

Feminine Gospels Knowledge Organiser - Carol Ann Duffy

Assessment

Stand alone essay question, choice of two questions. Engagement with a critical view point; mention two poems.

Context (A03)

Carol Ann Duffy- Poet Laureate 2009-2019

She has had several collections of poetry published. The *Feminine Gospels* was published in 2002. She said: "What I was trying to do was use the idea of the gospel truth: in a sense the gospels are a tall story told as truth, so these poems were about trying to find truth about particularly female issues, but doing it within tall stories."

Critical Views (A05)

Helene Cixous- "women write in white ink"-their voices are often invisible

Jacques Lacan- Jouissance- a force of life "Begins with a tickle and ends with a blaze of petrol"

Laura Mulvey - "male gaze" ""Woman's desire is subjugated to her image (...) as bearer, not maker, of meaning.""

Structure of collection (A02)

Long Queen- opening poem reflects key ideas in the collection- importance of woman's voice, art and the matrilineal line

Laughter of Stafford Girls High signals a shift in mood and tone

Ends with Elegies- moving towards the personal rather than political

Techniques/Typicality (A02)

Enumeration

Alliteration

Assonance

Revelatory enjambment

Internal rhyme

"Tough-guy vernacular"

Natural Imagery (esp. rivers and the moon)

Fairy Tale Imagery

(towers/woods/apples/transformation)

Mythological Imagery (harpies, Ariadne, Daphne, Echo)

Biblical imagery (Eve, crucifixion)

Allegory

Conceit

Catharsis

Pathos

Specific cultural references

Themes and Connections (A04)

Women's bodies/transformation- **The Diet, The Map Woman, The Woman who Shopped, Tall, Beautiful**
Degradation and Mistreatment of Women-**Beautiful, Loud, History**

Women and History- **Beautiful, Sub, Long Queen, Wish**
Unheard Voice- **Sub, History, Virgin's Memo, Anon, Loud, Laughter of Stafford Girl's High, White Writing**

Motherhood- **Virgin's Memo, The Cord, Light Gatherer, Work, Long Queen**

The Poetic Voice- **Gambler, Dreaming Week, Tall, Anon, White Writing**

Matrilineal Line- **Long Queen, The Cord, Anon, History**

Elegies- **Wish, North-West, Death and the Moon**

Key Poems and Content

The Long Queen- "Women, girls, spinsters, hags...wet nurses,/witches, widows, wives" ;"No girl born who wasn't the Long Queen's always child"; "*Tears*: Salt pearls, bright jewels" "Her pleasures were stories, true or false"

The Map Woman: "a precis of where to end or go back and begin" "A wedding pair ran, ringed, from the church" "When she knelt/she felt her father's house pressing into her bone" "her skin sloughed like a snake"

Beautiful: "queen of his heart, pin up, superstar" "Beauty is fame" "a little bird inside a cage" "made him fuck her as a lad" "They filmed her harder, harder" "dumped what they couldn't use" "*Give us a smile, Cunt*" "History's Stinking breath in her face"

Loud: "her voice ripped out of her throat like a firework" "she'd been easily led...Not any more. Now she could roar", "She was pure sound, rumbling like an avalanche" "she bawled at the moon and it span away"

History: "half dead" "smelling of pee" "She was History" "watched for a hundred years as the air of Rome/turned to stone" "how the children waved/ their little hands from the trains"" She woke again,/ cold, in the dark" "shit wrapped in a newspaper posted/ onto the floor"

Sub: “my breasts bandaged beneath my no. 13 shirt” “on the other side of the steam” “bandaged again, time of the month” “nursing the precious egg of the ball” “John, Paul, George and *Moi*” “Emily Dickinson’s poems” “I felt the first kick/ of my child; whacked a century into the crowd” “agreed on a whim to slim/to the weight of a boy” “What I think to myself is this: “

Anon: “she still lived on/*Anon*” “as though it had something/to get off it’s chest” “she passed on her pen/like a baton”

Laughter of Stafford Girls’ High: “the sound of the laugh.../ was a liquid one, a gurgle, a ripple, a dribble, a babble” “a sketch of a girl, a first draft” “The Beaufort Scale...: Nought, calm; two , light breeze” “anarchy roared in her face/like a tropical wind” “the moon /was pinned like a monitor’s badge to the sky” “Mrs Mackay...her husband of twenty-five grinding childless years” “the clouds were slowly being torn up like a rule book” “they could hope to grow to be/ the finest of England’s daughters, mothers and wives” “*All for one!...And one for all!*” “kissing her, kissing her, kissing her” “watching the head/ Queen Canute” “she felt her heart flare in its dark cave, hungry, blind” “it was now the air they breathed/teachers and girls” “A cheer like an avalanche burst from the roof” “it’s desks the small coffins of lessons/ the blackboard tombstones of learning” “the poem was done” “She wrote her maiden name with a stick in the sand”

White Writing: “No vows written to wed you” “I write them white” “No poems written to praise you/I write them white”

The Light Gatherer: “your kissed feet glowed in my one hand” “It glittered like a river/ silver, clever with fish” “you fell from a star/into my lap” “like a jewelled cave, turquoise, diamond and gold, opening out”

Wish: “What if her arm reached out/ to grab the stones?” “Nobody slept who couldn’t be woken/by the light” “If only I can push open this heavy door” “why do I shout, why do I run”

Death and the Moon “(for Catherine Marcangeli)” “ghosts of my wordless breath reach/for the stars” “I could touch the edge of the moon” “The red cave of your widow’s unbearable cry” “Unreachable/by prayers, even if poems are prayers” “you are further forever than that”

Practise questions. For each, discuss/examine the view presented in the statement with reference to at least two poems from the collection.

The poems in *The Feminine Gospels* promote the idea that women only have power and strength as a group rather than as individuals.

The Feminine Gospels strives to return a voice to silenced women.

The poems after *The Laughter of Stafford Girls’ High* fail at voicing the truth about women’s experiences.

The collection fails to achieve its agenda of writing the feminine truth because the three sections have nothing in common.

The collection excludes a male audience by only including female figures.

The collection suggests that modern women are still suffering from discrimination.