

Reading...

Three Poems about Identity

The poems in this pack are thematically linked. Each writer uses their poem to explore the idea of identity.

Talking and Listening

Read the poem 'Third Generation' by Nadine Aisha Jassat and complete the discussion activities that follow.

Third Generation

My old man's a brown old man,
and my mother's white.
When they ask if he's from Pakistan,
I'm told to be polite.
When they say she's not my Mother,
I say to me we look the same,
and when they tell me to be ashamed of them,
I say I have two worlds to gain.
My Bali wants a suburban house
to prove himself to you,
and if my Ma ever left that house
you'd condemn him for that too.
I grew myself from both of them
each bone, each nail, each tooth.
I wonder how my children will grow,
under the shadow of this roof?

(Nadine Aisha Jassat, *Let Me Tell You This*, 404 Ink: 2018)

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Task One

Working with a partner **summarise** what this poem is about.

Task Two

Working with a partner **identify** and then **discuss** the charges/complaints/issues that other people have levelled at the speaker in the past. What is your response to these?

Task Three

Again, with a partner, **identify** and **comment** on **two** things the speaker has to be proud of.

Task Four

This poem is called 'Third Generation'. What do you think the **title** means?

Critical Reading

Read the poem 'Scot Mid' by Nadine Aisha Jassat. Answer the questions that follow in as much detail as you can.

Scot Mid

I am 26,
walking through quiet Edinburgh streets
on my way to the supermarket.

There's a shopping list in my head, chanting
Aubergine – ginger – butter to make ghee –
Aubergine – ginger – butter to make ghee.

Two children trail in front of me,
at the tail coats of fathers
who walk further ahead
in heavy laced boots.
The wee boy turns,
I smile, he screams.
He screams,
'You're a bad woman!'

His sister hushes him away, apologetic.
Tells me he didn't mean it.
I am panic: eyes to the child,
to the pavement, to the wall,
did anyone else hear?
To the pavement, to the wall,
Did anyone else hear him?
To the child, to the floor.

Returning home,
conscious of my face in that child's mind
and the newspapers he has seen
and the television he has watched
and the words he has heard,
I have a memory, briefly,
of a university friend
in consoling tones
telling me
I could 'pass for white'.

No matter how gentle.
No matter how serene.
No matter how many good works I do,
Or taxes I pay,
Or lives I save,
I will always be,
always be, to them
a dangerous woman.

And what are they to me?

(Nadine Aisha Jassat, *Let Me Tell You This*, 404 Ink: 2018)

Questions

1. Why do you think the writer opens with the line '**I am 26**'?

2. What does the detail '**quiet Edinburgh streets**' help us to understand about the speaker's situation? (ie. Why might this be an important detail for us to know?)

3. In **stanza two** the writer allows us to hear a shopping list. What poetic technique is used here?

4. What does this shopping list make us think about the woman's frame of mind at this point?

5. What **contrast** does the writer create in the **third stanza**?

6. '**You're a bad woman!**' – why is this line **unexpected** at this point in the poem?

7. Look at the **sister's** reaction. How do you think she is feeling at this point and why?

8. In **verse 4** the speaker says '**I am panic**'. Why is this a good image to use at this point?

9. Why does the speaker ask herself a **rhetorical question** at the end of this page?

10. Explain *in your own words* what the speaker means when she says: '**conscious of my face in that child's mind**'.

11. What does the word '**consoling**' mean and why do you think the university friend speaks to her in this way?

12. What does it mean to ‘**pass as white**’? Explain *in your own words*.

13. Why does the university friend think the speaker wants to ‘**pass as white**’?

14. **Anaphora** is used (‘No matter...No matter...No matter’). What does it draw attention to?

15. In the second last verse the speaker says that she will always be ‘**a dangerous woman**’. How does what the speaker has said/behaved so far in the poem contradict this idea?

16. What **message** are we supposed to take away from this poem at the end?

Writing Activity

In this poem the speaker experiences **irrational prejudice** from a child she does not know.

Think about the society we live in. How are these opinions and prejudices **formed** and **shaped**? Conduct **research** into this question. You might want to think about

a.) the part the media play

b.) the part families and friendships have to play in shaping prejudices about groups of people

Present your findings in the form of a **discursive** (two-sided) essay.

REMEMBER!

Include a **bibliography** of the sources that you consulted during your research

Chaudhri Sher Mobarik looks at the loch

Light shakes out the dishrag sky
and scatters the water with sequins. *Look, hen!*
says my father, *Loch Lomond!* as if
it were all his doing, as if he owned it,
laird of Lomond, laird of the language.
He is proud to say *hen* and even more *loch*
with an och not an *ock*, to speak
proper Glaswegian like a true-born Scot,
and he makes the right sound at the back
of the throat because he can say *khush*
and *khwah* and *khamosh*, because the sounds
for happy and dream are the words that swim
in the water for him, so he says it again,
Hen! Look! The Loch!

(Imtiaz Dharker, *Luck is the Hook*, Bloodaxe Books: 2018)

1. Explain, **in your own words**, the father's reaction to seeing Loch Lomond. (2 marks)

- _____
- _____

2. Quote **two** examples of **imagery** used by the writer to show the father's response to what he is seeing and analyse the images fully. (4 marks)

Quotation: _____
Technique: _____
Analysis: _____

3. Why do you think the writer repeats the word '**laird**' in line 5? (2 marks)

4. Explain **in your own words** why the father is '**proud to say hen**'. (2 marks)

- _____
- _____

5. '**He is proud [...] to speak like a true-born Scot**'

Fully analyse this simile, explaining what it helps us understand about the speaker's father. (2 marks)

6. **Explain** why the final line is a good way to bring this poem to a close. (2 marks)

7. Why do you think the poet, Imtiaz Dharker, gives the poem the title **Chaudhri Sher Mobarik looks at the loch**? (1 mark)

Developing Set Text Skills

With reference to **two** poems you have studied show how the **theme of identity** is explored.

(5 marks)

Commonality

- In the first poem called ‘ _____ ’ the theme of identity is explored when the writer discusses _____
- In the second poem called ‘ _____ ’ the theme of identity is explored when the writer discusses _____

From Poem One

Quotation:

“ _____ ”

Technique:

Analysis:

From Poem Two

Quotation:

“ _____ ”

Technique:

Analysis:

Creative Writing

In this poem the poet, Dean Atta, reflects on how his identity has been shaped and influenced. He uses the technique of **anaphora** (the repetition of the first words of the line) to good effect.

I Come From

I come from shepherd's pie and Sunday roast
Jerk chicken and stuffed vine leaves
I come from travelling through my taste buds but loving where I live

I come from a home that some would call broken
I come from D.I.Y. that never got done
I come from waiting by the phone for him to call

I come from waving the white flag to loneliness
I come from the rainbow flag and the union jack
I come from a British passport and an ever-ready suitcase

I come from jet fuel and fresh coconut water
I come from crossing oceans to find myself
I come from deep issues and shallow solutions

I come from a limited vocabulary but an unrestricted imagination
I come from a decent education and a marvellous mother
I come from being given permission to dream but choosing to wake up instead

I come from wherever I lay my head
I come from unanswered questions and unread books
Unnoticed effort and undelivered apologies and thanks

I come from who I trust and who I have left
I come from last year and last year and I don't notice how I've changed
I come from looking in the mirror and looking online to find myself

I come from stories, myths, legends and folk tales
I come from lullabies and pop songs, Hip Hop and poetry
I come from griots, grandmothers and her-story tellers

I come from published words and strangers' smiles
I come from my own pen but I see people torn apart like paper
Each a story or poem that never made it into a book.

Writing Task

Using Dean Atta's poem as your template, write your own poem about your identity. Reflect on who you are and how you came to be like this. Be as creative as possible!

Success Criteria

1. Anaphora ('I come from...')
2. Five 3-line stanzas
3. Mixture of **literal** and **metaphorical** places
4. A final line that starts 'Each story a...'



Planning for Writing

In each box come up with three things that relate to you.

ie. For **Place** you might write: Dumfries, Glasgow, Fife, Scotland, school etc.

Place	Family
Food	Culture