



# Poppies

## Key Learning:

Explore the use of language in the poem.



Poppies was written by Jane Weir at the request of Carol Ann Duffy, the Poet Laureate, to commemorate those lost in war, and came out of her reading the writing of women from the First and Second World Wars.



The poem tells the story of a mother's experience of watching her son go off to war.

In it, she describes the last time she sees him before leaving to fight and her emotional reaction to this. She speaks about helping to smarten his uniform before he leaves and afterwards, she visits places which remind her of him; desperate to feel close to him.

The poem shows the effect of war on left behind.



Symbol of remembrance - it is this symbol that causes the mother in the poem to remember the day her son left to go to war.

# Poppies



This frames the context of the poem - it is the date and poppies which cause the memory.

Metaphor - suggests blood flow - links to image of injury and war.

Three days before Armistice Sunday and poppies had already been placed on individual war graves. Before you left, I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals, spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

Uniform - ambiguous - could also suggest a school uniform - mother remembering him as a child.

Physical shape of the petals - vivid memory.

Metaphor - link to military - could also suggest the growing distance between mother and son.

Metaphor - suggests injury - mother is emotionally wounded.

Mother is looking after him - last chance she will have before he leaves.

Memory of childhood - affection - she can't do this now that he is an adult.

Sellotape bandaged around my hand, I rounded up as many white cat hairs as I could, smoothed down your shirt's upturned collar, steeled the softening of my face. I wanted to graze my nose across the tip of your nose, play at being Eskimos like we did when you were little. I resisted the impulse to run my fingers through the gelled blackthorns of your hair. All my words flattened, rolled, turned into felt,

List - reflects the range of emotions she has - she can't articulate them or stop him from going even though she wants to.

Alliteration - mother is trying to remain strong - emotionally affected by her son's leaving.

Metaphor - spiked hair - he is unapproachable/grown up.

Put on a 'front' for  
him as he left.

Simile - shows the  
son's feelings - he  
sees it as an  
exciting world full  
of experiences and  
opportunities.

slowly melting. **I was brave**, as I walked  
with you, to the front door, threw  
it open, **the world overflowing  
like a treasure chest**. A split second  
and you were away, **intoxicated**.

After you'd gone **I went into your bedroom**,  
**released a song bird from its cage**.

Later a **single dove** flew from the pear tree,  
and this is where it has led me,  
skirting the church yard walls, **my stomach busy  
making tucks, darts, pleats**, hat-less, without  
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

Metaphor for  
son -  
symbolises  
freedom.

**Sewing metaphor - reflects her anxiety and sadness -  
reminds us that she is at home and he has gone.  
Lack of coat etc links to her emotional state.**

Wants to  
feel close to  
him - almost  
grieving.

Symbol of  
peace but  
also  
mourning as  
it a 'single  
dove'.

Timescale is ambiguous here - could represent her fear that his name will added OR it already has.

Physical shape but also her desperation to have him home safe - will even use superstition.

On reaching the top of the hill I traced the inscriptions on the war memorial, leaned against it like a wishbone.

The dove pulled freely against the sky, an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear your playground voice catching on the wind.

Metaphor for son - he is/was something beautiful to her.

She wishes he was a child again so that she can keep him safe and at home.