

The Poetry Map – Free Online Resource

www.mattbryden.co.uk/Matt_Bryden/PoetryMap/

Introduction

This resource of 67 poems is aimed at children of 14 years and above due to its occasionally adult content (including death and sex). It encourages close reading for content and navigating a website for information. Students are also encouraged to record new vocabulary as they proceed, and it would be useful if students had dictionaries to hand (or were directed to an online dictionary) to assist them. On one occasion, students are directed to seek an answer online. Audio is required.

The Poetry Map is divided into four navigable ‘paths’. The worksheet contains questions arranged by path, and a final section with questions about the contents of the whole map.

As a guideline, it takes an hour to read through each path. To answer the questions and then discuss them in class, ninety minutes per path is advised, or longer. Completing the worksheets might be more enjoyable if students work in pairs. Since students’ ability to concentrate on such a task tends to tail off after an hour or so, they might answer questions on one path at a time, or complete a path for homework.

The Poetry Map is not designed as a guide to meter, alliteration or poetic form; rather, it provides the opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a number of poems, and inhabit a world where not every piece of information is provided. While these worksheets provide one way of using these poems, there are, of course, numerous other ways in which they could be used.

NOTE my decision to use poems that leave a lot of things open and unspecified can lead to problems contextualizing, and this can require teachers to step in and encourage students to reach understanding by themselves. For this reason, a gloss for each poem on which the worksheets focus is provided at the end. Should you wish to reproduce any of the poems featured on the poetry map they are available (as one file) here:

http://www.mattbryden.co.uk/Matt_Bryden/PoetryMap/Teacher/Downloadable.pdf

I am available to answer questions etc: matt.bryden@gmail.com

Instructions

The Poetry Map contains 67 poems placed on the map at the location of either their setting or composition. The poems are divided into four 'paths'. Each path has a different theme.

There are also 15 magic tickets  which provide extra information.

You have three things to do:

- 1 Read through the poems in each path, answering the questions on this worksheet. *Note* not every poem has a question about it, but you need to read every poem in the path.
- 2 When you find a magic ticket, open it and describe what you find in the Magic Ticket table below Question 17.
- 3 Record any new vocabulary on the back page.

You will need headphones occasionally. The poems contain references to sex and death, and for this reason the Poetry Map is recommended for students over 14 years of age.

A reminder: these worksheets refer to poems, so not everything will be immediately clear – you will need to THINK and look for clues to answer the questions.

Write your answers on this sheet

Path One **Witness** (16 poems)

- 1 What is the theme of the poems in this path?

Rural life – farm animals, fields, the moon and stars, harvest... perhaps death as well, since the final poem seems to describe the death of a relationship.

- 2 In the poem ‘The Muntjac,’ list the verbs, *eg to root, to expose etc*

to grasp, to look, to release, to thump, (to cloud – could be a noun or verb), to christen, to open

- 3 In the poem ‘Lambing’

- a) what situation do the narrator and his friend stumble upon?

They find a dead ewe at the end of the lambing season. It is pregnant.

- b) what do they then try to do?

To deliver the unborn lambs which may be alive inside her (they are unsuccessful).

- c) i) does each stanza have a similar number of lines? Why do you think this is the case?

i) Not really. There are 4 stanzas, the first 3 of which are each 6 lines long. The final stanza is just 4 lines, perhaps because the narrator’s hope for a living lamb is cut off midway, as are the lambs’ lives.

- d) Is there a rhyme scheme? Is there a regular meter?

Although there is no rhyme scheme, there is some assonance (eg ‘lies’, ‘side’, ‘eye’) and consonance (l, m, k and t sounds in the first stanza, for example: muck cakes her wrist. The flock...). The meter is loosely iambic – ‘I *lift* a *leg* *manipulate* the *hoof*...’

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4 In 'The Westbury Horse'

- a) which county is Westbury in? **Wiltshire**
- b) is it a real horse? **No, it is carved into the chalk hillside**
- c) What does the weather sound like there? **Very windy, because it is high up the hill**
- d) Why do you think it was created? **No one knows – perhaps it was advertising, and**

Westbury had good horses for sale, or stables to keep them in. There are a number of horses carved into hillsides in the South West of England. Or maybe it just looks good!

5 In 'Spadework'

- a) how do we know the burial is of an animal and not a person?

We are told that foxes might dig it up. A human grave would be dug deeper to prevent this.

- b) who does the burying? Why? **The narrator, probably a boy or girl because they say the spade is heavy.**
- c) why do you think the narrator says their voice will now be stronger if they speak?

They feel more grown up after this experience.

6 Which poem(s) in Path 1:

- a) describes an art class? **Life Drawing**
- b) begins with a woman being rescued from a flood? **'Boscastle' –
'a winch lifts a woman / on an orange thread / from her chimney'**
- c) is set at night? **New Moon ('sleeping ducks') and 'A Butcher's Girl'
('I'm only securing a look at the stars')**
- d) is set in York? **In Tearful Weather**
- e) contains a vegetarian archaeologist? **Singled Out**

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Path Two A Discipline (18 poems)

7 What is the theme of the poems in this path?

Teaching

8 In the poem 'The Example' in Path Two, the narrator is observing a pupil.

a) What are their feelings towards her?

Admiration (the title is 'The Example', as in the phrase 'a shining example'). The narrator most admires how Hidemi is free to be herself, jumping on the trampoline 'voice stretched, extended / and sounding each bounce.' This is compared to the shy, guarded narrator who would cover their mouth in embarrassment and 'slide their feeling into a shirt pocket' if they were to express themselves that openly in public.

b) What do you think Hidemi's disclosure (the secret she has told) was?

It is never explicit. However, the narrator feels guilty to know it, so perhaps it is personal.

c) Who do you think the narrator is? This is subjective – boy, girl, teacher, student...

9 a) Which 6 poems in Path Two contain a girl's name? List them.

'Acquaintance' (Sofia), 'Group Portrait' (Aneta, Zuzannah),
'Half-term' (Johanna/Jana) 'Leanings' (Elya) 'Summer School' (Jahan)
'The Example' (Hidemi)

b) Which animals are the students compared to in 'Exam Conditions'? Why?

Birds, because they are displaying themselves to others.

c) Which 3 poems contain words written in a different language

'Acquaintance' (French) 'Preston' (phonemic script, used to teach pronunciation) and 'Half Term' (Polish)

d) Who are Soo and Sweep? *Use the internet to find this answer*

Characters in a children's television programme

e) Which poem is set in an inappropriate place?

'Summer School,' a squash court is used as a classroom

f) Which poem is set at night? 'College' ('night rubs the glass')

g) Which poem contains weeping? 'Sonnet'

Path Three **Czech Film** (17 poems)

10 What is the theme of the poems in this path?

Eastern Europe

11 In the poem 'Spring'

a) list all the adjectives in the poem:

brave, invisible, first, small, other, thin, higher, frail, sloping, town, high, other, alpine, independent, efficiently-stacked, chopped, new, proud, chipped, white, small, blossomy, red, steep, vertical

b) what do you think 'pivo' means? Beer

c) do you think this is a poem? It's a 'prose poem', a mixture between prose and poetry. Perhaps the biggest difference between prose poems and prose are a) length and b) the care with which they are written, promising a reward if the reader gives it their full attention.

d) Why do you think there is a red square on the tree trunk?
It is a sign that the route is part of a walking trail.

12 a) In which two countries are most of the poems in path 3 set?

The Czech Republic and Poland.

b) Which poem describes teachers being taught? 'Czech School'

c) What misunderstanding takes place in 'Coming Up Short'?

The woman at the zoo thinks the narrator has brought an animal to give to the zoo. In fact, it is just his/her shoes!

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- d) Which 5 poems contain animals?
'Spring' (dogs) 'Coming Up Short' (turtles, ponies, a crocodile, bats)
'Openings' (a bear) 'Goals' (dogs) 'Raciborz, Poland' (dogs)
- e) Which 2 poems contain references to things you can buy in a bakery?
'Waking' (biscuits) and 'Entries' [section 4 'Vigils'] (rolls)
- f) Which 2 poems describe people eating fish?
'Tealights' and 'Just imagine a forest'

Path Four **Singles** (16 poems)

13 What is the theme of the poems in this path?

Individuals

14 In the poem 'The Choice'

- a) What is the situation? **A train has struck a car**
- b) Explain the title **The narrator wonders whether the car driver chose to keep trying to move his car to save the people on the train instead of escaping, even though it risked his life (and we may presume he was killed)**
- c) What do you think it would feel like to be on the train? **Probably claustrophobic and frightening, as the passengers cannot get off. Also it might feel quite strange, as trains are usually moving. So it would seem extremely silent and still.**
- d) How do people react? **The porter checks everyone is okay, while the driver walks through the snow to check on the car driver; some passengers discuss the accident, some think about it, and some just want to get home quickly (they 'bemoan the time'); the police want to interview people.**

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15 In Path 4

- a) Which poem contains food? ‘It’s My Contention’ (soup)
- b) Which poem is set by the sea?
‘In a Naval Town’ (‘hovercraft’ + position on map)
- c) Which 3 poems are set by the River Thames?
‘Prayer Meeting’, ‘It’s My Contention’, ‘The Atheist in the Aquarium’
- d) Which poem contains some kind of training?
‘Lifting Protocol’ (learning to lift an object safely)
- e) Which poem contains one side of a conversation?
‘In the Next Seat’
- f) Which poem ends in a restaurant? ‘Vestige’

16 **Random**

Which path contains:

	Path	Poem(s)
a. 4 poems about a dead animal	1	‘The Muntjac’, ‘Lambing’, ‘Ground’ ‘Spadework’
b. 3 poems about a train crash	4	‘The Choice’, In the Next Seat’, ‘Vestige’
c. a poem about a set of triplets	3	‘Imagine a Forest’
d. a poem set in France	4	‘Toulouse’
e. 3 poems set in a factory	4	‘Factory’, ‘The Smile’, ‘Lifting Protocol’
f. a poem set in a swimming pool	1	‘Selling Tin, Not Services’
g. a poem in which the narrator spies something private	2	‘Evening Out’

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- h. a poem set at the end of term 2 ‘Completion’
- i. a poem set in a zoo 4 ‘Coming Up Short’
- j. an art class 1 ‘Life Drawing’

17 Magic Ticket Table

The Poetry Map contains 15 magic tickets.
As you read through the poems, complete the table below.

	Poem	Path	What does the Ticket Reveal?
1	The Westbury Horse	1	Audio Recording
2 & 3	Harvest	1	Photo and information
4	Evening Out	2	Hand-written draft
5	Half Term	2	Polish
6	Preston	2	Scrambles phonetic Script
7	Leanings	2	Newspaper article
8	Czech School	3	Audio Recording
9	Tea Lights	3	Audio Recording
10	Raciborz, Poland	3	Audio Recording
11 – 13	Entries	3	3 more sections
14	Try Me	4	Photo of Bogart & Malone
15	Pioneers	4	Painting

18 New Vocabulary (table)

Gloss of Poems Discussed in Detail

Lambing

Still warm, she says. The sheep lies on its side.
The crows have claimed one eye – pools, ebbs
darken the snow. Three more weeks
to lamb. She pokes her hand beneath the wool.
I lift a leg, manipulate the hoof joint.
Muck cakes her wrist. The flock are keeping distant.

A probe and waters burst. Full hands of gut,
intestine slop on snow. I roll her sleeves
beyond her elbows. *Come*, I say, and push
the sheep against her arm. *Come on*. She feels
the hoof of one of them but can't secure
her grip, the cervix open. I want them born.

You're doing well, I say. Propitious year –
of snowfall, blue moon. I grip the fleece.
Come on. She holds the head now, pulls it
by the skull and worms it from the mother,
floppy lamb puppet, tips it so its paws
tread snow, then rubs its face, its closed eyes.

No. The umbilicus spills its red all over.
Back in. This time easier. A girl,
too young. She holds her up.
We lay them by the mother's side –

Overview

The poem occurs just before the lambing season ('three more weeks to lamb.'). It contains conversation between the narrator and a woman. They stumble across a recently dead sheep ('still warm') which crows have already started to eat. The pair attempt to deliver the unborn lambs who may be alive inside the sheep. Despite their best intentions ('I want them born') they are unsuccessful ('No'). They leave the bodies by the side of the sheep and leave.

The Westbury Horse

On a plaque, how the horse
had to be scrubbed regularly
to keep it clean.

There are pictures of men
holding implements with both hands,
pulling together as a team;

and this a mile above a reservoir,
up a bridleway milky with rainwater,
hoof-prints cut into the chalk.

Now the image is linear –
whitewashed concrete, filled in
not carved out, no longer a wound.

I walk the ridge between quarry and hill,
hood pinched in each cheek like a bit.

Overview

The poem describes a visit to the Westbury Horse in Wiltshire. Even though it is not real – it is an image of a horse carved into the chalk landscape – it still requires care like a horse ('how the horse had to be scrubbed regularly') and is itself reached via a bridleway. This horse is not natural however, being made of 'whitewashed concrete' a decidedly modern change to a very old monument. In fact, it is the narrator who makes the journey up to 'the ridge' who most resembles a horse, biting his/her hood to keep the wind from his/her face, as if it were a horse's 'bit'.

Spadework

At her burial, I shouldered my role, lifted
clean bites of strong earth to one side.
The tool weighed heavy in my hands
as I lowered her in a blanket into the hole
which might that night be raided by foxes.
I brought the back of the spade down
hard against the soil, tried
not to laugh as I cast my eyes
at the ground before my family.
Afterwards, I went up to my room,
knelt on the bed and gazed outside.
Sure my voice would be stronger if I spoke.

Overview

The spadework of the title refers to the burying of a pet by a child of unspecified age. We may guess it is a child because the spade ‘weighed heavy in my hands.’ S/he is uncomfortable doing this, as shown by the nervous laughter as s/he ‘lower(s) her in a blanket into the hole’ in front of their family. Doing such a difficult, demanding task could be seen as a rite of passage, and thus the child feels afterwards as if they have entered adulthood – hence the belief that their voice ‘would be stronger’ if they now spoke. The deepening of a boy’s voice in puberty might suggest that the narrator is male. The bite of white into the right-hand side of the text could be seen to resemble the bite of a spade.

The Example

I haven't told a soul, but
since Hidemi's disclosure
she looks a little different –
like her hair has been rinsed this morning
and left to fall forward
over her eyes.

I feel a little guilty
as though implicit in my knowledge
were a design.
Little does she know
I would no more take her in my arms
now than before.

Hidemi bounces on the trampoline,
her high voice coming
through the library window.
If I were light like that,
voice stretched, extended and
sounding each bounce –

I would clap a covering hand,
slide my feeling
into a shirtpocket,
return to my usual gait,
head down. I crane
my neck towards her voice.

Overview

A lot of things in this poem are unclear, especially the identities of the narrator and Hidemi, and how they know each other. The reference to a trampoline suggests that Hidemi is relatively young, and so it might be set in a school (and the second path in general does contain poems linked to teaching). However, what *is* clear is that the narrator wants to possess some of the qualities of Hidemi: 'I crane my neck towards her voice.' While Hidemi is able to express herself (her 'voice stretched, extended' as she bounces on the trampoline) the narrator is much less able to express themselves – s/he 'would clap a covering hand' over his/her own mouth). We can assume that Hidemi's disclosure is a personal matter which the narrator probably would not have been able to make him/herself. Knowing the contents of the disclosure makes the narrator feel 'guilty', which again suggests its personal nature.

Spring

It's a brave man walks into Chlum. As if the foot has tripped an invisible wire, the first small dog scuttles towards you, alerting those in the other gardens with its thin bleat. As you scan the fifty metres ahead, gardens to either side, accept your predicament: the dog to your left is higher than the frail fence set in sloping soil. With a bound he'd be on you. A crossroads. To your right a town hall.

Chlum is a high town – the other side of Karlvu Vrch forest as I look at it now. The villagers not so much alpine as independent. Efficiently-stacked timber piled neatly in each garden for building huts, extensions, furniture. A child lifts a chopped circle of wood and drops it to the ground.

'Ahoj!' I say to a man following me. 'Pivo?' I mime a sip. Not here. His hand indicates Dobrovice or Svedske Sanca. I turn right, past more of these new, proud homes and along a path of chipped white stones to a small field of blossomy trees, one with a red square painted on its trunk. I can see Svedske Sanca. *Pivo*. A steep, almost vertical path begins at my feet. If I start, I might not get back up. I don't want to be barked at anymore.

Overview

The narrator is in a hostile environment with dogs barking from either side as s/he walks down a road. S/he observes the customs and habits of 'the villagers' as if they are unusual, suggesting a foreign environment (this path is principally set in Poland and the Czech Republic). When the narrator speaks to someone (asking for a place to get a beer) the reply comes with a gesture rather than any welcoming or recognisable language. Likewise, s/he then follows another mute command, a red way-marker on a tree. The narrator is left with an unenviable choice: to stay and be barked at, or to follow a route which may leave him/her trapped. S/he steps forth. We can assume that this new discomfort will at least be a new one.

The Choice

North of Joliet,
white fields run to road
then hills of forest.

The driver pulls on his jacket,
moves down the carriage,
steps into snow.

He heads along the tracks
to the bisected car
aware he will face the scene alone.

Through the left window,
parallel to his journey,
a police car speeds.

*

Ten minutes ago, the porter was clearing the corridor
of luggage, so passengers could evacuate quickly
in the case of emergency.

Wearing a blue overcoat now, he returns.
'Is everyone okay? Did anyone bump their head?'

*

We can't leave the carriage,
though cameras zoom through the cab window.

The police walk the corridors to some purpose.
A witness takes it in stride, bemoans the time.

'It's not that the car wasn't going slow –
that signal's overgrown,' a passenger says.

I re-piece events, recall
the whistle blowing, a shudder.

*

The morning commute.

Racing to beat the train, did the driver
change his mind, brake on the packed ice, skidding
onto the white slate of hard-packed snow
covering the track?

Perhaps he stayed in the car
as the train bore down,
turning and turning the motor
for the sake of the passengers.

Perhaps, as the wheels skidded,
the driver made a choice.

Overview

The setting is a train which has stopped moving after hitting a vehicle (the ‘bisected car’). The driver has called the police and now ‘steps into snow’ to check for survivors. The passengers who are unable to leave must instead dwell on the events (‘I re-piece events, recall... a shudder.’) The narrator wonders whether the car had stalled on the train tracks, and instead of fleeing, the driver had tried to restart it to save the lives of those on board the train.

[Note: the following two poems continue this story – a ‘found poem’ recording the comments of a passenger on the train, and a description of visiting a restaurant consequently, which is also visited by an ambulance, as someone struggles for breath, perhaps choking on their meal.]