

COURSE OUTLINE

BRITISH & IRISH POETRY

This course looks at some of the most influential British and Irish poets since The Renaissance. Students examine the origins of the poetic form and the influence of Petrarch on early sonneteers and the Metaphysical works of Donne; the satirical social commentary of Pope; The Romantics' experimentation with aestheticism, nature and the intellect; the primitive energy behind the works of Hughes and Heaney and the post-war cynicism of Larkin; and the confessional style of Plath and Duffy. Attention is paid to the development of form and style and the poets' treatment of language, themes and ideas.

The Poetry Course is adapted to the individual student's own interests and knowledge of poetry, but students will examine in detail some of the major turning points in British and Irish poetry – as well as gaining an insight into the life and times of some of their finest poets. The poems will be placed within their social, intellectual and historical context, and links will be drawn between a range of texts. We will be examining the concept of poetry, the role of the poet and the evolution of the poetic form over time, stopping off at major landmarks along the way.

Group seminars on the key poems will be used to clarify and extend students' critical awareness through discussion and readings. Skills of close textual analysis and critical interpretation will be developed throughout the course. Seminars are complemented by individual tutorials where students' written work is also discussed. The course requires reading a selection of recommended poems by the core poets plus two written assignments.

Week One Courtly Love and The Renaissance

We examine the traditions of love poetry, the influence of the Renaissance on poetic form and two unconventional approaches to seduction and satire.

Focus: John Donne and Alexander Pope.

Week Two Romanticism

We explore the Romantic tradition and the impact its creative, philosophical and intellectual concerns had on the face of poetry.

Focus: William Wordsworth and John Keats.

Week Three Nature and human nature

We look at three of the greatest twentieth century poets and their evocations of man and nature in post-war Britain and Ireland.

Focus: Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney and Philip Larkin

Week Four Female poets

We focus on two female voices of the twentieth century and their use of the confessional style.

Focus: Sylvia Plath and Carol Ann Duffy

Recommended Introductory Reading and Textbooks

Primary texts may be read in any edition, but some useful anthologies of poetry include:

The Oxford Book of English Verse Christopher Ricks ISBN 9780192141828

Great Modern Poets: Michael Schmidt ISBN 9781905204700

The Best Poetry Of Our Times

Useful reference books include:

Mastering Poetry Sara Thorne ISBN 9780333698754

An Introduction to English Poetry James Fenton ISBN 9780141004396

Specific poems for analysis in seminars will be provided as handouts.

If you are unable to obtain books locally, they may be ordered from

<http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk>

or

www.amazon.co.uk