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Chapter

A World of *Poetry*

Third Edition

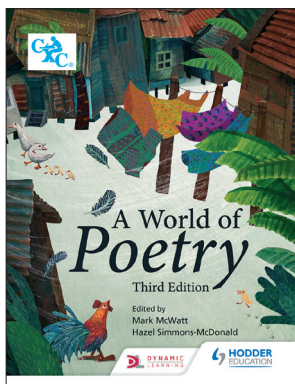
Edited by
Mark McWatt
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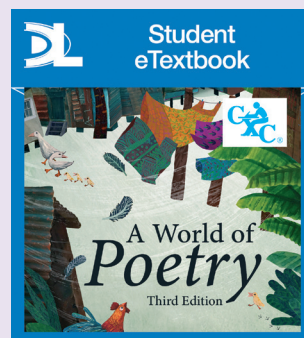
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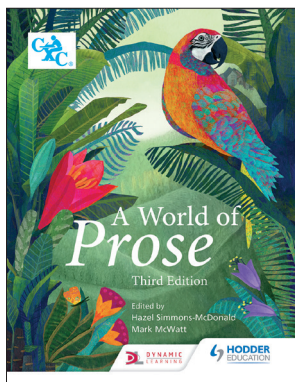
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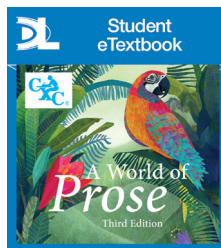
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Sample Pages

A World of *Poetry*

Third Edition

Edited by
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This indicates the page number of the notes and questions which accompany the poem or vice versa.

Introduction

Dear students and teachers,

For this third edition of *A World of Poetry*, we have removed 76 of the 139 poems that were in the second edition and replaced them with 93 new poems. There are now 156 poems in the book, with the extra ones perhaps reflecting a slightly greater emphasis on the work of contemporary Caribbean poets.

While we have kept the book's organisation into twelve sections, each reflecting the dominant theme of the poems, we do not intend this organisation to dictate the order in which you read them. You will discover that several of the poems explore more than one theme and may fit just as well into a different section. Teachers, you may wish to choose two (or more) poems from any of the thematic groups and devise questions that help your students to read the poems carefully, while focusing their attention on the broader themes.

As you are probably aware, CXC specifically tests a candidate's ability to compare and synthesise information from two or more sources. To develop this skill, you can devise questions on two poems having the same theme or even on individual poems, particularly longer ones, that will focus on the way(s) in which their different parts relate to each other and to the central idea or theme.

You may find the notes and questions at the end of each section useful for initiating discussion on individual poems. Our questions are not exhaustive, and they do not focus on every aspect of the poems deserving comment. Students, we think it is important for you to interpret, analyse and explore the deeper levels of meaning in the poems, and that too long a list of questions might restrict your discussions and limit the process of discovery.

We have also included general information on poetic genre and form, and notes on figurative language. We hope that these will help you to recognise poetic devices when you encounter them in your reading, and that you will be better able to understand why they are used and how they contribute to the overall richness and meaning of individual poems.

While we have chosen several poems that we think a CXC candidate should study, we have also tried to include poems that will appeal to your interests. We hope that you will experience delight and intellectual stimulation from reading the poems in this book.

Mark McWatt and Hazel Simmons-McDonald

THE CHILD AND THE WORLD

Sample Pages

Landscape Painter

(For Albert Huie)

I watch him set up easel,
Both straddling precariously
A corner of the twisted, climbing
Mountain track

5 A tireless humming-bird, his brush
Dips, darts, hovers now here, now there,
Where puddles of pigment
Bloom in the palette's wild small garden.

10 The mountains pose for him
In a family group
Dignified, self-conscious, against the wide blue screen
Of morning; low green foot-hills
Sprawl like grandchildren about the knees
Of seated elders. And behind them, aloof,
15 Shouldering the sky, patriarchal in serenity,
Blue Mountain Peak bulks.

And the professional gaze
Studies positions, impatiently waiting
For the perfect moment to fix
20 Their preparedness, to confine them
For the pleasant formality
Of the family album.

His brush a humming-bird
Meticulously poised ...
25 The little hills fidgeting,
Changelessly changing,
Artlessly frustrating
The painter's art.



Vivian Virtue

I played that game. I hear still the laughter on the
lady-slippered bank.

Death in the long river of lilies invades my heart,
grown old, grown iron.

20

p.46

Ian McDonald

Little Boy Crying

Your mouth contorting in brief spite and hurt,
your laughter metamorphosed into howls,
your frame so recently relaxed now tight
with three-year-old frustration, your bright eyes
swimming tears, splashing your bare feet,
you stand there angling for a moment's hint
of guilt or sorrow for the quick slap struck.

The ogre towers above you, that grim giant,
empty of feeling, a colossal cruel,
soon victim of the tale's conclusion, dead
at last. You hate him, you imagine
chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down
or plotting deeper pits to trap him in.

You cannot understand, not yet,
the hurt your easy tears can scald him with,
nor guess the wavering hidden behind that mask.
This fierce man longs to lift you, curb your sadness
with piggy-back or bull-fight, anything,
but dare not ruin the lessons you should learn.

20

p.46

You must not make a plaything of the rain.

Mervyn Morris

advance towards the city. Rum-flushed, sun-burnt,
in rainbow shorts the visitors hurl pennies into the dark
current and await the water's howl.

10 They applaud (as boys bore like fantails
into the depths), and chatter like *Challenger's* crown
when two minutes pass. What if the experiment fails?

15 Soon, black hands puncture the surface; each raised trophy
acknowledged with a din. Jerked by that roar, a straw hat sails
into the murk. A fat man bellows: 'Boy, get my hat for me!'

The memory throbs with shame. Today, we are seduced
by a dawn that hymns a subtler story.
The conquistador slides inside our skin! He's reproduced

20 inside brick houses that mottle the heights and terraces,
a black man bellowing at his own, a black
child deaf to the strum of ancestral glory.

p.47

Anthony Kellman

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time, son,
they used to laugh with their hearts
and laugh with their eyes;
but now they only laugh with their teeth,
5 while their ice-block-cold eyes
search behind my shadow.

There was a time indeed
they used to shake hands with their hearts;
but that's gone, son.

10 Now they shake hands without hearts
while their left hands search
my empty pockets.

15 'Feel at home!' 'Come again';
 they say, and when I come
 again and feel
 at home, once, twice,
 there will be no thrice –
 for then I find doors shut on me.

20 So I have learned many things, son.
 I have learned to wear many faces
 like dresses – homiface,
 officeface, streetface, hostface,
 cocktailface, with all their conforming smiles
 like a fixed portrait smile.

25 And I have learned, too,
 to laugh with only my teeth
 and shake hands without my heart.
 I have also learned to say, 'Goodbye',
 when I mean 'Good-riddance';
30 to say 'Glad to meet you',
 without being glad; and to say 'It's been
 nice talking to you', after being bored.

 But believe me, son.
 I want to be what I used to be
35 when I was like you. I want
 to unlearn all these muting things.
 Most of all, I want to relearn
 how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror
 shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!

40 So show me, son,
 how to laugh; show me how
 I used to laugh and smile
 once upon a time when I was like you.

Then myself forced its way through
And I shook hands and said I was sorry.

10 Hate is a funny thing;
 It splits you in two,
 One part against the other,
 So that you can never win.

p.110

David Eva (aged 13)

Echo

Come to me in the silence of the night;
 Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
 As sunlight on a stream;
5 Come back in tears,
 O memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
 Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;

10 Where thirsting longing eyes
 Watch the slow door
 That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
 My very life again though cold in death:
15 Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
 Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
 Speak low, lean low,
 As long ago, my love, how long ago.

p.110

Christina Rossetti

It is the Constant Image of Your Face

It is the constant image of your face
framed in my hands as you knelt before my chair
the grave attention of your eyes
surveying me amid my world of knives
5 that stays with me, perennially accuses
and convicts me of heart's-treachery;
and neither you nor I can plead excuses
for you, you know, can claim no loyalty –
my land takes precedence of all my loves.

10 Yet I beg mitigation, pleading guilty
for you, my dear, accomplice of my heart
made, without words, such blackmail with your beauty
and proffered me such dear protectiveness
that I confess without remorse or shame
15 my still-fresh treason to my country
and hope that she, my other, dearest love
will pardon freely, not attaching blame
being your mistress (or your match) in tenderness.

p.110

Dennis Brutus

Notes and questions

The poems in this section deal with different forms and manifestations of love and the relationships in which it is expressed. Several themes associated with love are explored. It may be helpful to make a summary statement that expresses what each poem is about, the theme(s) explored, the poet's treatment of each theme and so forth.

p.99

Come Breakfast with Me

'Hegel' and 'Kant' (line 10) – 18th century European philosophers.

- Is the poem really about breakfast? If not, what is its real subject?
- Describe the atmosphere that the poem evokes. What does it tell us about the mood and desires of the poet?

p.99

The Lady's-Maid's Song

- Is this poem just fun or is it making a serious (feminist) point? Does it have to be either one or the other?
- Explain what the poet means by 'he'll have her heart' (line 20). Is this the 'interest' referred to in the last line?

p.100

Koriabo

'Koriabo' (title) – a tributary of the Barima river in the north-west district of Guyana.

- Who is the persona of this poem speaking to and why?
- Describe in your own words the qualities of the 'love' that the poet longs for in lines 13–15.

p.101

Sonnet 73

- Notice the way Shakespeare uses three different metaphors to express the same idea, one in each of the three quatrains (groups of 4 lines) of the sonnet. What is the idea being expressed?
- In Shakespeare's sonnets the couplet (the last two lines) is called 'the whip' because it 'lashes back' or comments on the first 12 lines of the poem. How does the couplet in this sonnet comment on the rest of the poem?

p.102

Nexus

- In what ways is the 'need' mentioned in line 1 an 'affliction' (line 2)?
- What do you infer were the 'old philosophies' (lines 13–14) of the person addressed in the poem?
- What is the fear expressed by the speaker of the poem?
- How does the speaker of the poem suggest that the bond with the person addressed may be sustained? Discuss this in the context of the final stanza and the last two lines in particular.

p.103

Close to You Now

- Describe the various ways in which the speaker of the poem considers herself close to the 'you' addressed in the poem.
- What do the 'rain' (stanza 5) and 'showers' (stanza 6) symbolise?
- Read the stanzas in which the following lines occur and discuss the possible meanings with your classmates:
 - 'I ask you questions. I sleep./I speak the answers when I wake.' (lines 11–12)
 - '... my bowl/had been always full of the fine gold wheat/which only the prayerful can see and eat./And all the time I was living on leftovers.' (lines 15–18)
 - '... I go silent and still/and I will see your face/and want then for nothing.' (lines 34–36).
- Who do you imagine the 'you' addressed in the poem might be?

p.104

Lullaby

This poem attempts, perhaps, to bridge the gap between the values we traditionally assign to body and soul, i.e. the physical pleasures of the body (often associated with sin) and the spiritual virtues of the soul.

- The 'fashionable madmen' with their 'pedantic boring cry' about paying the cost (lines 24–26) are the guardians of moral standards of the society. Why is the persona targeting them?
- Time and mortality are strong arguments in this poem against facile moral judgements. Point out two examples of this.

p.105

Hate

- The poet suggests that there are two personalities in this poem. Can you explain the differences in the references to 'me' and 'myself' in the poem?
- Which personality seems to be the genuine self? Does this self experience the hate that is expressed in the poem? If not, what does this self experience?
- Explain the meaning of 'Then myself forced its way through' (line 8).

p.106

Echo

In this poem the poet is urging her lover to come back to her.

- Is her lover alive or dead? What evidence for your answer can you find in the poem?
- Where is the 'door' referred to in line 11? Why is it 'letting in' but 'lets out' no one (line 12)?
- What kind of return of her lover does the poet settle for in the final stanza?

p.107

It is the Constant Image of Your Face

- Can you explain the nature of the conflict experienced by the persona in this poem?
- For whom is love expressed by the persona of the poem?
- What is the 'treachery' referred to in line 6?
- What is the nature of the 'treason' the persona has committed? Do you agree with the view that it is treason?
- The persona's two loves possess, in his view, a similar quality. What is this quality?
- Explain in your own words the meaning of lines 16–18.

Reading and enjoying poetry

Many students around CSEC age seem to be afraid of poems. They try to avoid them as much as possible, and when they can't, they approach them with dread, expecting the worst. It is true that for years the mean marks for the poetry questions on the CSEC paper have been among the lowest. This is a sad situation when one considers that poems exist mainly to give pleasure – as is the case with most creative writing. Poems are to be read aloud and enjoyed rather than approached as a difficult puzzle to be solved. Poems are in fact the most natural form of literary expression, the closest to ordinary speech and the first literary form that you encounter, long before you start going to school. The nursery rhymes, songs and jingles that you learned and enjoyed as very young children were poems – you can tell from looking at them. You can recognise a poem on the page because it consists of a string of individual lines, rather than paragraphs or solid blocks of writing. The lines can be long, marching or galloping right across the page, or short, descending swiftly down the middle like a narrow staircase. You can see how the very appearance of a poem can suggest movement or impart a feeling about it, even before the words are read. Whatever the appearance of poems on the page, however, they all share the same basic unit, the line, unlike prose where the unit is the sentence or paragraph.

Because a poem is built of lines of words and is really meant to be read aloud, it has a special quality of sound which builds into a recognisable pattern that we call *rhythm*. All poems have rhythm, which consists of repeated patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. Poems are like music, and in earlier times many were sung and accompanied by instruments such as the lute. So poems have a *beat*, like music, and the word 'rhythm' can be used to talk about both music and poetry. Note how the stressed (underlined) syllables determine the particular beat in the opening lines of 'The Lady's-Maid's Song' (p.99):

When Adam found his rib was gone
He cursed and sighed and cried and swore,
And looked with cold resentment on
The creature God had used it for.

Here you get a regular pattern of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. This is known as *iambic metre*. It is the most common metre in English poetry and is closest to the rhythm of ordinary speech in English language. There is no need for you to learn all the technical terms for the various metres at this stage, though you should be aware that there are several and they all produce

Checklist for reading a poem

1 Subject matter

- Who is speaking? (speaker)
- In what situation? (occasion)
- To whom? (addressee)
- Privately or publicly?
- About what? (subject or theme)
- What is said? (thesis)
- Directly or indirectly?
- What common human concerns does this touch on? (universality)

2 Sound

- What does the sound pattern tell you?
- Is the rhythm quick or slow?
- Does the rhythm suit/reinforce the subject matter?
- Is there rhyme?
- Does the rhyme contribute to your understanding/enjoyment of the poem?
- Is there any interesting or appropriate use of alliteration/assonance?

3 Diction

- Are the words simple or complicated?
- Sophisticated or naive?
- Formal or conversational?
- Smooth or rough?
- Many-syllabled or monosyllabic?
- How does the diction contribute to the meaning/mood?

4 Imagery

- Is the imagery striking or ordinary?
- Easily understood or obscure?

- Is the principal appeal to the sense of sight or hearing, touch, etc?
- Is the imagery functional or ornamental?
- Is the imagery symbolic?
- Is the symbolism natural, conventional or original?

5 Mood and tone

- How would you describe the mood of the poem?
- Is the poem more thoughtful than emotional?
- More emotional than thoughtful?
- Are thought and emotion balanced in the poem?
- Is the tone of the poem serious or light?
- Is it ironical, satirical, sentimental, sincere, flippant, etc?

6 Organic consistency

- Do all the items above fuse into an organic whole?
- Are there any elements (imagery, diction, etc.) which appear unsuited to the rest of the poem?
- Are there any elements which don't seem to have a good reason for being there?

7 Do you like the poem? If you were putting together an anthology of good poems, would you include the poem? For what particular reasons?

Glossary of terms

alliteration a sound effect caused by the repetition of stressed consonant sounds

assonance a sound effect consisting of the repetition of stressed vowel sounds

blank verse unrhymed five-stress lines, principally of iambic metre (iambic pentameters); Milton's *Paradise Lost* and most of Shakespeare's plays are written in blank verse

caesura a pause in a line of poetry, usually dependent on the sense of the line and indicated by a strong punctuation mark

connotation the secondary meanings and associations suggested to the reader by a particular word or phrase, as opposed to denotation or dictionary meaning

couplet two lines of the same metre which rhyme

denotation the meaning of a word according to the dictionary, as opposed to its connotations

elegy a formal poem lamenting the death of a particular person

epic a long narrative poem, usually celebrating some aspect of the history or identity of a people; Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are examples of epic poems

epic simile a simile extending over several lines, in which the object of comparison is described at great length

eye rhyme a pair of syllables which appear to the eye as though they should rhyme, but which do not, such as 'have' and 'wave'

figurative language non-literal expressions used to convey more vividly certain ideas and feelings; includes such figures as simile, metaphor and personification

form either the appearance of poetry on the page or a way of referring to the structure of the poem – its division into stanzas, etc.

free verse poetry that has no regular rhythmic pattern (metre)

hyperbole a type of figurative language consisting of exaggeration or overstatement

imagery vivid description of an object or a scene; the term is also applied to figurative language, particularly to examples of simile and metaphor

A World of Poetry includes all the prescribed poems for the revised CSEC® English A and English B syllabuses. It has been compiled with the approval of the Caribbean Examinations Council by Editors who have served as CSEC® English panel members.

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A World of Poetry,
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- The material in this anthology will help students to prepare effectively for the CSEC® examination.
- The poems have been chosen to cover a wide range of themes and subjects and include a balance of well-known poems from the past as well as more recent works.
- The anthology includes poems from the Caribbean and the rest of the world to stimulate an interest in and enjoyment of poetry.
- This collection contains notes on each poem and questions to provoke discussion, as well as a useful checklist to help students with poetry analysis.

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