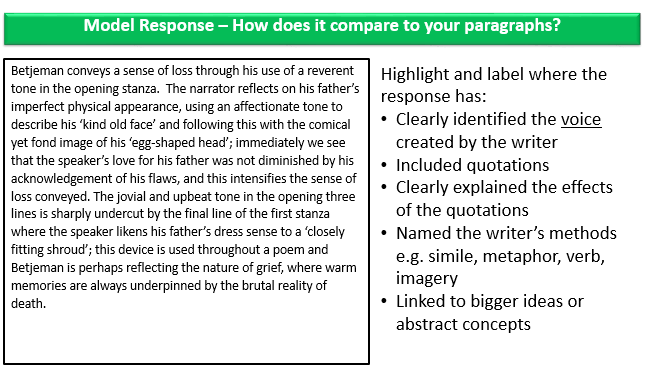
He would hold my hand and take me by the river  
where we’d talk all about his family being poor.  
He’d get his mum out of Glasgow when he got older.  
A wee holiday some place nice. Some place far.  
I’d tell my mum about my Brendon Gallacher

how his mum drank and his daddy was a cat burglar.  
And she’d say, ‘Why not have him round to dinner?’  
No, no, I’d say, he’s got big holes in his trousers.  
I like meeting him by the burn in the open air.  
Then one day after we’d been friends two years,

One day when it was pouring and I was indoors,  
My mum says to me, ‘I was talking to Mrs Moir  
who lives next door to your Brendon Gallacher  
Didn’t you say his address was 24 Novar?  
She says there are no Gallachers at 24 Novar

There never have been any Gallachers next door.’  
And he died then, my Brendon Gallacher,  
flat out on my bedroom floor, his spiky hair,  
his impish grin, his funny, flapping ear.  
Oh Brendon. Oh my Brendon Gallacher.

**Jackie Kay**



**On a Portrait of a Deaf Man by John Betjeman**

The kind old face, the egg-shaped head,

The tie, discreetly loud,

The loosely fitting shooting clothes,

A closely fitting shroud.

He liked old city dining rooms,

Potatoes in their skin,

But now his mouth is wide to let

The London clay come in.

He took me on long silent walks

In country lanes when young.

He knew the names of ev'ry bird

But not the song it sung.

And when he could not hear me speak

He smiled and looked so wise

That now I do not like to think

Of maggots in his eyes.

He liked the rain-washed Cornish air

And smell of ploughed-up soil,

He liked a landscape big and bare

And painted it in oil.

But least of all he liked that place

Which hangs on Highgate Hill

Of soaked Carrara-covered earth

For Londoners to fill.

He would have liked to say goodbye,

Shake hands with many friends,

In Highgate now his finger-bones

Stick through his finger-ends.

You, God, who treat him thus and thus,

Say "Save his soul and pray."

You ask me to believe You and

I only see decay.

**Ozymandias by Percy Shelley**

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: `Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.

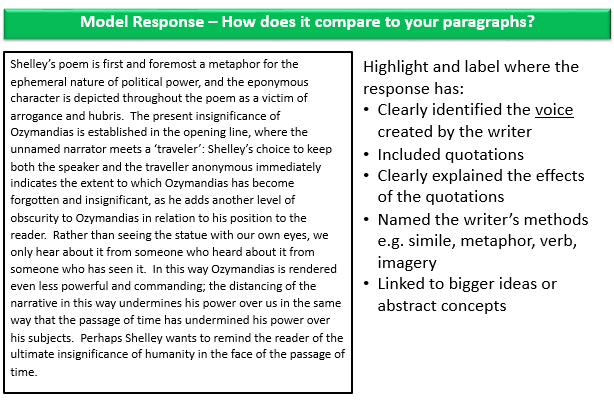
And on the pedestal these words appear --

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

She rode with round the terrace – all and each

Would draw from her alike the approving speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men, – good! but thanked

Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name

With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame

This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say, ‘Just this

Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark’ – and if she let

Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,

– E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master’s known munificence

Is ample warrant that no just pretence

Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go

Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

ROBERT BROWNING

**My Last Duchess**

*Ferrara*

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf’s hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said

‘Frà Pandolf’ by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not

Her husband’s presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek: perhaps

Frà Pandolf chanced to say ‘Her mantle laps

Over my lady’s wrist too much,’ or ‘Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint

Half-flush that dies along her throat’: such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had

A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er

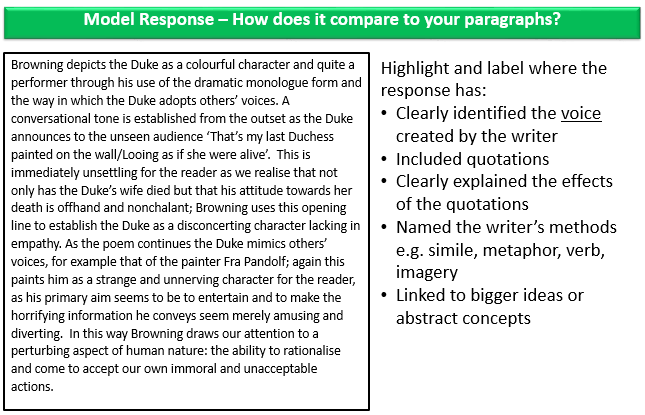
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,

The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule



**Full marks response: Compare the ways the poets present ideas about power in *Ozymandias* and one other poem from *Character and Voice.***

Both ‘Ozymandias’ and ‘The River God’ are poems that create a character for whom power is a central concern. In ‘Ozymandias’*,* Shelley indirectly creates a voice of an Egyptian king, Ramesses II, but does this through the distancing narrative frame of a traveller 'from an antique land.' This sense of distance diminishes and undermines the sense of power given to the subject, Ozymandias. By contrast, in ‘The River God’ Stevie Smith creates the persona of a river who has great and enduring physical power, but feels unappreciated and neglected.

The nature of power in ‘Ozymandias’ is expressed in terms of tyrannical, cruel behaviour. The remains of a 'vast' statue are 'stamp'd' with a 'frown' and a 'sneer of cold command'. It is evident that Ozymandias ruled as a tyrant, without regard for the people. The phrase 'the hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed' suggests that he gained his strength and power from, and at the expense of, his people. However, the end of the poem undermines this power. The irony of the inscription on the pedestal is highlighted by the simple phrase 'Nothing beside remains', suggesting that nothing lasts forever - even great civilisations will eventually crumble and 'decay.' This word is a key word in the poem. Shelley is suggesting that decay and decline is inevitable. Perhaps this can also be read as a warning for our own society, for western civilisation, or for humankind in general: nothing lasts forever.

By contrast, ‘The River God’ begins in quite defensive fashion, with the assertion that 'I may be smelly and I may be old'; the voice created immediately gives the impression that it is defending itself and feels insecure and unappreciated. We get a sense of the River God's sense of fun (‘Hi yih, yippity-yap, merrily I flow’) and its appreciation of beauty - in fact the word 'beautiful' appears four times. However, the overwhelming sense of insecurity and bitterness carries a hint of threat. There is a threat to the swimmers, who 'take a long time drowning... In the spirit of clowning'. The use of rhyme here implies a sense of sadistic and light-hearted enjoyment in inflicting death on the powerless humans. However, mixed in with this sense of power is a feeling of powerlessness and insecurity in the final line about his 'beautiful dear': 'If she wishes to go I will not forgive her.' Both of these poems seem to create voices of timeless power, but below the surface there is a suggestion of vulnerability.

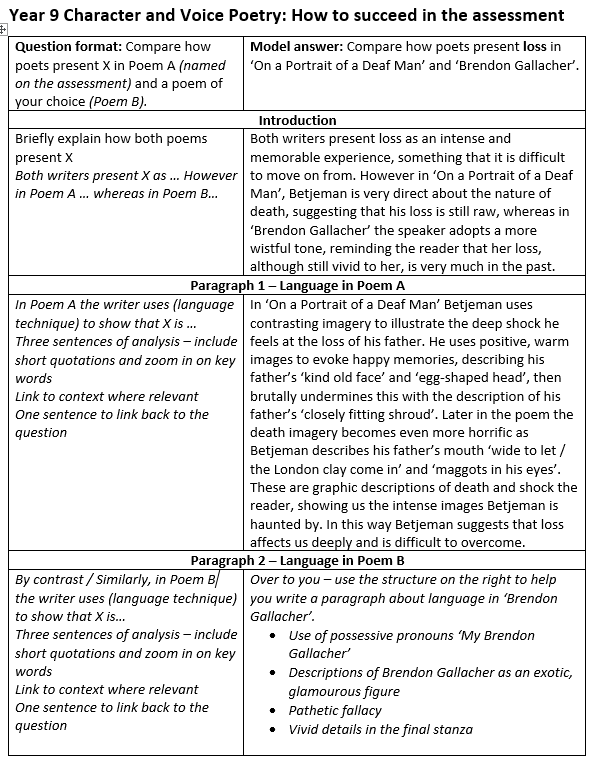
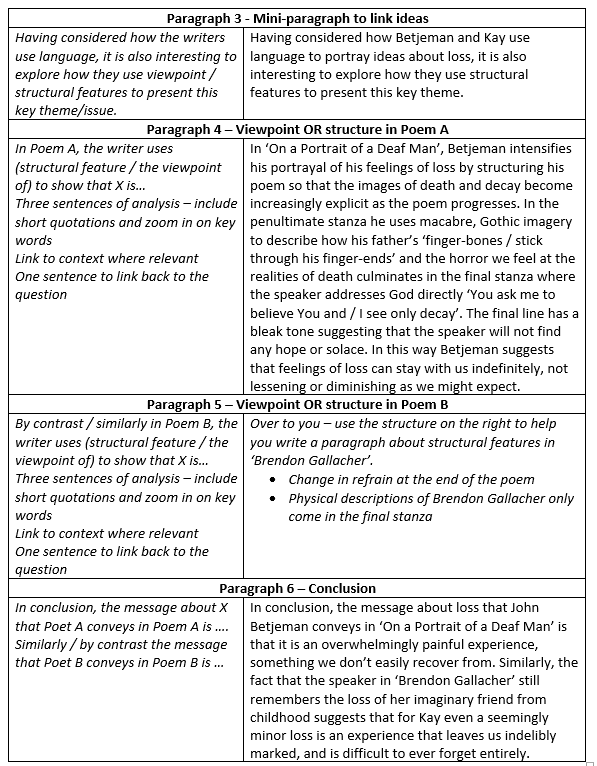
‘Ozymandias’ is written in the form of a sonnet, and with this particular form comes a regular rhyme scheme and rhythm, creating a sense of order. This neatness and orderliness underlines the simple, undeniable truth at the heart of the poem: nothing lasts forever. The simplicity and conciseness of the poem’s form makes this simple message all the more powerful. In contrast, ‘The River God’ creates moments of orderliness with its heavy use of rhyme, but the slight inconsistencies in the rhyme scheme suggest the contrasting feelings of power and powerlessness the speaker feels. The defensive opening lines do not rhyme, and many of the final lines end with the repetitive 'her' suggesting his paranoia and obsession. In contrast, moments of humour sound stronger with perfect feminine rhymes (‘drowning’/ ‘clowning’) or strong masculine ones (‘flow’/ ‘go’). The long, flowing single stanza and the use of enjambment suggest a continuous flow – like a river. This perhaps suggests the relentless power of the river despite moments of weakness.

Finally, both poets’ language choices clearly establish their underlying messages about power and powerlessness. Shelley’s language choices in ‘Ozymandias’ create an overall sense of destruction, lifelessness and decay. The poem is set in a 'desert', which is a symbol of infertility and death, and the remains of the statue are described as 'lifeless'. By the end of the poem, this is further emphasised by using the alliteration of 'boundless and bare' to emphasise this harsh reality, and then further by the use of the word 'wreck.' Even the word 'remains', here used as a verb, has a more destructive and powerful meaning when considered as a noun: what is left of something that has been destroyed.

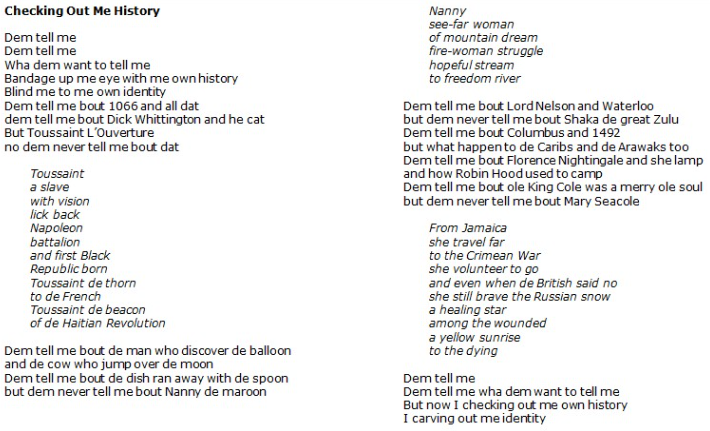
By contrast, ‘The River God’s language is simple and direct, creating a colloquial and very human voice for the river. The first line is largely monosyllabic, and the general pattern of simple language continues throughout. Colloquial idioms further emphasise this sense of humanity, with phrases like 'plenty of go' helping to create a persona we can relate to. This sense of an unappreciated character with literal and metaphorical hidden depths is developed as the poem goes on. His obsession is revealed through the repetition of 'beautiful' and 'her', but the dark reality of the situation to the reader is emphasised through the descriptions of her 'white face' and her 'golden sleepy head'. These seem to suggest beauty, but also strongly suggest death - and the power of the river to inflict it. There is an awkward contrast between the River God’s casual take on the situation and our own. Finally, the phrase 'wide original bed' provides a sense of power that is missing from *Ozymandias* - a sense of permanence. The interesting use of the word 'original' suggests that the river has always been there and always will. In this poem, Stevie Smith seems to be demonstrating the dangerous power of nature and warning us of the deadly consequences of showing no respect for that power. In contrast, the end of Shelley’s poem provides a scene of peace and emptiness after the rule of Ozymandias as the 'lone and level sands stretch far away.' The soft, alliterative sounds of this final line show that there is no longer any echo of the tyrannical power that once existed there.

**Highlight and label where the response has:**

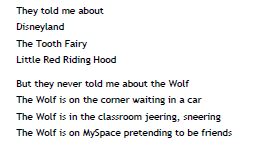
* Clearly identified the voice created by the writer
* Included quotations
* Clearly explained the effects of the quotations
* Named the writer’s methods e.g. simile, metaphor, verb, imagery
* Linked to bigger ideas or abstract concepts



**Homework tasks – your teacher may set tasks from this bank OR may set tasks of their own.**

1. Use Look – Cover – Write – Check to learn all the Language devices for a quick quiz next lesson.
2. Use Look – Cover – Write – Check to learn all the Structure and Form devices for a quick quiz next lesson.
3. Use Look – Cover – Write – Check to learn the active verbs for analysing for a quiz quiz next lesson.
4. Create flashcards with key quotations for each poem and test yourself for 10 minutes every day to prepare for your assessment.
5. Read John Agard’s poem ‘Checking Out Me History. In this poem Agard explore how we are educated and how it can be biased; he reflects on all the significant figures from black culture and history that he was not taught about in school.

Then write your own poem in the same style using the structure below. You could write about anything where information has been kept from you or where certain aspects of history have been emphasised over others. You could think about your parents, the government, society, school…For example, in the first list you could mention nursery rhymes, fairytales or childhood ‘facts’ told to children. The second list could be based on distorted or suppressed facts or realities.

 Example: