

Knowledge Organiser: Identity Poetry

| Poet: Poem | Writer's Intent | Key Idea | Explanation | How it's seen in the poems | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Adrien Mitchell <i>What is Poetry?</i> | In this short, funny poem Mitchell explores what poetry is and how it differs from prose. He also pokes fun at the 'so-called' rules of poetry. | Identity and Struggle | In their poems, Henley and Kipling both explore how life's inevitable struggles can shape our identity for better or worse. In typical late Victorian style, both imply that with resilience and a 'stiff upper lip' difficult experiences can shape our identities for the better and even 'make men' of us, an idea that may seem problematic for us today. | <i>Invictus: 'It matters not how strait the gate,/ How charged with punishments the scroll,/ I am the master of my fate,/ I am the captain of my soul'</i> | |
| William Ernest Henley <i>Invictus</i> | In this late Victorian, regular, rhyming poem (ABAB) the speaker explores how they have used resilience and fortitude to overcome a series of difficult circumstances and develop a strong identity. | Identity and Family | In their poems, Hardy and Plath explore very different aspects of familial identity. Hardy explores the essence of familial identity from a more abstract point of view. What exactly is it that links family members and relatives over many generations? This was idea that interested Hardy in his own life. Plath's poem <i>Morning Song</i> explores the impact of becoming a mother on a woman's identity. The perspective in her poem is much more personal and infused with Plath's own experiences. | <i>Heredity: 'I am the family face;/ Flesh perishes, I live on,'</i> | |
| Rudyard Kipling, If | In this late Victorian poem with a regular stanza structure and rhyme scheme the speaker delivers a series of pieces of advice to his 'son' regarding how to survive life's ups and downs and develop a 'manly' identity. | | | <i>Morning Song: 'One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral/ In my Victorian nightgown.'</i> | |
| Thomas Hardy, Heredity | In this short late Victorian poem the concept of familial identity is personified and speaks to the reader. The poem explores what it is that links us with our relatives over the generations. | Identity and Immigration | The final three poems, all written by poets who are from immigrant heritage, explore the impact of immigration on identity. While the first poem explores the identity of a recent immigrant, the second two explore the impact of immigration and multiculturalism on the English language and British national identity. | <i>Island Man: 'Island man heaves himself/ Another London day'</i> <i>Listen Mr Oxford Don: 'Dem accuse me of assault/ on de Oxford doctionary'</i> | |
| Sylvia Plath, Morning Song | This poem from the 1960s is written in free verse in six regular three line stanzas. The speaker reflects with both warmth and anxiety to her new identity as a mother. | Writer's methods | | | |
| | | Key Method | Definition | Example | Purpose |
| Grace Nichols, Island Man | In this free verse poem from the 1980s the poet explores the fragmented identity of a recent immigrant to the UK. | Persona | The 'speaker' in a poem who is a created character, not the poet. | The persona in the poem <i>If</i> is a late Victorian father giving advice to his son. | A persona is used to build a sense of character and can give a different perspective on an issue |
| John Agard, Listen Mr Oxford Don | In this funny and direct poem written in free verse and in a colloquial style, the speaker explores the multiple linguistic identities that exist within a multicultural society. | Form | The way a poem is set out, or a term used to categorise poems which follow particular conventions (e.g. sonnet, ballad) | <i>Invictus</i> has a regular stanza and rhyme scheme whereas <i>The British</i> is written in free verse. | The form of a poem is often associated with the ideas it expresses e.g. a sonnet is associated with love and an elegy is associated with loss. |
| Benjamin Zephaniah, The British | In this poem which resembles a 'recipe', the speaker explores the identity of modern Britain. | Imagery | Literary device(s) used to create a particular image to convey the key ideas/ themes in a text (e.g. similes, metaphors and personification) | The poem <i>Morning Song</i> uses metaphors and similes connected with nature (roses, cats, moths) to convey the mother's sense of wonder towards her child. | Poetic imagery helps to create vivid images in the reader's mind. |
| | | Tone | The general character or attitude of a place, piece of writing, situation | The tone of the poem <i>What is Poetry</i> is playful and fun. | Tone is used to highlight the attitude of the persona or writer towards their subject matter. |



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| Key Word Glossary-replace with NOH poetic terms list | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Word | Definition | Example from this unit | Word in Action |
| Alliteration | The repetition of the same consonant sound, often at the beginning of words. | <i>Invictus</i> : 'Black as the pit from pole to pole' | Henley uses alliteration in this line to emphasise the difficulties that the speaker is facing. |
| Assonance | The repetition of a vowel sound for emphasis. | <i>Listen Mr Oxford Don</i> : 'Me not no Oxford don' | The repetition of the short 'o' sound (assonance) emphasizes the fact that the speaker is 'not' like an Oxford tutor. |
| Caesura | A rhythmical pause within a line of poetry expressed in writing by a piece of punctuation. | <i>If</i> : 'If you can dream-and not make dreams your master' | The caesura in the form of a dash in the middle of this line draws our attention to the concept of having dreams. |
| Dramatic monologue | A poem in which an imagined speaker addresses a silent listener, usually not the reader. | <i>Listen Mr Oxford Don</i> is written in the form of a dramatic monologue . | Agard's use of the dramatic monologue format makes the speaker's message more direct and pointed. |
| Emotive language | Word choice which is used to evoke emotion in the reader. | <i>Invictus</i> : 'My head is bloody but unbowed' | Henley's use of the emotive image of an injured person who retains their strength regardless inspires admiration in the reader. |
| Enjambment | The overlapping of a sentence onto the following line, usually to emphasise a word or phrase at the start of a line or verse. | <i>Morning Song</i> : 'All night your moth-breath/Flickers among the flat pink roses.' | Plath's use of enjambment in <i>Morning Song</i> creates a fluid, free flowing effect that mirrors the mother's amazement and joy at her new child. |
| Juxtaposition | When two or more ideas, images, words etc. are placed side by side to develop comparisons and contrasts. | <i>Island Man</i> : 'Comes back to the sands/ Of a grey metallic roar' | Nichols' juxtaposition of the image of 'sands', which relates to island life with the 'grey metallic roar' (traffic sounds) of London highlights the man's fragmented identity. |
| Onomatopoeia | The use of a word that sounds like its meaning. | <i>Morning Song</i> : 'The midwife slapped your footsoles' | Plath's use of onomatopoeia with the verb 'slapped' draws our attention to the shocking nature of birth. |
| Metaphor | A comparison in which one thing is said to be another. | <i>Island Man</i> : 'the dull North circular roar' is a metaphor for the London traffic | Nichols' use of the metaphor 'dull North circular roar' to evoke the London traffic highlights how uncomfortable the man feels in London. |
| Personification | The attribution of human feelings, emotions, or sensations to an inanimate object. | <i>What is Poetry?</i> : 'those naked words dancing together' | Mitchell uses personification to evoke the idea of poetry as an uninhibited dance between words. |
| Repetition | A literary device which repeats the same word or phrase a few times to make it memorable. | The phrase 'if you can' is repeated throughout the poem <i>If</i> . | The repetition of the phrase 'if you can' in the poem <i>If</i> draws our attention to the potential life choices that are open to the son (and to us as the reader). |
| Rhyme scheme | The pattern of a poem's rhyme, often identified using letters e.g. ABABCC. | <i>Invictus</i> has an ABAB rhyme scheme | The consistent rhyme scheme in the poem <i>Invictus</i> helps to create a sense of order and confidence in the speaker's belief that they are the captain of 'their soul' |
| Simile | A comparison that uses 'like' or 'as'. | <i>Morning Song</i> : 'Love set you going like a fat gold watch' | Plath's use of a simile to describe her baby as being like a 'fat gold watch' shows that the baby is of high value to her, like a gold watch. |
| Sonnet | A poem that has 14 lines and a particular pattern of rhyme (traditionally ABAB CDCD EFEF GG) | The prologue to the play <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> is a sonnet . | Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form in the Prologue to <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> helps us to understand that this will be a play about love. |
| Structure | The way a poem is organised. | <i>Island Man</i> is written in free verse . | Nichols' use of a free verse structure in <i>Island Man</i> helps to evoke the free flowing thoughts of the man being described. |
| Stanza | A unit of poetry (sometimes called a verse) | <i>Invictus</i> has four stanzas of four lines each | The regular stanza structure of the poem <i>Invictus</i> helps to create a sense of order and confidence in the speaker. |
| Volta | A turning point in a poem. | There is a volta after line 9 of <i>Morning Song</i> | Plath uses a volta after line 9 to present a more positive viewpoint of her new identity as a mother. |



