

In Praise of...

- Ode to Dirt
- Ode to Gossips
- Bread Soup: An Old Icelandic Recipe
- The Travelling Onion
- Peaches
- Litany



Overview of the Sequence

The poems you need for this sequence are all included in the *EMC Poetry Playlist* anthology:

- Ode to Dirt, by Sharon Olds (p88)
- Ode to Gossips, by Safia Elhillo (p89)
- Bread Soup: An Old Icelandic Recipe, by Bill Holm (p71)
- The Travelling Onion, by Naomi Shihab Nye (p69)
- Peaches, by Peter Davison (p70)
- Litany, by Billy Collins (p90)

In addition to the *EMC Poetry Playlist* anthology, you will need the following handout:

- Praise1_Openings.pdf (Ode to a Nightingale, Ode to Solitude, Ode to a Skylark)
- Praise2_FullPoems.pdf (Ode to a Nightingale, Ode to Solitude, Ode to a Skylark)



Introduction to the Ode

There's a long history of poems praising something or someone. The ode is a poem in praise of a person or object, often actually addressed to it.

Here are examples of some of the subjects that odes have been written about in the past.

- Talk about what strikes you about these subject choices. What, if anything, do they have in common?

a skylark

duty

a Grecian urn

a nightingale

dejection

the west wind

solitude

autumn

beauty

liberty

immortality

joy



Odes from the 18th and 19th Centuries

For this activity you will need the handout Praise1_Openings.pdf.

Included on the handout are the openings to three traditional odes, one written in the 18th century, the other two in the 19th century.

- Look at the openings and talk about which of the subjects you think each one might be about.

a skylark

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a Grecian urn

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joy



Odes from the 18th and 19th Centuries

For this activity you will need the handout Praise1_Openings.pdf.

- How would you describe each of the openings of the odes on the handout? Choose from this list of adjectives the ones that seem most relevant to you.

noble

joyful

humorous

emotional

philosophical

serious

admiring

thoughtful

beautiful

poetic

happy

angry

sad

grateful

peaceful

cynical

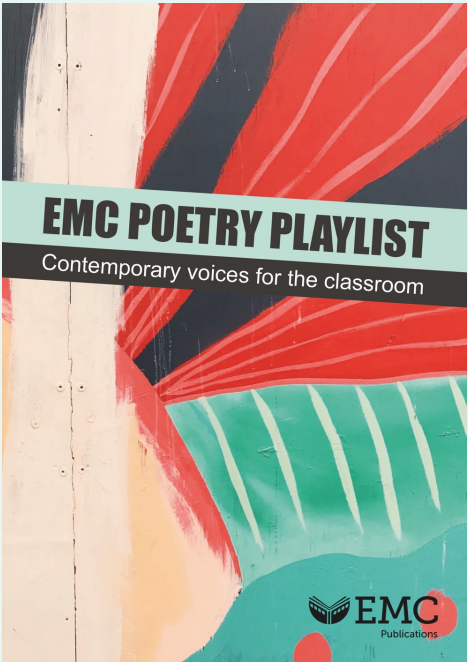


Talking about 'Ode to Dirt'

- Read these statements and, talking in pairs or threes, choose the three that you agree with most.
- Share your views with the class.

- A. The poem is suggesting that dirt is much more important than we might think.
- B. Olds is suggesting that human beings are part of a whole cycle of nature, that includes everything, down to the most basic thing, like dirt.
- C. Olds has written the poem to call for a change in the way people think about themselves.
- D. Addressing her thoughts to dirt makes this a humorous poem.
- E. Olds challenges our expectations through humour but the poem has a serious message.
- F. The poem isn't really about dirt at all.
- G. The poem turns upside down our expectations of what an ode is like.
- H. The poem does exactly what a good ode has always done.





The Poetry of Love



The Poetry of Love

The poems covered in this sequence can all be found in *EMC Poetry Playlist*:

- The Fist, by Derek Walcott (p76)
- Answers, by Robin Robertson (p32)
- Love Song for Ayumi, by Marianne Chan (p77)
- One Hundred Love Sonnets: XVII, by Pablo Neruda (p78)
- Love in a Time of Climate Change, by Craig Santos Perez (p79)



Love Lyrics

- In a small group, brainstorm any titles and phrases from love songs you know.
- As a class, collect your titles and phrases together.
- Discuss what you notice, for example:
 - Common themes
 - Words or phrases that come up a lot across different songs
 - Different moods, for example, romantic, angry
 - Topics, for example crushes, jealousy
 - Any clichéd phrases
 - Any unusual or surprising phrases.
- Keep a note of your findings to refer to as you study this unit on Love Poetry.





The Fist



Before Reading: 'The Fist'

The poem you are about to read is called 'The Fist'.

Working with a partner

- Clench one of your hands into a tight fist and consider for a moment how that feels.
- Discuss some of the associations you have with a clenched fist, including what emotions might be involved and both positive and negative associations.

Working as a class

- Remind yourself of some of the different themes, topics and moods you came up with when you thought about love songs you know.
- Discuss:
 - What kind of love you might expect a poem called 'The Fist' to explore
 - Whether you would expect a different kind of poem if it was called 'These Fists'.



Reading 'The Fist'

- Listen as your teacher reads the poem.
- Turn to a partner and explain two things that stick in your mind from the poem.
- Now read the poem to yourself. (It is on page 80.)
- Write a few sentences about your first impression of the poem. For example:
 - 'I like...'
 - 'I didn't like...'
 - 'I noticed...'
 - 'I'm confused by...'
 - 'I predicted...and...'
 - 'This reminds me of...'
 - 'I was/wasn't surprised that...'
- As a class, share some of your thoughts about the poem.



An Extended Metaphor

An extended metaphor is one that continues over several lines.

- With a partner or small group, discuss how a fist/hand is used as an extended metaphor in this poem. You could think about:
 - What kind of love you think the speaker is experiencing and whether it is constant or changeable
 - Whether the last line changes your view of the speaker's experience in the relationship
 - Why you think Walcott chose the extended metaphor of a fist to represent love.



Discussing the Poem

- In a pair or small group, discuss which of these words and phrases applies to 'The Fist'.
- Choose two that give you lots to say about the poem
- Share your group's thoughts with the rest of your class.

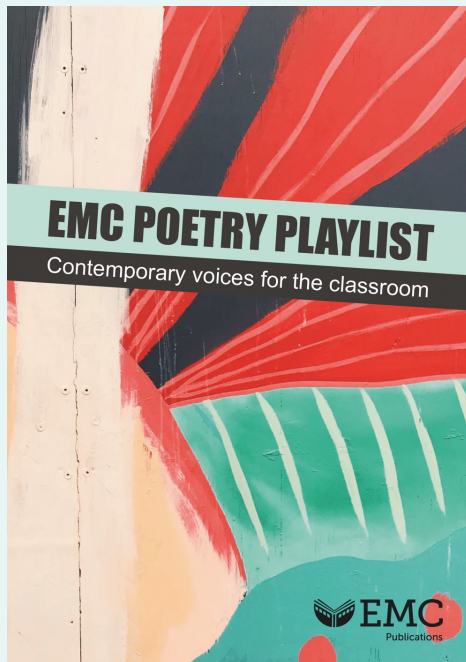
Romantic	Directly addressing someone	Powerful
Unusual comparisons	Sad	Funny
Highly structured	Clever	Very different from prose
Positive view of love	Negative view of love	The people in the relationship feel the same about each other



An Extended Metaphor

- As a class, discuss what kinds of love could be represented by:
 - A twisting road
 - A cuddly toy
 - A broken phone
 - An open window
 - A heavy blanket.
- Working on your own, choose one of the ideas above, or come up with your own metaphor for love.
- Working with a partner, work together to brainstorm emotions, ideas and other associations to go with both of your chosen image. For example, a broken phone might be associated with lack of communication, or someone being careless with your feelings.
- Draw on your discussion with your partner to write a short love poem of a few lines, using your metaphor all the way through.





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