

POETRY APPRECIATION 2023

January 2023: HEROISM

Our January subject was Heroism and the poems found celebrated heroes and heroines of the battlefield and those less obvious ones of normal life.

The Charge of the Light Brigade and **The Boy on his burning deck** typified the Victorian ideal of duty at any cost whilst Brooke's **The soldier** will probably be the most remembered war poem of all time. War also gave us the thoughts of an Officer comforting a bereaved Mother with tales of her son's bravery when in fact he had been a useless coward. It had softened her loss when the truth would have been unbearable.

Everyday life of humble people gave us the unappreciated father who every cold morning woke early to light the fire and do the chores in a cold house. Another humble person remembered was **Grace Darling** whose heroic rescuing of ship-wrecked seafarers inspired William McGonagall to spout pages of some of the worst poetry ever written!

We discussed the shredding of peoples characters by the media and the present re-assessment of the heroes of the past by our modern standards.

The exact meaning of the word vituperative was questioned but no, I'm not going to tell you. Look it up yourself!

April 2023: LOVE

Not love in it's usual sentimental form. We've been there and done that several times before so this meeting explored other facets of love.

We heard the justification of a lover offering his beloved a mere a blade of grass rather than the desired verse, the affection of a man for his elderly cat, the love of a garden and even the love of a treasured pair of earrings that travelled with their owner all over the country. This one produced some of the most amazing rhymes.

Other verses explored the relationship of a greedy nephew and his equally grasping uncle and love in a bathtub. A poem translated from the Portuguese was so good in translation it must have been glorious in the original. In contrast, one written by artificial intelligence was really pretty dreadful.

Searching for our poems is not a chore but part of the pleasure of being in our group and our discussions always lively and thought-provoking. I think that we all agree that we love being in our group although we're not up to writing a poem to it.

May 2023: RELATIONS

Our May meeting was such a success that my neighbour heard our laughter from her garden! Of course, we didn't only laugh. There were serious and thought-provoking poems as well but although we were small in number we had a super meeting. I hope that those who were unwell have now recovered and those on holiday had a good time and will be back with us in June.

Our subject for June has been expanded. It was just to be "Food" but it's now "Food and Drink" so plenty of scope there.

In July we will be concentrating on the poetry of Seamus Heaney. So that we don't all come up with the same poems I suggest that we have a think about which ones we each would like to present and decide at the June meeting just who will do what. This will also give us a chance to be prepared to discuss the various poems in greater detail.

October 2023: SEAMUS HEANEY

Our October meeting was a continuation of our study of some of the poetry of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney. His family background was in farming and that and the violence and sorrows of the political situation in 20th century Ireland deeply affected his poetry.

He describes his admiration of his father's ability to dig and the mastery of their trades of a blacksmith and a thatcher but also recounts the horrific result of a bomb-makers skill.

Family life gave him the grief of his young brother's sudden death but also his appreciation of his wife's loving care as she makes a little brooch to be worn at the harvest. We felt with him as he describes both.

We had to think hard about some of his works but still enjoyed our study

In November our subject will be "Autumn/Endings". In December it's "Celebrations" and in January we will be looking for poems with memorable last lines. A New Year challenge!

New members are always welcome. Just come along and listen if you wish at first. We are not particularly erudite but just enjoy venturing further than that lonely cloud into which we wandered at school.