Compare how poets present the effects of conflict on people in ‘Poppies’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Weir presents **the effects of conflict on people** to criticise the traumatic impacts of war. However, Wilfred Owen wanted to ‘expose’ the true horrors of war. Weir wrote ‘Poppies’ partly in response to the grief Wilfred Owen’s mother experienced receiving news of his death tragically on Armistice day. As a soldier, Owen wanted his poetry to act as a damning testament revealing the suffering of the men he fought alongside.

Firstly, Weir shows **the effects of conflict on people** when the speaker refers to the “spasms of paper red” of the poppy she pins on her child. The word choice “spasms” suggests violence and death which links to the connotations of “red” implying blood. Weir draws on sensory language due to her background in textiles and this imagery is sustained throughout the poem perhaps showing the impacts of grief. However, Owen is more brutal as he describes the “merciless iced east winds that knive us…” Here the personification emphasises how deadly and vicious the weather was for soldiers. The word choice “knive” implies death and violence and reminds the reader of the constant threat these soldiers endured but it is not the enemy they fear but the weather. Owen is questioning why they are being made to stay in these horrendous conditions.

Throughout, Weir shows **the effects of conflict on people** as the speaker “released a song bird from its cage”. This is symbolic of how she lets go of her son both to go to war but also of her acceptance of his death. It is complimented with the following line referring to how a “single dove flew” which is used as a symbol of peace. However, Owen is more critical as he uses a refrain throughout saying “But nothing happens”. Initially, this is representative of the monotony and drawn out fears of war but over the course of the poem the tone shifts to become more accusatory so that the message implies that these soldiers are being sent to war for no reason other than to wait to die.

Finally, Weir shows **the effects of conflict on people** as the speaker visits a “war memorial” and “leaned against it like a wishbone”. The simile creates a surprisingly complex image as it both suggests fragility but also demonstrates the mother’s wish for her son to return. However, the word choice “wishbone” reminds us that for the wish to happen it must be broken which tragically implies that this wish for the son is breaking the mother. However, Owen is more despairing as he describes how “Slowly our ghosts drag home”. The metaphor suggests that the soldiers already view themselves as dead. The word choice “ghosts” implies that the soldiers haunt people at home creating the sense that they have nowhere else to go. Tragically this proved to be true for Owen as he died just a few days before Armistice day.

Ultimately, both poets demonstrate that **the effects of conflict on people** are horrible and disturbing.

**Very basic version**

Compare how poets present power in ‘My Last Duchess’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Browning presents **power** to criticise people like the Duke. However, Wilfred Owen wanted to ‘expose’ the true horrors of war. Browning wrote ‘My Last Duchess’ to show negative ideas. Owen wanted his poetry to act as a damning testament revealing the suffering of the men he fought alongside.

Firstly, Browning shows **power** in how the speaker in ‘My Last Duchess’ uses possessive language saying “I call that piece a wonder now”. However, Owen is more brutal as he describes the “merciless iced east winds that knive us…” Here the personification emphasises how deadly and vicious the weather was for soldiers. The word choice “knive” implies death and violence and reminds the reader of the constant threat these soldiers endured but it is not the enemy they fear but the weather. Owen is questioning why they are being made to stay in these horrendous conditions.

Throughout, Browning shows **power** as the speaker says “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” However, Owen is more critical as he uses a refrain throughout saying “But nothing happens”. Initially, this is representative of the monotony and drawn out fears of war but over the course of the poem the tone shifts to become more accusatory so that the message implies that these soldiers are being sent to war for no reason other than to wait to die.

Finally, Browning shows **power** as the speaker talks about “Neptune… / Taming a sea-horse” which symbolises him controlling his wife. However, Owen is more despairing as he describes how “Slowly our ghosts drag home”. The metaphor suggests that the soldiers already view themselves as dead. The word choice “ghosts” implies that the soldiers haunt people at home creating the sense that they have nowhere else to go. Tragically this proved to be true for Owen as he died just a few days before Armistice day.

Ultimately, both poets demonstrate that power can be horrible and disturbing.

Key quotations that you must memorise:

Exposure:

“merciless iced east winds that knive us…”

 

“But nothing happens.”

“Slowly our ghosts drag home”

Poppies:

“spasms of paper red”

“released a song bird from its cage. / Later a single dove flew”

“the war memorial, / leaned against it like a wishbone.”

Power and Conflict Poetry Revision

All past questions are listed below. These mean that these poems are slightly less likely to come up. That is not always the case because both ‘Bayonet Charge’ and ‘Ozymandias’ have been used twice.

June 2022:

Compare how poets present ideas about conflict in ‘Bayonet Charge’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Nov 2021:

Compare how poets present ideas about power and control in ‘London’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Nov 2020:

Compare how poets present the ways people are affected by difficult experiences in ‘Remains’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

June 2019:

Compare how poets present the ways that people are affected by war in ‘War Photographer’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

June 2018:

Compare how poets present ideas about power in ‘Ozymandias’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

June 2017:

Compare how poets present the effects of war in ‘Bayonet Charge’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Sample Set 3:

Compare how poets present the effects of conflict on people in ‘Poppies’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Sample Set 2:

Compare the ways poets present the power of the natural world in ‘Storm on the Island’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

Specimen Paper 1:

Compare the ways poets present ideas about power in ‘Ozymandias’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’. [30 marks]

These are all the poems. The ones in bold have come up before. The ones underlined have come up twice:

**Ozymandias – Percy Shelley**

**London – William Blake**

Extract from, The Prelude – William Wordsworth

My Last Duchess – Robert Browning

The Charge of the Light Brigade – Alfred Lord Tennyson

Exposure – Wilfred Owen

**Storm on the Island – Seamus Heaney**

**Bayonet Charge – Ted Hughes**

**Remains – Simon Armitage**

**Poppies – Jane Weir**

**War Photographer – Carol Ann Duffy**

Tissue – Imtiaz Dharker

The Emigrée – Carol Rumens

Checking Out Me History – John Agard

Kamikaze – Beatrice Garland