

Poetry 2022

January 2022: NOT LOVE

Our January meeting proved that size does not matter. Only seven of us were able share our poems on the subject of "Any emotion that is not Love" but we had a really good time together not just listening to the poetry but discussing it and sharing our feelings about it.

Firstly we agreed that poets could be a rather miserable lot. Having eliminated love we'd found sorrow and loss in abundance but more uplifting emotions a bit thin on the ground. However, Gerald Manley Hopkins "The Windhover" exulted in the power and beauty of a kestrel whilst the satisfaction of a low class builders labourer on seeing a completed cathedral were emphatically expressed as "I bloody built that".

Other poems dealt with the loosening of parent child bonds, the efforts of a mother to help her son after a terrorist attack and even the emotions felt by someone battling obsessive compulsive disorder.

Carol Ann Duffy's Euridice definitely did not want to be brought back from being peacefully dead to yet more earthly life with her boring husband and her Mrs Beast is absolutely guaranteed never to feature in any A level syllabus.

Yes there was a little sad ness with Rossetti's "Remember me" and regret at life's failures from the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa.

Next month we will be trying to find something we'd enjoyed written by a poet we'd previously found daunting. In March, having avoided love in January we will have it as our subject for the umpteenth time but love of anything is allowed. Dogs, horses, gardening etc. Yes, even chocolate!

February 2022: A POET PREVIOUSLY NOT LIKED OR NOT KNOWN

It had seemed like a good idea at the time when we chose as this month's subject. Actually we spent many hours ploughing through unloved and unlovable verse in order to come up with offerings that eventually gave us an interesting and rewarding afternoon.

It was admitted that some poets were disliked more for our prejudice against their personal opinions or lives than for the standard of their poetry. Jingo patriotism, political views, racial slurs and known bad behaviour to others were a turn-off for some members. Ted Hughes, Rupert Brooke and Kipling all suffered this condemnation although a good defence of Kipling was given. However it was admitted that although we did not like all they had to say, we appreciated the skill with which they said it.

One member admitted a blanket dislike of nature poetry and complicated verse was generally not appreciated. Overlong poems were definitely not liked. We decided that these were written to fill the leisure hours of Victorians who lacked TV, Social Media, Cinema, Box sets and the u3a!

Previously unknown poets included Rupi Kaur. Tom Boyne, Paul Muldoon and Matthew Sweeney. All worth a second look though.

Next month we're finding poems about love but preferably not romantic love. We'll be free to love animals, music, food, playing the bagpipes or whatever else turns us on.

September 2022: FEATURES

We started with a reading and discussion of "Floral Tribute", written by Simon Armitage, Poet Laureate on the death of Queen Elizabeth.

The first letter of each line read downwards spelt ELIZABETH in both of its two verses and even the difficult "Z" was smoothly integrated.

The Lily was used as a symbol of her life, its beauty enduring beyond death. We particularly liked the following two lines:-

"The country loaded it's whole self into your slender hands,

Hands that can rest now, relieved of a century's weight"

The rest of the meeting was filled with poems describing "Features of Nature" and our "features" included Mountains, Forests, Seascapes, Clouds and even one by Seamus Heaney on the Irish boglands. We felt that R.S. Thomas rather glossed over rural poverty when he wrote of the Welsh Hills and that a description of the thoughts of the victim of a climbing accident victim whilst being rescued were rather strange. The sea evoked visions of life and movement but also reminders of the wrecks and skulls under the waves.

For our October meeting we'll be finding Poems that describe a person and in November our subject will be "Growth".