



Scotland Learning



Teacher's Notes BBC Two Spring 2009

English

Curriculum Match *Intermediate 2 and Higher*

Transmission time:

Programme 1 — Thursday 29 January 04.00–04.20

Programme 2 — Thursday 29 January 04.20–04.40

Scottish Poetry

These Intermediate 2/Higher English programmes aim to encourage students to develop competence in skills of understanding, analysis and evaluation. Two poems by Carol Ann Duffy and two poems by Liz Lochhead are presented. One programme is dedicated to each writer. The programmes contain dramatisations of three of the poems and a critique of the fourth. Interview contributions from both poets provide a strong and personal starting point for students as they start their analysis of the poems.

During the 2008–09 term, schools and educational establishments can order a DVD of the Scottish Poetry programmes. Contact

BBC Schools Broadcast Recordings

Telephone: 08701 272 272 Fax: 08701 273 273.

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Programme One **Carol Ann Duffy**

Timed running order

Time	Content
00.00–00.32	Title sequence: Carol Ann Duffy.
00.32–00.56	The programme starts with a brief introduction to Carol Ann Duffy and her work. The introduction asks us to consider that her popularity with schools may be because many of her poems are strong dramatic monologues.
00.56–01.40	Poem 1: <i>Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941</i> Carol Ann Duffy talks about the inspiration for the poem. She talks about a series of wartime drawings of people sheltering in the underground sketched by Henry Moore. The sequence provides examples of some of Henry Moore's war time drawings including 'Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941', the inspiration for the poem.
01.40–03.35	The poet reads her poem to camera. Graphics highlight the frequent use of the negative in the poem.
03.35–03.56	A student gives a brief reaction to the poem. A second student asks why, from the whole of the Tate Gallery, did she choose 'Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941' to write about?
03.56–04.44	The poet talks about the humane quality and the intensity of the Henry Moore image which attracted her. She identified with this Londoner. She had thought she would select a big Picasso painting!
04.44–04.55	A student notes how the woman in the poem has lost her memory yet her body seems to still remember things. She asks if the poet has used this idea of memory and body memory in other poems.
04.55–05.49	Carol Ann Duffy explains that as a poet she has always been interested by memory, particularly memory of childhood and place. When the poet studied the image of the woman in the picture she played with the idea that the bombing had so traumatised the woman that her memory has been lost. Only her body is able to reveal things to her — her craving for a cigarette, knowing that she is pregnant. The poet thinks that a lot of her work is connected to memory in some way.
05.49–06.05	A student comments on the feeling of fear and claustrophobia that permeates most of the poem. She then asks if the idea of the poem ending with planes in the sky and the woman's appeal to God was a deliberate juxtaposition that had always been in the poet's head.
06.05–07.01	The poet tells us that she never knows what the last line of her poems will be. She agrees that fear and claustrophobia are there in the poem. We see archive footage of people sheltering in the underground as the poet explains that the ending of the poem is inspired by the character looking skyward toward the bombers that fill the sky. Archive film of a bomber shows bombs being dropped.
07.01–08.52	An animation of the poem is voiced by an actor.

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Programme One: timed running order (*continued*)

Time	Content
08.52–09.00	Programme sting introducing Poem 2: <i>Education for Leisure</i>
09.00–09.58	Carol Ann Duffy explains that 'Education for Leisure' was written in the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. We see archive pictures of Mrs Thatcher as the poet explains her perception of Thatcher's politics. The poet reveals that in the 80s she had worked as visiting poet in a run down comprehensive school in the East end of London. There were many problems in the school and they operated a policy of exclusion for disruptive pupils. All these elements from the 1980s are in the background of the poem.
09.58–11.32	The poet reads her poem to camera. Graphics highlight the frequent use of the word 'I'.
11.32–11.41	A student compliments the deliberate coldness of the poem. Another student asks the poet if she is happy to have created an anti-hero.
11.41–12.34	The poet denies that she has created an anti-hero or hero. She was more concerned to show empathy for someone who is disturbed, failing and therefore being excluded from school. She was looking at how the vulnerable were being pushed to the edge during the 1980s by Thatcherite policies. The poet is asking what will happen if we continue to exclude these people? What will happen to them and to us?
12.34–12.39	A student asks if he should feel sorry for this alienated character.
12.39–13.29	The poet is sympathetic to the fictional character she has created but reveals that the poem is based on a true story of a badly behaved and violent boy who poured the school fish down the loo. The poet saw this behaviour as a cry for help. As a writer she is pleased if others feel sympathy for the character but she is equally interested if the reader feels something different.
13.29–13.38	A student explains that he can't feel sorry for the character and he wants to know why she wanted to write about someone so dark.
13.38–14.18	The poet explains that she wanted to look beyond his cruel behaviour to the reasons that might explain the behaviour. The poet wants us to explore the idea that 'help' was required, rather than exclusion.
14.18–14.24	A student asks about the Shakespearean references in the poem.
14.24–15.12	The poet explains that the references are from King Lear — 'As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods, They kill us for their sport'. The fly which the boy squashes against the window reminds the boy of an English lesson where King Lear was studied.
15.12–15.19	A student explains he found the poem quite funny until he heard the last line of the poem. He wants to know how considered the last line was.
15.19–16.16	The poet explains that she never knows where the journey of writing the poem will take her. She is pleased that the student has picked up on the dark humour of the poem.
16.16–18.04	A dramatisation of the poem is voiced by an actor.
18.04–18.40	End titles

Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941 by Carol Ann Duffy

I forget. I have looked at the other faces and found
no memory, no love. *Christ, she's a rum one.*
Their laughter fills the tunnel, but it does not
comfort me. There was a bang and then
I was running with the rest through smoke. Thick, grey
smoke has covered thirty years at least.
I know I am pregnant, but I do not know my name.

Now they are singing. *Underneath the lantern
by the barrack gate.* But waiting for whom?
Did I? I have no wedding ring, no handbag, nothing.
I want a fag. I have either lost my ring or I am
a loose woman. No. Someone has loved me. Someone
is looking for me even now. I live somewhere.
I sing the word *darling* and it yields nothing.

Nothing. A child is crying. Mine doesn't show yet.
Baby. My hands mime the memory of knitting.
Purl. Plain. I know how to do these things, yet my mind
has unravelled into thin threads that lead nowhere.
In a moment I shall stand up and scream until
somebody helps me. The skies were filled with sirens, planes,
fire, bombs, and I lost myself in the crowd. Dear God.

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*Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941
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Education for Leisure *by Carol Ann Duffy*

Today I am going to kill something. Anything.
I have had enough of being ignored and today
I am going to play God. It is an ordinary day,
a sort of grey with boredom stirring in the streets.

I squash a fly against the window with my thumb.
We did that at school. Shakespeare. It was in
another language and now the fly is in another language.
I breathe out talent on the glass to write my name.

I am a genius. I could be anything at all, with half
the chance. But today I am going to change the world.
Something's world. The cat avoids me. The cat
knows I am a genius and has hidden itself.

I pour the goldfish down the bog. I pull the chain.
I see that it is good. The budgie is panicking.
Once a fortnight, I walk the two miles into town
for signing on. They don't appreciate my autograph.

There is nothing left to kill. I dial the radio
and tell the man he's talking to a superstar.
He cuts me off. I get our bread-knife and go out.
The pavements glitter suddenly. I touch your arm.

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Programme Two **Liz Lochhead**

Timed running order

Time	Content
00.00–00.30	Title sequence: Liz Lochhead.
00.30–01.15	A brief introduction maps Liz Lochhead's career path and celebrates her many achievements. Archive footage of the poet.
01.15–01.59	Poem 1: A New View of Scotland/Love Poem Liz Lochhead explains how the BBC asked her if they could make a visualisation of this poem. She explains that the poem is a mixture of a love poem for her husband and memories of growing up in the 1950s. She tells us that she said 'no' to the BBC because a film of these images would negate all the hard work she had done to get the poem to work in people's heads as they read it.
01.59–04.22	The poet reads her poem to camera. Graphics highlight any references to time.
04.22–04.43	After a brief glimpse of archive footage showing couples kissing at a 1950s Scottish New Year party we are introduced to a group of students. One talks about his appreciation of the last line of the poem — 'There is no time like the present for a kiss'. Another student asks why the poet has given her poem two titles.
04.43–05.03	The poet explains that when the poem was written it was about two different things — memory and the present. At the time the poem was written, 18 years ago, she had just met the man who would become her husband. The poet reflects how that present has now become the past. Today the poem is now about two different memories.
05.03–05.05	A student asks which of the memories the poet prefers.
05.05–05.23	Liz Lochhead will not pick a preferred memory. She argues that the memory and the present in the poem are equally important. She elaborates that people are not just a present tense but that we are the sum of our memories as well.
05.23–05.41	A student explains how some of the detail of the poem was explained to her by her grandmother who knew and recognised some of the traditions referred to by the poet.
05.41–06.15	The poet is glad that these traditions are remembered and shared. She tells us how important she believes they are. With the help of archive footage the poet reminds us of some more New Year traditions and superstitions.
06.15–06.24	A student tells the poet that he will continue to support these traditions.
06.24–06.38	A short extract from the poem is read over archive pictures of women cleaning house for New Year. The poem extract ends with 'this is too ordinary to be nostalgia.'
06.38–06.53	The poet explains that she sees memory as being a positive thing linked to history and truth. She sees nostalgia as being a bad thing because nostalgia is all about telling our selves sentimental lies about the past.
06.53–08.54	In place of a visualisation of this poem the poet Liz Niven critiques 'A New View of Scotland /Love Poem'.

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Programme Two: timed running order (*continued*)

Time	Content
08.54–09.33	Liz Lochhead appeals to students to enjoy poems for what they are. She asks them not to over-interpret but to take poems at face value.
09.33–09.43	Programme sting introducing Poem 2: <i>The Man in the Comic Strip</i>
09.43–10.11	Liz Lochhead explains that there is one of her poems that she would be happy for the BBC to make a visualisation of. It's a poem which is all about the visual language of signs and symbols and the international convention of comic book characters.
10.11–12.35	The poet reads her poem to camera.
12.35–12.58	A student compliments the poet on the last line of the poem, which he believes, speaks of oblivion and nothingness.
12.58–13.22	The poet is pleased that the last line works for him. The poet tells us how important it is to find the right ending for a poem. She compares it to having the right punch line for a joke.
13.22–13.35	A student interprets the poem as depicting a world where manipulation and control are dominant themes. He wants to know who the poet believes is the controller. Is it a country, a state or is it about politics?
13.35–14.12	The poet believes that the student has zeroed in on some of the underlying themes and darkness of the poem but urges him to look at the face value of the poem first. The man depicted in the poem lives in the 'country' of the comic book. The poet urges the student to focus on the images that are there.
14.12–14.42	Two student explains how much they have enjoyed the comic book imagery and how easy it has been to visualise the world created in the poem. One of the students asks where the inspiration for the poem came from.
14.42–15.01	The poet explains that she was inspired by a book of universal signs and symbols. She was drawn to the universal images that transcended language.
15.01–15.06	A student asks which technique the poet enjoyed using most to create this poem.
15.06– 15.42	The poet doesn't have a favourite technique but she recognises the use of imagery throughout the poem. She also draws our attention to the frequent use of 'Z' sounds. However, the main technique used in this poem is the creation of a 'list' which compiles all the different ways in which reality and violence are presented in the comic book world.
15.42–15.55	Two students briefly discuss the level of alienation of the man in the comic book.
15.55–16.00	Liz Lochhead leads us into the animation, which visualises this poem.
16.00–18.28	An animation of the poem is voiced by an actor.
18.28–19.03	End titles.

A New View of Scotland/Love Poem by Liz Lochhead

Down on her hands and knees
at ten at night on Hogmanay,
my mother still giving it elbowgrease
jiffywaxing the vinolay. (This is too
ordinary to be nostalgia.) On the kitchen table
a newly opened tin of sockeye salmon.
Though we do not expect anyone,
the slab of black bun,
petticoat-tails fanned out
on bone china.
'Last year it was very quiet ...'

Mum's got her rollers in with waveset
and her well-pressed good dress
slack across the candlewick upstairs.
Nearly half-ten already and her not shifted!
If we're to even hope to prosper
this midnight must find us
how we would like to be.
A new view of Scotland
with a dangling calendar
is propped under last year's,
ready to take its place

Darling, it's thirty years since
anybody was able to trick me,
December thirtyfirst, into
*'looking into a mirror to see a lassie
wi' as minny heids as days in the year'* –
and two already since,
familiar strangers at a party,
we did not know that we were
the happiness we wished each other
when the Bells went, did we?

All over the city
off-licences pull down their shutters,
people make for where they want to be
to bring the new year in.
In highrises and tenements
sunburst clocks tick
on dusted mantelshelves.
Everyone puts on their best spread of plenty
(for to even hope to prosper
this midnight must find us
how we would like to be).
So there's a bottle of sickly liqueur
among the booze in the alcove,
golden crusts on steak pies
like quilts on a double bed.
And this is where we live.
There is no time like the
present for a kiss.

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The Man in the Comic Strip *by Liz Lochhead*

For the man in the comic strip
things are not funny. No wonder he's
running in whichever direction his pisspoor
piston legs are facing
getting nowhere fast.

If only he had the sense he was born with
he'd know there is a world of difference
between the thinks bubble and the speech balloon
and when to keep it zipped, so, with a visible fastener —
But his mouth is always getting him into trouble.
Fistfights blossom round him,
there are flowers explode when the punches connect.
A good idea is a lightbulb, but too seldom.
When he curses, spirals
and asterisks and exclamation marks
whizz around his head like his always palpable distress.
Fear comes off him like petals from a daisy.
Anger brings lightning down on his head and
has him hopping.
Hunger fills the space around him
with floating ideograms of roasted chickens
and iced buns like maidens' breasts the way
the scent of money fills his eyes with dollar signs.

For him the heart is always a beating heart,
True Love —
always comically unrequited.
The unmistakable silhouette of his one-and-only
will always be kissing another
behind the shades at her window
and, down-at-the-mouth, he'll
always have to watch it from the graphic
lamplit street.

He never knows what is around the corner
although we can see it coming.
When he is shocked his hair stands perfectly on end.

But his scream is a total zero and he knows it.
Knows to beware of the zigzags of danger,
knows how very different from
the beeline of zee's that is a hostile horizontal buzzing
of singleminded insects swarming after him
are the gorgeous big haphazard zeds of sleep.

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