

## Year 12 - Introduction to Context

### Auden's 'September 1, 1939'

**Aim:** to introduce pupils to the importance of context in gaining a full understanding of literature;  
To remind pupils of terminology studied at GCSE  
To introduce pupils to the Assessment objectives.

**Objectives:** to do close analytical reading of the poem  
To read criticisms of poem  
To look at the poem in context through the last half a century  
To do a piece of critical writing on the poem

#### Introduction

- Ask how we understand the main way we get understanding of a piece of writing.
- Discuss the idea of text, language (AO3) and structure (AO4)
- Explain that going to look at the first verse of a poem and once read, guess what the title of the poem is.

#### Shared reading

- Put up the first verse on OHT/white board.
- Read it to the class and ask for possible guesses at a title.
- Go through the first verse with pupils, considering the different techniques/effects/structure.
- To increase their understanding of the text, what questions do they want you to answer about it? Hopefully they will ask for author/ date/ place etc. With each question, ask them to consider what would they gain by knowing about the author/date/place etc. As far as possible answer the questions for them.
- Give them the title and ask for knowledge of the significance of the date.

#### Pair work/group work

- Give pupils a verse of the poem each and ask them to go through it in the same way class did with verse one.
- Pupils should also have a copy of their verse on OHT so they can present it to the class when they're done.

- Just Before they're finished, give up a complete copy of the poem to the groups. Ask them to look where their verse comes in the structure and if they can see anything else they want to add as a result: any connecting images/idea/tone etc.
- Pupils feed back on their verse and others make notes.
- Pupils then write down what they think of the poem

#### Shared reading

- Give pupils the information from Auden's biography about the poem.
- Once read, ask if this changes their ideas about the poem. (Context)
- In pairs, pupils go back through the poem and see if they can add anything else - give assistance if needed here.

#### Class work

- Give pupils the quote from Ezra Pound: 'Literature is news that stays news'.
- Ask them to consider what this means.
- The poem has a specific time and location and mood, so do they think it could make sense again, or be relevant again. Encourage discussion of this.
- Give out the copies of the pictures that were taken on and shortly after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.
- Ask pupils to take notice of pictures for each verse and ask what the photographer has tried to capture with each one.

#### Group Work

- Divide the class into three groups. Give each group one of the articles written after September 11<sup>th</sup> about the relevance of Auden's poem. They are to make notes on what the writers say about the poem - producing at least five bullet points that they can then share with the class.
- Feedback.

#### Class work

- Ask pupils for their opinion on the poem now that they have seen how it has remained news for the past 63 years.

#### Written work

- Write a critical appreciation of Auden's *September 1, 1939*, paying specific attention to language, structure and form.