

# Power & Conflict compared

Consider what power and conflict might mean:

## Power :

- Man's perceived power over man, nature, objects, women
- Human power v power of nature – nature wins!
- Losing power/status/reputation
- Male power and authority
- How power corrupts people, Power of society
- Powerlessness
- Oppression, resisting oppression and identity
- Human power is temporary
- How a lack of control leads to fear

## Conflict:

- Inner conflict V external conflict
- Conflict between man and nature
- Conflict of war, and its repercussions
- Man's resilience v giving in in conflict situations
- The aftermath of conflict
- Loss, isolation and the futility of war
- Heroism and pride in fighting for one's country/sacrifice/bravery v futility of war
- Reality of conflict
- How conflict endures in the memory
- Linked to a sense of identity or lack of

Conflict might relate to an actual conflict in war ([Charge of Light B](#), [Exposure](#), [Bayonet Charge](#), [Kamikaze](#), [Poppies](#), [Remains](#)). However, there are different attitudes, connections and nuances within each. [War Photographer](#) is from the perspective of an observer, not a participant.

It's worth investigating each one of these poems as they can be connected with each other on multiple levels. The 2017 question was on [Bayonet Charge](#) asking about the effects of war. So the questions are likely to be fairly generic.

## Charge of the light brigade

- The senselessness of war and the reality of war (compare to [Exposure](#))
- It also highlights duty to one's country and patriotism (compare to [Kamikaze](#))
- Bravery in the face of death, admiration for sacrifice one's self
- Died in battle – inevitable that they would die – waste of life
- Celebration of a band of brothers fight together – noble yet fruitless
- Wordsworth is a contemporary observer compared to Owen in [Exposure](#) who was the participant – and who shortly died in battle
- Internal striving for glory – decisive action to face the enemy – compared with [Remains](#) where internal reflections show how speaker is unable to come to terms with the killing

## [Exposure](#) by comparison exposes:

- The painful, tragic reality of war in the trenches by a poet killed in the war
- Utter hopelessness/pain/suffering/vulnerability of the soldiers
- Brutal weather and nature are the big killers (compare with [Storm on the Island](#))
- Death and despair is seen as inevitable

## Bayonet Charge:

- Highlights the physical reality of life on the battlefield with all the 'raw' details – as the soldier runs into gunfire, he is conflicted and freezes. (Compare to modern [Remains](#) where the speaker isn't affected at the time, but struggles with the enormity of his actions later)
- Utter terror replaces patriotism – yet he goes on even though he realises that in the heat of the moment 'King, honour, human dignity' don't matter – only the desperation to survive does
- Vivid sights and sounds of war (Compare to [Exposure/War Photography](#))
- One moment in war – compare to [Kamikaze](#) and how a single decision in war affects the rest of the soldier's life

## Kamikaze

- How a pilot turned back, reneging on his duty to his country by being overpowered by his beautiful homeland/ family memories. He chooses life over certain 'one-way' death...
- Irony of being shunned by the community and the family he turned back for
- Inner conflict (compare to [Remains](#))
- Sense of being trapped and conflicted at the moment of decision
- How the past and your memories have a power over you (connect with [The Emigree](#))
- How your own community can ostracize and punish – making life worse than death, 'as though he no longer existed' (Compare to [The Emigree](#))
- The beauty of the natural world creates a strong sense of home, place and family within him. Interesting to connect with [Poppies](#) because of the family connection. Voice of daughter in Kamikaze and speaker V the mother's in [Poppies](#).)
- Also, compare with [The Prelude](#) – how a strong sense of place can terrify and overpower the self.

## War Photographer:

- Observer of war, not participant (Like mother in [Poppies](#))
- Tension between war zone and rural England – displaced, detached (Compare to the [Emigree](#) and to [Poppies](#))
- Exposure to human conflict – sense of duty
- Isolated response to conflict 'finally alone' as if relieved V the ongoing sense of trauma inside the soldier's head in [Remains](#)
- Images of atrocities don't affect newspaper buyers. (Compare to [Exposure](#) where the soldiers are brutalised and broken by extreme conditions) Interesting comparison too with [Poppies](#) where war memorials serve as a reminder to the war dead.

## Poppies:

- First person narrative of mother recalling memories of son as a child and later as he went off to war V now. Ambiguity of whether son is still alive adds to the pathos of poem
- Time shifts in poem between past and present
- Son's excitement of war/duty V mother's fears (compare to [Bayonet Charge](#) – idea of sense of duty felt initially then replaced by fear)
- Images of war mixed with images of home (connect to [The Emigree](#))
- Mother's sense of love for son/pain of potential loss (compare to [War Photographer](#) Poignant images of wife's loss of husband)

## Remains:

- Idea of soldier being haunted by the responsibility of killing another human being – unable to escape the memory. Compare to [War Photographer](#) where the 'shots' (the images) are 'Spools of suffering' and yet they become throwaway images in the media

- Focuses on the effects of war. Psychological damage – PTSD – of what war really does to a person. Tortured mind unable to escape (Compare to [Exposure](#))
- Casual language initially suggests causal attitude to death and killing, but is shortly replaced by horror of the reality 'Blood-shadow' 'Bursts again' 'Here in my head' 'my bloody hands' Sense of conscience and guilt replaces collective responsibility of 'all three of us' (Compare to [War Photographer](#))
- How conflict leads to emotional pain
- Memory here is a powerful tormentor – it haunts (compare to [The Emigree](#) where a vivid memory of home both hinders the speaker and helps keep her childhood alive)

### The Emigree:

- Memory of a woman's homeland – now war-torn. Idea that memories ('sunlight-clear') are precious and can't be destroyed.
- Sense of identity linked with one's past and homeland – sense of wanting to go back and yet knowing it's impossible (Compare with [Kamikaze](#))
- Vivid picture of place (Compare to [Checking out me history](#))
- Conflicted. Torn between the nostalgic past life and the pain of separation. (Compare to [Poppies](#))
- Personal struggle evident. Memory liberates ('My city takes me dancing' yet also creates pain as realisation that the past has gone forever – 'no way back.' E.g. Loss of language.
- Sense of feeling like an exile from homeland – ([Kamikaze](#))
- Sense of an authoritarian tyranny or regime that can oppress a society – power struggle between regime and people (Compare to [Ozymandias](#))
- Places have an impact on humans ([The Prelude](#))

### Ozymandias:

- Abuse of power and how power corrupts (Compare to [London](#))
- Downfall of tyrannical ruler – memory crumbles to dust

- Power visible due to art yet is powerless in reality
- Strong, male, arrogant male (compare to [My Last Duchess](#))
- Nature overpowers his monument built to last (Compare to [Storm on the Island](#))
- Idea of pride/confidence coming before a fall ([My Last Duchess](#))
- Ideas about strength and fragility (compare to [Tissue](#))
- Time and nature erode the monument – the bigger powers (Compare to [Tissue](#) and how memories are preserved on paper over time through the generations)
- Power of nature (compare to [The Prelude](#) and [Exposure](#))

## [My Last Duchess](#)

- Powerful man dominates and abuses position to get what he wants. About corruption of power.
- Presents male ego, jealousy, arrogance, revenge – compare to [Ozymandias](#) who is powered by his arrogance
- Controls wife with violence 'all smiles stopped' and later with curtain – seems ironic that he calls that 'piece a wonder, *now*.' Kills to maintain supreme control.
- Men v women – men as dominant, women expected to be subservient and trophies. Women are objectified.
- Use of art to demonstrate masculine power. [War Photographer](#) deals with images as a commodity – wants images to provoke a reaction. [Ozymandias](#) is a sculpture to preserve the Pharaoh's greatness. In [Tissue](#), the power of paper is used as a tool to preserve memories, and even used as imaginary layers of a city to flag up man's obsession with power and permanence.

## [London :](#)

- How people in society are oppressed/controlled by political/religious institutions etc (Compare with [Checking out me history](#))
- Sense of decay in people physically, morally, spiritually in city

- Irony: how greatest city in world is place of misery, poverty, abuse, slavery, corruption (Compare with [The Emigree](#))  
Further irony: [Ozymandias](#): Bold claims on plaque are empty now since the civilisation he ruled over no longer exists.
- Higher classes corrupt, control and use their power to oppress lower classes (compare to [My Last Duchess](#))
- Sense of resisting oppression: reference to red and black are linked to the resistance – the French Revolution. (Compare to [Checking out me History](#) defiantly re-addressing the imbalance in his education.
- Poem is an act of rebellion. Compare to [The Emigree](#) – speaker refuses to let go of her memories despite the powers of the regime in her home town. The 'sunlight' imagery is designed to outweigh the 'dark' images in the poem 'dark', 'shadow' and 'death.)
- Vision of a city in the industrial age (compare to the rural idyll of [The Prelude](#)) This city is an image of manmade urban corruption.

## The Prelude

- Childhood experience of Wordsworth's in rural England
- Nature as an all-powerful, almighty force – man is insignificant and inferior in comparison (Compare to [Storm on the Island](#))
- Conflict between man and the dark forces of nature
- Psychological fear – how an event can change you, traumatise and unsettle the mind (Compare to [Remains](#))
- Powerful memory (could compare to [War Photographer](#), [The Emigree](#), [Remains](#), [Poppies](#))
- The dangers of Mother Nature (Compare to [Exposure](#))
- How a place can have a deep impact on you (Compare to [The Emigree](#), [Kamikaze](#), [London](#), [Storm on the Island](#))
- Childlike experience of growing up and being overpowered by a situation (Compare to [The Emigree](#))
- Feelings of guilt and shame at stealing – affects the child long after. Spoilt childhood? (Compare to [Remains](#) to see how the soldier's guilt plays out)

## Storm on the Island

- Man is powerless in face of ferocious weather/conflict. Man has to be submissive/hide to survive/has few tools to fight back with (Compare to [Exposure](#))
- Human beings are insignificant when compared to the mighty weather (Compare to [Ozymandias](#))
- Possibly a political allegory for the Northern Ireland conflict which began in the 60s
- Power of nature to destroy – by implication, this could suggest the power of man to destroy each other's lives/places of safety
- Man as insignificant, nature the enemy (Compare to [Exposure](#))  
For a twist, consider how peaceful, idyllic nature persuades the pilot in [Kamikaze](#) to return back

## Checking out me history

- About colonial power v the speaker's sense of his cultural past which has been ignored in his education in England
- Identity – cultural identity - held hostage by a colonial power that fed a diet of 'white' history to school students.
- Implication is that the speaker has been controlled socially due to white British culture being seen as more important/valuable etc
- Tension between cultures co-existing in same society
- Celebration of military leaders v reality of war (Compare to [Exposure](#), [Bayonet Charge](#))
- Speaker gains sense of self worth – language reflects insistence that his Caribbean history matters. A sense of resistance filters through this poem and emerges triumphant. As if he's on the start of his journey? (Compare to idea in [The Emigree](#) where the speaker refuses to let her memories of home be taken from her. Yet, there's a finality to her leaving, 'There's no way back.')

## Tissue

- Ambiguous poem about different layers of meaning – leaving us contradictions. Paper is fragile 'lets light .. shine through' and yet is powerful enough to convey information down the generations through old, cherished books. Could light be truth/God? (Compare to [The Emigree](#) and use of sunlight)
- Implication too that nature is powerful.
- Paper has the power to change things despite its fragility
- Possibly paper is used to explore notions about control. Paper controls lives ie the Koran, maps, money. Suggestion that money controls our lives in an unhealthy way. 'Fly our lives like paper kites.' Implies lack of power that we have over our lives.
- Possibly paper symbolises humankind – both fragile and powerful (similar idea in [Ozymandias](#) where his words are strong, but his monument crumbles over time)
- Paper is 'thinned' and then turns into a 'living tissue' – implies human mortality. Our lives will end as the human body is delicate. Perhaps saying humans are fragile and – like the thinnest paper – are subject to disintegrating.
- Refers to identity – comments on how we as people are torn
- Vivid poem about memories – explored in terms of paper records (Could compare to [Poppies](#) or [War photographer](#))
- Look at how [London](#) presents the power of man – how man is corrupted by power. In Tissue, man's power is presented as more fragile. Though we assume power is constant, through records, buildings and money, the reality is that our bodies are fragile. Dharker suggests how temporary and flimsy our power over our own lives really is.

Kamikaze presents the **consequences of choosing not to die for your country** and not achieving the 'one way journey into history'. The shame and social stigma that it brings is a contrast with how other poets present the **senselessness/reality of war** such as Exposure and Remains.

The image of silence in Kamikaze as if the pilot's life is now a living death represents how he is **judged on his apparent lack of heroism**. His guilt lives on in him, 'he must have wondered which had been the better way to die.' The same can be said for the soldier speaker in Remains, 'his bloody life in my bloody hands.' Both are forever changed by their decision in the heat of the moment. **Internal conflict** is highlighted.

**War is celebrated** in The Charge of the Light Brigade. Checking out me... also **celebrates Caribbean war heroes**. While others **question the futility of war**: War Photographer/Exposure.

Remains and Poppies reveal the **devastating effects of conflict**.

Checking out me **challenges traditional concepts of truth and history** – suggesting that one's identity (both personal and national) is rooted in a place.

**Conflict between national and family identity** is a theme explored in Kamikaze. The pilot is considered a traitor almost to his country by turning his back on his 'history.' Tension between family and national identity are explored. Patriotism is so strong that his family shunned him 'as though he had never returned.'

Or it might be where a **speaker is conflicted or torn**: War Photographer, Kamikaze, The Emigree, Tissue. Checking out me history – conflicted by the power of the British empire and his own Caribbean identity.

Internal and external conflict is explored – notably man v nature. Storm on an island and The prelude, for instance. It's also linked to the power element.