Black Rook in Rainy Weather

- In this poem she is looking for inspiration
- She fears neutrality and longs for emotion – “a brief respite from fear of total neutrality”
- “a wet black rook arranging and rearranging its feathers in the rain” – a long, repetitive, unappealing structure, displaying the monotony of her life – euphony ‘a’ sound
- Alliteration used in ‘rare, random descent’
- Spiritual nature of inspiration is conveyed through the words “miracle”, “celestial”, “angel”
- Flippant mood – “I can’t honestly complain” – “even this dull, ruinous landscape”
- Nature is explored in order to convey her lack of contentment

LINK Elm

Morning Song

- “love set you going like a fat gold watch” – unique simile to convey the beauty of birth
- Objectification of the infant – “took its place among the elements” “in a drafted museum”
- No rhyming scheme – the unpredictability of what’s in store for this new infant/free verse
- Self doubt is evident – “I am no more your mother than the cloud that distils a mirror”
- “in my Victorian nightgown” – conveys an old fashioned mother
- A very poetic description of a baby’s cry, signifying hope for the baby’s future – “Your handful of notes; the clear vowels rise like balloons”

Link Child

Poppies in July

- “little hell flames” – negative, calamitous imagery opens the poem
- The question “do you no harm?” – asking whether her relationship is self destructive
- “I put my hands among the flames. Nothing burns. ‘ no feeling, neutrality – this echoes ‘Black Rook’ “fear of total neutrality”
“it exhausts me to watch you” – she is growing tired of her husband (he has just committed infidelity) and is exhausted through her personal depression

“Fumes” – repetition of the “flame” idea

“opiates” – the idea of drugs/narcotics – wonders if these may put her at ease

If I could bleed or sleep – suicidal thoughts

“If my mouth could marry a hurt like that” – thoughts of regret, especially of her marriage

Repetition of the word “colorless” indicates her life is meaningless now

The lack of rhyming scheme and the irregularity of the poem indicates a lack of self control and personal structure

The Arrival of the Beebox

This explores the role of power in one’s life

One of her most peculiar poems

Style – uses many poetic techniques here

In this poem, she explores the confinement of her own personal thoughts

“the box is locked” – confinement “it is dangerous” – these explore the power and danger of her own negative thoughts

“swarmy feeling of African hands” – lack of liberation

“It is like a Roman mob”

“a box of maniacs”

“they can die, I need feed them nothing, I am the owner”

“Funeral veil” – “the box is only temporary” – life will end – suicidal thoughts end the poem

The structure of the poem indicates she is more mentally stable and is longing for control

Elm

One of her bleakest poems

Uses personification

Uses the Elm Tree as a metaphor

“I know the bottom” – depression

Use of ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘she’ – lack of personal identity
“love is a shadow” – not really there, unrealistic – “how you lie and cry after it” – “it has gone off, like a horse” – abandonment

“I have suffered the atrocity of sunsets” - EST reference

“The moon, also, is merciless” – alliteration

Depression – “your bad dreams possess me”, “I am inhabited by a cry”, “I am terrified by this thing that sleeps in me”

Weather used to convey emotions/pathetic fallacy – “clouds pass” “this is rain now” “a wind of such violence”

“its snaky acid kiss”

Ends with the line – “that kill, that kill, that kill”

Very gloomy, complete lack of hope, feels abandoned

Child

• Similar to ‘Morning Song’ yet more anxiety driven.
• She admires the beauty and purity of the infant but simultaneously envies it
• Theme of anguish and depression is remarkably evident
• “troubous/wringing of hands
• Metaphor – “this dark ceiling without a star
• “April snowdrop, Indian pipe” – Snowdrop: beautiful: symbol for the purity of the infant. – Indian pipe is dark: symbol for Plath’s darkness and depair
• “Your clear eye”
• “I want to fill it with colour and ducks”
• Doesn’t end on a joyous note compared to “Morning Song”

Points for an introduction/conclusion

• Epigraph: “the worst enemy to creativity is self doubt”
• Her poetry is 1. Intense 2. Personal 3. Confessional 4. Disturbing
• Reading her poetry is almost like reading her diary
• Her unique style contributes to her poetry: honesty, use of assonance and repetition to convey things which are tedious, her remarkable use of striking metaphors and unusual metaphors in order to depict her personal anguish
• “is there no way out of the mind?”
• “let me live, love and say it well in good sentences”