

Pairing poems

Objectives

- To make connections between the Poetry By Heart timeline anthology poems and other 'unseen' poems
- To have fun finding pairs of poems in the timeline anthology and exploring their connections

Introduction

Now we take a step further, pairing poems to explore their meanings and effects through comparison and contrast. Mike Dixon, member of the Poetry By Heart senior development team, offers his selection of poems for comparing. Julie Blake responds with her selection.

Poems for comparing

Mike Dixon's choice One demanding element within pre and post 16 English specifications concerns the requirement to compare texts. This led me to consider what poems I might put alongside some of my favourites in the Poetry By Heart anthology. Below are 6 suggestions: some challenging and some more straightforward. All the (A) poems are available at www.poetrybyheart.org.uk whilst the (B) poems are easily accessible at various sites such as poetryarchive.org and poetryfoundation.org.

A 'The Soldier' - Rupert Brooke

B 'Drummer Hodge' - Thomas Hardy

This is a popular pairing but it's a good one. Brooke's soldier's death produces a '...corner of a foreign field/That is forever England' whereas Drummer Hodge's body lifeless after a Boer War battle is absorbed in to the South African landscape. 'Yet portion of that unknown plain/Will Hodge for ever be.'

A 'Ae fond kiss and then we sever' – Robert Burns

B 'Since there's no help come let us kiss and part' – Michael Drayton

Two poems about love and loss and, in Drayton's case, lingering hope.

A 'The Chimney Sweeper' – William Blake

B 'The Sluggard' – Isaac Watts

Taken from his collection 'Divine Songs', Watts' poem is an example of the kind of morally uplifting and 'improving' verse that remained very popular for many years after its publication. Blake's poem of course is

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Recitation competition

much more morally ambiguous and challenging whilst seeming to adopt the conventions of eighteenth century poems for children.

A 'On the Death of Robert Levet' – Samuel Johnson

B 'An Ode on the Death of Mr Henry Purcell' – John Dryden

Different approaches in style and tone to commemorating the sadly departed.

A 'You Are Old Father William' – Lewis Carroll

B 'The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them' – Robert Southey

Lewis Carroll's famous poem from 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' and the poem by Southey that it so amusingly parodies.

A 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' – The Gawain Poet

B 'Piers Plowman' lines 1 to 21 – William Langland

Comparing these two magnificent middle English alliterative poems would encourage the appreciation of sound effects and the texture of words and would really draw attention to the acoustic quality of verse.

Find-the-pairs in the PBH timeline

"Find the pairs" is a fun game to have students play as a way of exploring the anthology and making their own connections with poems. Here are my six favourite "pairs": find them on the Poetry By Heart timeline and spot the connections, then either find a new pair or find another poem you could add to these pairs to make a trio.

1. 'Dover Beach' by Matthew Arnold and 'Look, We Have Coming to Dover' by Daljit Singh
2. 'Lord Randall' by an anonymous poet and 'Langley Lane' by Jacob Polley
3. 'In Summer's Heat and Mid-Time of the Day' by Christopher Marlowe and 'Strawberries' by Edwin Morgan
4. 'Ae fond kiss and then we sever' by Robert Burns and 'Goodbye' by Alun Lewis
5. 'A mother to her waking infant' by Joanna Baillie and 'Waking with Russell' by Don Paterson, though for a triple comparative challenge throw in Sylvia Plath's 'Morning Song' too
6. 'Sonny's lettah' by Linton Kwesi Johnson and 'Boy Breaking Glass' by Gwendolyn Brooks