

English at Key Stage 3

**Echoes in the Wilderness**  
Contemporary Irish poets  
by  
**Gillian Goetzee**



'Ireland in Schools'  
*for*  
The Warrington Project

**SU23**

# Contents

Note for teachers - mode of teaching

Echoes in the Wilderness

Contemporary Irish poets - an anthology

Echoes in the Wilderness

Contemporary Irish poets - activity book

Echoes in the Wilderness

Contemporary Irish poets - students' work

Assignment 1: 'Loneliness'

The House *by* Howard Wright

McGwinn and Son *by* Ted McNulty

Assignment 2: 'Irish countryside'

The Girl with the Keys to Pearse's Cottage *by* Paul Durcan

Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949 *by* Paul Durcan

Assignment 3: 'The troubles'

Enemy Encounter *by* Padraic Fiacc

The Disturbance *by* Tony Curtis

## **Note for teachers - mode of teaching**

### **PREPARATION ACTIVITIES**

This Study Unit begins with activities which enable pupils to think about the importance of environment and culture within a poem. They inform mood and character and may be part of the ideas being explored. Pupils should also learn that poets are created by the environment and culture to which they belong.

The poems here arise out of the particular environment and culture of Ireland and part of the purpose of the Unit is for pupils to confront the experience of Ireland. Therefore the initial activities focus on developing understanding of Irish culture: the landscape, history, social attitudes, etc.

You should teach all this preparation work to the whole class, although a lot of the activities are then independent and could be produced in pairs or groups.

### **POETRY ACTIVITIES**

#### Three discrete poems

The poetry section begins with three discrete poems and their separate sets of questions. You may wish to teach one or all of the poems to the whole class to familiarise the pupils with the concepts and techniques relevant to poetry and to this Unit.

For the key poetry activities and assignments the class should be divided into groups of approximately four. These could be differentiated groups, mixed ability groups, single gender, mixed gender and so on depending on the management demands of the class at the time. The groupings should be the results of definite decisions.

You may wish to spend some time with the class considering the sort of group behaviour which would encourage successful learning.

#### Four pairs of poems

There are also four pairs of poems in the Unit. Each pairing has tasks on the separate poems, followed by an assignment which asks the pupils to compare the poems in some way. Each group should choose which pair of poems to study and work through the related tasks and the assignment together. You should visit each group for about ten minutes at a time each lesson. You may wish to bring the whole class together to work on planning and the use of quotation.

You may want to give the groups about eight lessons to complete the activities on two poems, the first draft and the final draft of the assignment, and each group manage its own time. Or you may provide more of a structure, controlling the management of time yourself.

You may wish to introduce Key words before the poetry is studied.

The spirit of the mode of teaching is to encourage collaboration and active, independent thinking within a rigorous structure.

## DELIVERING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

*Echoes in the Wilderness* includes poetry by major poets from different cultures and traditions published after 1914 and delivers the National Curriculum for English at Key Stage 3 in respect of speaking and listening, reading and writing.

### Speaking and listening

The study unit provides students with opportunities for group discussion and interaction, exploring and analysing texts.

### Reading

The study unit provides students with opportunities to:

#### *(Reading for meaning)*

- extract meaning beyond the literal, explaining how the choice of language and style affects implied and explicit meaning;
- understand how ideas, values and emotions are explored and portrayed;
- identify the perspectives offered on individuals, community and society;
- read and appreciate the scope and richness of complete poems;

#### *(Understanding the authors' craft)*

- understand how language is used in imaginative, original and diverse ways;
- reflect on the writers' presentation of ideas and issues;
- understand how techniques, structures, forms and styles vary;
- compare texts, looking at style, theme and language and identifying connections and contrasts;

#### *(Texts from other cultures and traditions)*

- understand the values and assumptions in the texts;
- understand the significance of the subject matter and the language;
- understand how familiar themes are explored in different cultural contexts.

### Writing

The study unit provides students with opportunities to

- analyse, review, comment;
- reflect on the nature and significance of the subject matter;
- form their own view, taking into account a range of evidence and opinions;
- organise their ideas and information.

Students plan, draft, redraft and proofread the summative assignment, which should be in Standard English.

English at Key Stage 3

# **Echoes in the Wilderness**

**Contemporary Irish poets - an anthology**

*by*

**Gillian Goetzee**

'Ireland in Schools'

*for*

The Warrington Project

SU23

# Contents

1.	Penance Tony Curtis	1
2.	Voices Damien Quinn	2
3.	Postcard from Fermanagh Bill O'Keefe	3
4.	The House Howard Wright	4
5.	McGwinn and Son Ted McNulty	5
6.	The Girl with the Keys to Pearse's Cottage Paul Durcan	6
7.	Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949 Paul Durcan	7
8.	Enemy Encounter Padraic Fiacc	8
9.	The Disturbance Tony Curtis	9
10.	The Dowser and the Child Tony Curtis	10
11.	My Father Perceived as a Vision of St Francis Paula Meehan	11

## 1. Penance

And still they live in unforgiven places,  
on the sides of arthritic hills,  
where low walls hide the sea and the sea  
hides the dead, though the dead still whisper  
in their silent graves, 'I'm cold, I'm cold.'

Enough bog here to stoke the fires of Hell,  
and stones so many you'd think they grew  
in the soil. Though nothing ever grows.  
God knows there was more wood on Calvary.

This morning, on a high road beyond Cleggan,  
I passed the ruins of a deserted cottage,  
and a ruined cottage that looked deserted,  
only a man eyed me. I asked where the road went?  
'To the end,' he said, 'the end.' Then shuffled off.

Tony Curtis

## 2. Voices

Another bloody day has  
passed  
and it's reported  
in shades of grey

as numerous as the dead,  
too numerous to count.  
The camera crews

are having a field day  
filming green landscapes,  
winter-dulled, windswept,

death-drabbed; and grey  
unprosperous  
villages where black flags  
slap the gables

of the waking homes;  
*Bandit Country*, somebody  
said

as if we were captured  
in celluloid  
just south of the Rio  
Grande.

Libelling us with labels or  
slandering us with word-  
sorcery. Tit-for-tat

tragedies earn them a living  
but fools can flaunt  
their failings

much too much,  
make others believe.  
Yet I've got

little else  
to offer  
but my words:

jejune at best,  
inane at worst,  
conceived in the mind's

parish of lies.  
Shaped by tribal traits,  
stories of histories

hatching, parables and  
prayers and the  
knowledge of the wedge

hammered home centuries  
ago by outsiders  
to keep the peace,

to separate like from like,  
to create separate voices  
echoing in the wilderness.

Damien Quinn

### 3. Postcard from Fermanagh

Chopper clatter bursting  
Through the treetops  
Above the chalet clearing  
At eggs and bacon breakfast

The scout, nosing the forest  
The gunship, a hawk shadow

Good day, sir  
Do you have any identification?  
In a soft lilt,  
In a battledress

Later, a red Orion  
Disgorges a black swat squad

Island Enniskillen  
Still fortified, enchants  
We are coming back here  
Next year - sooner, perhaps

Where else can peace be enjoyed  
So much, as on a front line?

Bill O'Keefe

## 4. The House

My grandfather was so frail  
that when bloothered  
after a Saturday session  
in the bookies and McConville's  
I could lift him with one hand  
    and carry him  
like a raincoat over my arm,  
and just as easily hang him  
against the side of the house  
until I found his keys.

It's neither here nor there  
why he drank.  
Suffice to say when Violet died  
he couldn't look  
at another woman.  
He'd got a little house  
of his own, and sat all night  
footering with the coals.  
In that house  
he couldn't look at another bottle.

Howard Wright

## 5. McGwinn and Son

Too many butchers  
in the village  
and alone in his shop  
pretending to be busy  
he suddenly hears  
the long curse  
he never knew was in him,  
the throat of his own  
with a shout  
that goes back to the day  
he put on his father's apron  
and his mouth  
turned into a purse.

Ted McNulty

## 6. The Girl with the Keys to Pearse's Cottage

When I was sixteen I met a dark girl;  
Her dark hair was darker because her smile was so bright;  
She was the girl with the keys to Pearse's Cottage;  
And her name was Cáit Killann.

The Cottage was built into the side of a hill;  
I recall two windows and cosmic peace  
Of bare brown rooms and on whitewashed walls  
Photographs of the passionate pale Pearse.

I recall wet thatch and peeling jambs  
and how all was best seen from below in the field;  
I used to sit in the rushes with ledger-book and pencil  
Compiling poems of passion for Cáit Killann.

Often she used to linger on the sill of a window;  
Hands by her side and brown legs akimbo;  
In the sun red skirt and moon-black blazer;  
Looking toward our strange world wide-eyed.  
Our world was strange because it had no future,  
She was America-bound at Summer's end.  
She had no choice but to leave her home -  
The girl with the keys to Pearse's Cottage

O Cáit Killann, O Cáit Killann,  
You have gone with your keys from your own native place.  
Yet here in this dark - El Greco eyes blaze back  
From your Connemara postman's daughter's proudly  
mortal face.

Paul Durcan

## 7. Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949

Leaving behind us the alien, foreign city of Dublin,  
My father drove through the night in an old Ford Anglia,  
His five-year old son in the seat beside him,  
The rexine seat of red leatherette,  
and a yellow moon peered in through the windscreen.  
'Daddy, Daddy,' I cried, 'pass out the moon,'  
But no matter how hard he drove he could not pass  
out the moon.

Each town we passed through was another milestone  
And their names were magic passwords into eternity:  
Kilcock, Kinnegad, Strokestown, Elphin,  
Tarmonbarry, Tulsk, Ballayhaderreen, Ballavary;  
Now we were in Mayo and the next step was Turlough,  
The village of Turlough in the heartland of Mayo  
and my father's mother's house, all oil lamps and women,  
and my bedroom over the public bar below,  
and in the morning cattle cries and cock crows:  
Life's seemingly seamless garment gorgeously rent  
By their screeched and bellowings. And in the evenings  
I walked with my father in the high grass down by  
the river.

Talking with him - an unheard of thing in the city.

But home was not home and the moon could be no more out-flanked  
Than the daylight nightmare of Dublin City:  
Back down along the canal we chugged into the city  
and each lock gate tolled our mutual doom;  
and railings and parkings and asphalt and traffic lights,  
and blocks after blocks of so-called 'new' tenements -  
Thousands of crosses of loneliness planted  
In the narrowing grave of the life of the father;  
In the wide, wide cemetery of the boy's childhood.

Paul Durcan

## 8. Enemy Encounter

Dumping (left over from the autumn)  
Dead leaves, near a culvert  
I come on

    a British Army Soldier  
with a rifle and a radio  
Perched hiding. He has red hair.

He is young enough to be my weenie  
-bopper daughter's boyfriend.  
He is like a lonely little winter robin.  
We are that close to each other, I  
Can nearly hear his heart beating.

I say something bland to make him grin,  
But his glass eyes look past my side  
- whiskers down  
    the Shore Road Street.

I am an Irishman  
    and he is afraid  
That I have come to kill him

Padraic Fiacc

## 9. The Disturbance

A bomb shatters the silence of George Street,  
sending clouds of dust down chimneys.  
In seconds the dull thud dies away,  
only a milk bottle rolling over the pavement  
disturbs the silence with its circular sound -  
Unshaven men in pyjamas stand like convicts  
framed in the doorways of their cells,  
or lean out windows like old farmers  
on wooden gates, staring over concrete fields.  
whose walls hold nothing in.  
Women half dressed, still warm from sleep,  
hold children's hands and let tired faces hang  
like flowers withering after daylight or water.  
While behind them kettles whistle  
and toast burns under the grill.  
Along another quiet road,  
a man, pedalling on old bicycle,  
whistles a familiar Irish air  
as he creaks up a hill towards home,  
the morning paper in his pocket,  
secure, folded like a job well done.

Tony Curtis

## 10. The Dowser and the Child

When you were leaving  
I always asked if you'd  
brought an umbrella;  
you made me think of rain  
upon the hills. All our lives

there was a steady drizzle between us;  
the sound of water in the distance.  
Your hands, your eyes  
dowsed over me, as if you  
could divine things deep within me.

It seemed to me you moved beneath  
a grey cloud. I remember  
even on sunny days, you wore  
a great wide hat, your eyes  
in darkness under the cool verandah.

Some days you were a passing shower.  
Some days you were a snowflake.  
Some days your tongue was a bolt  
of lightning that sent me  
scuttling under the kitchen table.

Hours I'd sit there, listening  
to the thunder of your things  
rolling in the distance.  
Nights when the wind blew,  
I could hear it moan in your room,  
creaking the bed. If I opened your door,  
you blew it shut with a shout.  
Once when I was lost in the forest  
at the back of our house, I followed  
the cold wind that led home to you.

I ran down the path to embrace you,  
but you stayed distant like all my  
rainbows, and told me, and told me,  
and told me, not to touch your  
delicate colours with mucky hands.

Tony Curtis

## 11. My Father Perceived as a Vision of St Francis

It was the piebald horse in next door's garden  
frightened me out of a dream  
with her dawn whinny. I was back  
in the boxroom of the house,  
my brother's room now,  
full of ties and sweaters and secrets.  
Bottles chinked on the doorstep,  
the first bus pulled up to the stop.  
The rest of the house slept  
except for my father. I heard  
him rake the ash from the grate,  
plug in the kettle, hum a snatch of a tune.  
Then he unlocked the back door  
and stepped out into the garden.

Autumn was nearly done, the first frost  
whitened the slates of the estate.  
He was older than I had reckoned,  
his hair completely silver,  
and for the first time I saw the stoop  
of his shoulder, saw that  
his leg was stiff. What's he at?  
So early and still stars in the west?

They came then: birds  
of every size, shape, colour; they came  
from the hedges and shrubs,  
from eaves and garden sheds,  
from the industrial estate, outlying fields;  
from Dubber Cross they came  
and the ditches of the North Road.  
The garden was a pandemonium  
when my father threw up his hands  
and tossed the crumbs to the air. The sun  
cleared O'Reilly's chimney  
and he was suddenly radiant,  
a perfect vision of St Francis,  
made whole, made young again,  
in a Finglas garden.

Paula Meehan

English at Key Stage 3

# **Echoes in the Wilderness**

**Contemporary Irish poets - activity book**

by

**Gillian Goetzee**

'Ireland in Schools'

*for*

The Warrington Project

SU23

# Contents

## PART ONE: THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

1. Home and family 2
2. Local area and community 3
3. Ireland 4

## PART TWO: TASKS ON INDIVIDUAL POEMS

1. Penance 6
2. Voices 7
3. Postcard from Fermanagh 8

## PART THREE: ASSIGNMENTS

Choosing your assignment 9

### Assignment one

The House  
McGwinn and Son 10

### Assignment two

The Girl with the Key to Pearse's Cottage  
Going Home to Mayo 11

### Assignment three

Enemy Encounter  
The Disturbance 13

### Assignment four

The Dowser and the child  
My Father Perceived as a Vision of St Francis 15

Part one  
The importance of environment and culture

# 1. Home and family

To understand and enjoy the poems in the Study Unit you need to understand what is meant by environment and culture. Their meanings overlap.

**Think of five things that could be covered by these words.**

YOU are created by the environment and culture around you. Poets are created by their environment and culture. Poets write about environment and culture, sometimes to show us more about a character.

The first important environment and culture which influences you is your **home and family**.

**Write, talk or think about  
your home and family environment and culture.**

The following may help you:

The physical environment of a home creates a mood and atmosphere. A clean, uncluttered room decorated in blue and white with angular, metallic furniture gives a cool, inhuman feeling, perhaps. *What is your home like? Whose personality does it represent? Does it fit in with your personality?*

Your bedroom may be a place in your home which shows your personality. *Is it lime green and orange, pink or black? Is it full of cuddly toys, technology, football trophies or Point Horror books? Can you choose the decoration or does your Mum or your older brother?*

Your family may have a belief or attitude which is important, such as being Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses or Muslim, or being Labour or Manchester United supporters, or believing in hard work or living for the moment. *How far are you influenced by any beliefs or attitudes? Do you agree or rebel?*

The emotional environment of your home will affect you. *Does your family shout a lot, hug a lot, keep separate, fiercely compete ... ?*

These adjectives may help: cramped, confined, empty, hectic, relaxed, affectionate, noisy, indifferent, fearful, calm.

## 2. Local area and community

The environment and culture of your local area and community also help to create YOU, create poets and are used by poets.

**Write, talk or think about images and ideas about Merseyside.**

The following may help you:

*How is Merseyside presented on the television?*

*How is the accent thought of by other people?*

*What is the typical scouser like?*

*Do you know people who think Merseyside is special?*

*Why is football so important?*

*Why do so many entertainers come from Merseyside?*

*What is the difference between Liverpool and the Wirral?*

**Do you think you belong to Merseyside?**

**If you do not come from Merseyside,  
think about your own local environment and culture.**

### 3. Ireland

This Study Unit is about poetry from Ireland. The Irish environment and culture has helped to make the poets the people they are. The environment and culture of Ireland are important in the poems and they influence the characters in the poems.

**Brainstorm images and ideas you have about Ireland and make a display.**

The following may help you:

Irish tourism advertisements

The news

Films: 'The Commitments', 'Into the West', 'The Crying Game'

Television: 'Father Ted', 'Ballykissangel', 'The Ambassador'

Music: The Corrs, Boyzone, Sinéad O'Connor

Your own visits to Ireland

Conversation with people who have visited or come from Ireland.

## Part two

### Tasks on individual poems

*You will do some or all of the following work on three poems with help from your teacher.*

# 1. Penance

Tony Curtis

This poem is set in Connemara, a country area in The Republic of Ireland. It is now a tourist destination, but it was a place where many people died of starvation in the middle of the nineteenth century. The main food of many Irish people was potatoes and when a potato disease spread through the country there was hardly anything to eat. Some people argue that the English who ruled Ireland then could have helped more, and perhaps the English made the famine worse than it needed to be.

To the Irish people now the Famine is a powerful memory as so many died and so many emigrated to escape.

The past and suffering and death are very present in the poem.

1. What factual details about the landscape of Connemara do you find out about?
2. How does Curtis create a sense of the past in the first stanza?
3. How does Curtis create a mood of suffering in the first stanza?
4. How is the mood of suffering added to in the second stanza ?
5. Why does Curtis decide to start a new stanza after line 9 ?
6. What is important about the man, where he lives, what he does and what he says?
7. How does Curtis make a poem about lasting suffering a little bit funny?
8. Think about the title, you may have to use a dictionary, and suggest who Curtis feels is responsible for the suffering, for the Famine. Try to find other clues in the poem.

**How does Curtis present the landscape of Connemara in his poem 'Penance'?**

**Use the above questions and your answers to help you.**

## 2. Voices

Damien Quinn

There are still terrible acts of violence happening in Ireland, although many people are working towards peace. This poem is about the media coverage, the media explanations and the poet's own attempts to explain the violence.

1. What may have just happened before the beginning of the poem?
2. How do we know this sort of thing happens all the time?
3. What does Quinn mean when he says the day's events are reported in 'shades of grey'?
4. Why does Quinn use the particular simile 'as numerous as the dead' in stanza 2?
5. Why are the camera crews 'having a field day'? Why might they enjoy this particular landscape?
6. How does Quinn's use of language change to describe the landscape in stanzas 3 and 4?
7. What is suggested by the label 'Bandit Country'? Why does this make Quinn angry?
8. What is the effect of alliteration in stanzas 7 and 8?
9. Why does Quinn accuse journalists of 'word sorcery'?
10. Quinn is Irish and he feels his words are those of an insider too involved to be able to explain the violence. Think carefully and explain what he is saying about his words, about Irish words and about the way words cause violence:  
conceived in the mind's parish of lies  
shaped by tribal traits  
stories of histories hatching
11. Who does Quinn think is ultimately responsible for the suffering and violence, who makes the words 'jejune' and 'inane', who stops the Irish from communicating with each other?
12. What is the mood created in the last two lines?
13. Why does Quinn set out the poem in short stanzas and short lines? Pick out one or two examples to comment on.

### How does Quinn explain the violence in Ireland?

Think about the media's presentation of events, the Irish people's use of words and the reason for the 'separate voices' of Irish people.

### 3. Postcard from Fermanagh

Bill O'Keefe

Northern Ireland is sometimes describes as an occupied country, with the presence and the threat of an army from England. This poem contrasts the countryside with the military menace, from the point of view of a tourist.

1. What factual details do you learn of the landscape of Fermanagh from the whole poem?
2. The poem is called 'Postcard' from Fermanagh. How does the postcard idea affect the language of the poem? Pick one or two examples and explain.
3. How does the opening line surprise the reader?
4. Why is the helicopter described as 'nosing the forest' and compared to a 'hawk shadow'?
5. How does the soldier speak to the narrator of the poem? How does this contrast with battle dress? Why is the uniform included only at the end of the stanza?
6. What effect does the verb 'disgorges' have?
7. Why does the narrator like holidaying in Enniskillen, a town in Fermanagh?
8. Do you think the people of Enniskillen like living on the frontline?
9. Would you like to visit or live in Enniskillen?
10. Why are the last two lines expressed as a question?
11. Do you think the narrator is the same person as the poet?

**How does O'Keefe present living on the front line in Ireland?  
Do you think he succeeds in making it tense?**

**Use the questions above and your answers to help you.**

## Part three

### Assignments

*You have just studied some difficult poetry. You are now going to be independent and face the challenge of thinking and writing about poems without the detailed support from your teacher. You will have help from other people in your group, or you may have to help them.*

**Read the eight poems left in the Anthology which are grouped in pairs.**

**Make a group decision on which two poems you are going to work on.**

**Read the poems carefully at least twice and discuss your first impressions.**

**Together answer all the questions on both poems, in detail.**

**Use your answers to help you plan and then write the final assignment.**

**When you, your group and your teacher have thought about what is successful about your assignment and about what needs improving, *you should write a final draft to be assessed.***

## Assignment one

The House *by* Howard Wright  
McGwinn and Son *by* Ted McNulty

### The House

Howard Wright

1. Who is telling the story?  
Why is this important ?
2. How does Howard Wright make it seem as if the narrator is a real person?
3. What do you find out about the grandfather's culture and lifestyle?
4. Why do you think the grandfather drinks so much?
5. Find five ways Howard Wright makes you feel sorry for the grandfather?
6. Is there anything else about the poem that you want to comment on?
7. Why is the poem called 'The House'?

### McGwinn and Son

Ted McNully

1. Why does the man have to pretend to be busy in the shop?
2. What do you learn of the man's environment and lifestyle?
3. How did the man feel when he became a butcher?
4. Why do you think the man became a butcher?
5. How did becoming a butcher change the man?
6. What has reminded the man of the day he became butcher?
7. Find at least three ways that Ted McNully makes you feel sorry for the man?
8. Why is the poem called 'McGwinn and Son'?

**Both poems are about lonely people.**

**Explain how the people are lonely.**

**How does each poet present the lonely person?**

**Which poem makes you feel the most sympathy for the lonely person?**

## Assignment two

The Girl with the Keys to Pearse's Cottage *by* Paul Durcan  
Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949 *by* Paul Durcan

### The Girl with the Keys to Pearse's Cottage

Paul Durcan

*Pearse was a poet, interested in Irish tradition and in education. He was also a fighter for Irish independence. He was executed in 1916 and was seen as a martyr.*

1. Why is it important that the narrator is sixteen?
2. Why is it important that the setting is a cottage which belonged to Pearse?
3. Why is it important that Cáit Killan is linked to the cottage?
4. How is the atmosphere of country life created in Stanza 2?
5. How is this atmosphere changed by the first two lines of Stanza 3?
6. How does Durcan show what was attractive about Cáit Killan?
7. Why is Cáit Killan leaving Ireland?
8. How does Durcan make this sad?
9. Find out who El Greco was and explain why Durcan describes Cáit Killan's eyes as 'El Greco eyes'?
10. How is Cáit Killan still there 'in the dark' at the end of the poem?
11. What difference does it make that the poem is about a man thinking about a past moment?
12. Is there anything else about the poem that you would like to comment on?

## Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949

Paul Durcan

1. Who is telling the story?  
Why is this important?
2. What did the child feel about Dublin?
3. How does Durcan make the situation convincing and real at first?
4. Why does Durcan include all the place names, the proper nouns?
5. How does Durcan show Irish country life in 1949?
6. What is Durcan referring to when he mentions 'Life's seemingly seamless garment...'? *You may have to look this up in a dictionary of quotations.*
7. How is the child's relationship with his father different in the countryside?
8. What do you think 'But home was not home...' may mean?
9. Explain five ways that Durcan makes Dublin seem a 'daylight nightmare'.
10. What difference does it make that the poem is about a man thinking about a past moment?
11. Is there anything else about the poem that you would like to comment on?

**Both poems are about the world of the Irish country side which has disappeared.**

**Explain what the world of the country side is like in each poem.**

**What and/or who symbolises the country side world in each poem?**

**How may the worlds be compared?**

**How is the loss of the country side presented?**

**Which poem makes you feel the loss the most?**

## Assignment three

Enemy Encounter *by* Padraic Fiacc

The Disturbance *by* Tony Curtis

### Enemy Encounter

Padraic Fiacc

1. What is a culvert?
2. What sort of person is the narrator?
3. How is the atmosphere created in the first stanza?
4. Why is there a break in the sentence between Stanza 1 and Stanza 2?
5. How do we know what the narrator's attitude to the soldier is?
6. What makes the narrator compare the soldier to a robin?
7. How does the narrator know that the soldier is afraid of him?  
Is the soldier right to be so afraid?
8. Is the narrator directly involved in the events of the poem?  
How does this change the poem?
9. Is the poem about individuals or about people in general?  
How does this change the poem?
10. Is there anything else about the poem that you would like to comment on?

## The Disturbance

Tony Curtis

1. How does the opening line try to surprise the reader?
2. How does the second line contrast with the first?
3. What would happen on your street if a bomb went off?
4. How does this compare with what happens on George Street?
5. Give at least two reasons why the men are compared to convicts.
6. Why does Curtis choose to compare the men to old farmers?
7. Why does Curtis choose to compare the women to withered flowers?
8. How do you know who set off the bomb?
9. Is this how you would expect someone to react if they had just set off a bomb successfully?
10. Is the narrator directly involved in the events of the poem?  
How does this change the poem?
11. Is this poem about individuals or people in Northern Ireland in general?  
How does this change the poem?
12. Is there anything else about the poem that you would like to comment on?

**Both poems are about Northern Ireland.**

**What is each poem saying about the experience of living through the troubles in Northern Ireland?**

**How do the two poets present their ideas?**

**Which poem do you like the best and why?**

## Assignment four

The Dowser and the Child *by* Tony Curtis

My Father Perceived as a Vision of St Francis *by* Pauline Meehan

### The Dowser and the Child

Tony Curtis

1. Find out what is a dowser?
2. What mood is created by ‘rain upon the hills’?  
What does this tell you about the way the narrator feels about his mother?
3. Explain what Stanza 2 shows about the narrator’s relationship with his mother.
4. How does Stanza 3 link with ‘you made me think of rain upon the hills’?
5. What would it be like to be the child of the mother shown in Stanza 4?
6. What is the mother compared to in Stanza 5?  
How would this affect her child?
7. What does the child in the poem feel about his mother in Stanza 6?
8. What does the narrator feel about his mother now that he is an adult?  
How does Curtis show this?
9. To whom is the narrator speaking?  
How does this change the poem?
10. What is main imagery of the poem?
11. Is there anything else about the poem that you would like to comment on?

## My Father Perceived as a Vision of St Francis

Paula Meehan

1. Who is St. Francis and for what is he particularly famous?
2. How is the opening line surprising?
3. Why do you think the narrator is in her brother's bedroom?  
Try to explain the circumstances.
4. How are sounds important in Stanza 1?  
What does the listening show you about the narrator and her feelings?
5. Why does Meehan choose to set the poem in Autumn?
6. What does the narrator realise about her father in Stanza 2?
7. How does 'What's he at?' have an impact?
8. How is the atmosphere created in the last line of Stanza 2?
9. How does Meehan make you understand that there were an enormous number of birds?
10. How does the narrator show what she feels about her father towards the end of the poem?
11. How does Meehan create a definite sense of place?  
Why do you think she does this?
12. Find five line endings and/or beginnings that are important.  
Explain why they are important.
13. What is the main imagery in the poem?
14. Is there anything else about the poem which you would like to comment on?

**Both poems are about Northern Ireland.**

**What is each poem saying about the experience of living through the troubles in Northern Ireland?**

**How do the two poets present their ideas?**

**Which poem do you like the better and why?**