Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance

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Contents:

Section:	Page No:
1. Abstract	**7**
2. Introduction	**7**
2.1 School Context	8
2.2 Introducing the Project	9
3. Literature Review	**10**
3.1 How Has Poetry Been Perceived in English Classrooms?	10
3.1.1 The Difficulty of Poetry	11
3.1.2 The Way Poetry is Configured in the Curriculum	12
3.1.3 Teachers' Lack of Subject and Pedagogical Knowledge	13
3.2 What Pedagogies Has Been Produced to Teach Poetry?	14
3.2.1 Pedagogies Which Rely on Teacher – led Reading	14
3.2.2 Pedagogies Which Rely on Scaffolded Reading	16
3.2.3 Pedagogies Which Focus on Aesthetic Reading	16
3.2.4 Pedagogies Which Focus on Form as Meaning	18
3.2.5 Pedagogies Which Focus on Sound as Meaning	19
3.2.6 Pedagogies Which Focus on Writing Poetry	20

3.2.7 Pedagogies Which Focus on Performance 21

3.2.8 Pedagogies Which Rely on a 'Third Space' 23

3.2.9 Pedagogies Which Rely on Technology as a Third Space 24

3.2.10 Pedagogies Which Focus on Student Agency 26

3.2.11 Conclusion 26

3.3 How has Poetry Pedagogy Changed in the Face of GCSE Examinations? 27

3.3.1 Conclusion 28

3.4 To What Extent Have Performance Approaches Been Used in the Current National Curriculum and GSCE context? 29

3.4.1 Memorisation 30

3.4.2 Changing Sounds 31

3.4.3 Implementing Elements of Drama 32

3.4.4 How Students Perform Poetry 33

4. Research Questions 34

5. Methodology 35

5.1 Research Design 35

5.2 Participants 38

5.3 Collaborators 39

5.4 Ethics 40

5.5 The Intervention 41

5.5.1 Unit Plan 42

5.5.2 Intervention Sessions 45

5.6 Instruments 50

5.6.1 Questionnaires 50

5.6.2 Interviews 53

5.6.3 Field Notes 54

5.7 Data Analysis 55

6. Findings and Discussion 56

6.1 To What Extent Do Year 11 Students Enjoy and Understand Poetry as it is Currently Taught in the Department? 57

6.1.1 'Packaging' Poetry for Examinations 57

6.1.2 Fixed Mindsets 58

6.1.3 Teachers' Influence 60

6.1.4 Pupil Talk Aiding Understanding 61

6.1.5 Breaking Fixed Mindsets 62

6.2 Do Year 11 Students Think Different Approaches to Teaching Could Help Them Enjoy and Understand Poetry Further? 63

6.2.1 Hearing Poetry 63

6.2.2 Considering Emotions of Poets 63

6.2.3 Listening Aids Understanding of Form 64

6.2.4 Fear of Performing 65

6.2.5 Outside Experiences Shaping Motivations 66

6.3 To What Extent Does Enjoyment Progress Understanding? 67

6.3.1'Enjoyment' as Emotional Reactions 67

6.3.2 The ‘Third Space’ 68

6.3.3. Examination Stress 68

6.3.4 Incorporating Elements of Drama 69

6.3.5 Incorporating Creativity 71

6.4 To What Extent Does Performing Enhance the Teaching of Poetry? 73

6.4.1 Positive Emotional Reactions to Performing 73

6.4.2 Connecting with Poets 74

6.4.3 Considering Sound 75

6.4.4 Expressing Ideas Through Movement 76

6.4.5 Positive Peer Modelling 77

7. Conclusion **80**

7.1 Creating a ‘Third Space’ 80

7.2 Heightened Emotions 81

7.3 Improving Confidence 81

7.4 Collaboration 82

7.5 Limitations 83

7.6 Implications 84

8. Reference List **86**

9. Appendix **105**

9.1 Appendix 1 – CUREC Approval Form 105

9.2 Appendix 2 – CUREC Headteacher Consent Form 106

9.3 Appendix 3 – CUREC Parent Information Sheet and Opt-Out Form 109

9.4 Appendix 4 – Microsoft Forms Pre-Intervention Poem Selection Graph 112

9.5 Appendix 5 – Example of Coding and Non-Verbal Cues In Field Notes 112

9.6 Appendix 6 – Example of Coding Log 113

9.7 Appendix 7 – Example of Post-Intervention Student Work 114

1 Abstract

In English literature education, poetry often stands as both a challenge and an opportunity. Students are tasked with memorising 15 poems for AQA GCSE examinations, yet pressure to achieve specific grades and constraints of time can hinder their overall experience. Literature suggests Key Stage Four English lessons, while essential for academic preparation, sometimes neglect the creative and performative aspects of poetry.

This small-scale case study incorporated aspects of performance in targeted interventions to enhance Year 11 students' enjoyment and understanding of poetry. Two classes were taught the AQA Power and Conflict Anthology through a new unit plan and four intervention sessions led by the Head of Drama. Data collected through field notes, interviews and questionnaires suggested using elements of drama and reading poetry aloud could positively affect students' enjoyment of the poems used in GCSE examinations, which could lead to increased understanding of poetry in lessons.

2 Introduction

In the field of education, poetry has previously been described as a 'Cinderella' subject or a 'rainbow' in secondary English literature curriculum as it encourages freedom of expression, playing with words and enjoying literature without the need to understand it (Benton, 2000; Benton, 1986). However, these optimistic metaphors are often followed with negative opinions of the 'conveyor belt' National Curriculum, which has 'constrained' and 'squeezed out' the joy in poetry (Benton, 2000). This idea was further exacerbated by the 2015 GCSE English Literature reforms, which included a prescriptive set of poetry anthologies to be taught and

memorised for assessment. The memorisation of poetry, as well as the sheer number of poems which must be covered for examinations, left little to no room for cognitive playfulness or freedom to read, write or perform other poetry in Key Stage Four.

Gove's 2015 English Literature reforms came into action only two years before I came to England to teach. Consequently, throughout my career I have been aware of the discourse about poetry in GCSE assessments through social media, the schools in my Trust and departments I have collaborated with. Teachers in each of these scenarios felt the prescriptive nature of the anthologies allowed room in the National Curriculum for students to appreciate and analyse poetry, but significantly reduced time for creative activities, which helped students interact with and enjoy the art form (Snapper, 2009).

To encourage discourse in my department around Key Stage Four poetry, I chose to conduct a small - scale study incorporating performances of the GCSE AQA Power and Conflict Anthology within Year 11 lesson time. This was in collaboration with my department and the Head of Drama and included mixed qualitative methods for rich, in-depth data to analyse and discuss.

2.1 School Context

My school is a co-educational academy within a Trust for years 7 - 13 in outer London. The Trust aims to improve schools which have received an Ofsted 'Requires Improvement' judgement. Our school does not have a selective intake due to receiving a 'Good'

score only a year ago, but is based in an affluent area, which results in pressure to compete with private schools in the borough for results.

On a department level, the Head of Department has just retired after holding the role for 29 years. Her leadership, alongside 4 teachers who have worked at the school for 15 years or more, has built strong traditions and methods of teaching many in the department are wary to change.

However, our 2023 exam data highlighted a lack of grades 7-9 in GCSE English Literature. This is filtering into retention rates for Sixth Form English Literature. On a whole school level, our lack of higher-level grades in English Literature has become a point of concern, as core subject scores affect the reputation of the school in our borough. This has led the Headteacher to urge the department to consider alternative methods of teaching this portion of the exams.

2.2 Introducing the Project

As a result of these scores, I was hired as Head of Department under the premise I will modernise how we teach GCSE literature. My experience as Head of Year for the current Year 11 cohort, alongside my work on Key Stage Three and Four literature schemes of work and background in musical theatre has led to a focus on GCSE poetry in the past year. I believe words hold more meaning when performed for an audience. I learned to memorise and perform literature in choir and theatre during secondary school, which ignited a passion for reading poetry and inspired me to become an English teacher. These experiences, along with my research on the perception of poetry in my school as my first-year project whilst studying a Master of Teaching and Learning, are why I have decided to collaborate with the Head of Drama

and my department to incorporate performance into a new unit plan for Year 11 English classes.

Poetry can be both 'enjoyed' and 'appreciated' - 'enjoyment' defined as an immediate and emotional reaction to poems and 'appreciation' deeper knowledge acquired through annotations and analysis (Ray, 1999). Therefore, I will be assessing if students 'enjoy' poetry more when 'appreciation' is coupled with performance.

To investigate these issues further before planning an intervention, in my literature review I asked the following questions:

1. How has poetry been perceived in English classrooms?
2. What pedagogies has been produced to teach poetry?
3. How has poetry pedagogy changed in the face of GCSE Examinations?
4. To what extent have performance approaches been used in the current National Curriculum and GSCE context?

3 Literature Review

3.1 How Has Poetry Been Perceived in English Classrooms?

Poetry is a vital element in literature curricula across the world. It is read and written in secondary schools for a variety of reasons, which include interacting with and interpreting literature from different cultures and times, developing individual voices and enjoying a form of

writing shorter than a story or novel. However, teaching poetry in English classrooms is often discussed as 'a professional problem to be solved' (Blake & Snapper, 2022) stemming from a common perception amongst researchers labelled as 'the problem with poetry' (Mathieson, 1980; Andrews, 1991). This 'problem' is seen as multi-faceted, as researchers attribute various factors to the poor reputation of poetry as an art form – 'the poetry, the children, the pedagogy and the teacher' (Benton, 1978). Firstly, poetry is considered hard to define and read. Secondly, children often negatively respond to it, due to preconceived ideas about poetry (Didau, 2019). Thirdly, current pedagogies struggle to encapsulate both enjoyment and appreciation of poetry. Fourthly, teachers' personal bias impact how poetry is taught in classrooms. These factors all contribute to how poetry is perceived within the confines of an English classroom and in the field of poetry education.

3.1.1 The Difficulty of Poetry

Firstly, defining poetry is 'like "trying" to pin down vapour' (Andrews, 1991) – as it is hard to define an ever evolving and flexible art form (Killingsworth Roberts et al., 2014). Poetry 'exploits the mercurial nature of words' (Wilson & Dymoke, 2017) and becomes 'a concentrated clot of sense' (Vygotsky, 1962). These clots 'enter the inner speech of others' and eventually 'unfold in the mind of the reader' (Barrs, 2016) creating a plethora of interpretations or ideas. Several researchers agree with Rosenblatt's theory that poetry is a 'transaction' between the reader and the text, where a poem is 'evoked' or experienced through the lens of individual readers (1978).

Poet Kenneth Koch calls poetry ‘a language within a language’ (1996) historically written by the upper class and most intelligent of society, who have been stereotyped as ‘solitary figures who write in isolation’ (Schmidt, 1999). This idea can lead ‘potential readers to…reject its advances’ (Xerri, 2012; Dymoke, 2009) and have led the public to think of the art form as ‘something rather odd...numinous’ (DES, 1975).

3.1.2 The Way Poetry is Configured in the Curriculum

Educational policies tried to shape how poetry was taught in England, such as the Bullock Report in 1975 (Alexander, 2022; Goodwyn, 2012). The National Curriculum, implemented in 1989, promoted a specific way of teaching poetry to ensure schools and teachers were giving students equal opportunities (Benton, 2000). In the 1990s, examination boards created anthologies tailored to GCSE examinations, which possibly disempowered teachers by creating a ‘prescriptive curriculum agenda’ with ‘little room for pedagogical possibilities’ (Cremin, 2013; Snapper, 2009). Gove’s reforms to the GCSE English literature curriculum in 2015 asked students to memorise 15 poems in these anthologies for examinations, taking away more creative time in the curriculum for GCSE preparation. This led to a feeling of poetry as a ‘packaged commodity’ (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2011) and contributed to poetry’s sense of intimidation on teachers and students alike (Blake, 2008; Hennessy et al., 2021).

There is a real concern in the English education field that poetry ‘could lose its place in the study of literature in schools’ (Simecek & Rumbold, 2016; Dymoke, 2014). This is interesting as there is probably more poetry in the National Curriculum and GCSEs now than at any other time, but

this comes at the expense of free time and creativity with reading, writing and performing poetry.

Several projects in England have attempted to bring creativity and enjoyment of poetry back into the curriculum, such as Poetry Matters, Poetry by Heart and The Cambridge Teaching Poetry Project (Blake & Snapper, 2022; Dymoke et al., 2014; Pullinger, 2012).

3.1.3 Teachers' Lack of Subject and Pedagogical Knowledge

It is widely reported secondary teachers in England, as well as pre-service teachers, feel anxious about their lack of knowledge when teaching poetry (Blake, 2020; Benton, 2000; Ray, 1999; Wade & Sidaway, 1990). Teachers tend to shy away from poetry as they feel they do not know enough about the art form or do not have enough pedagogical knowledge to teach poems (Sigvardsson, 2017). A UKLA *Teachers as readers: Phase 1* survey of 1200 practitioners evidenced less than 2 percent of the sample read poetry and 1.5 percent said poetry was their favourite childhood reading (Cremin et al., 2008). The survey also highlighted weak subject knowledge, with 22 percent unable to name a single poet (Cremin et al., 2008).

Similar anxieties about teaching poetry have been echoed by teachers in Australia (Weaven & Clark, 2013). In response to this uncertainty, Red Room Poetry in Australia hosted workshops for teachers wanting to dispel negative associations of poetry gained from their schooling (Xerri, 2018). Teachers in Malta recognise a 'gap in their professional training' (Xerri, 2013) and teachers in Sweden feel they cannot accurately 'teach poetry' (Sigvardsson, 2017). This research

culminates in an international call to build teacher confidence in the subject (Dymoke et al., 2014) as it can negatively affect students' confidence with poetry in classrooms.

Overall, the case that poetry is important to society and should be taught in schools across the world is clear, but there is little research showing how poetry should be taught, how much poetry should be included in a curriculum, or how to improve teachers' confidence with the art form (Simecek & Rumbold, 2016).

3.2 What Pedagogies Have Been Produced to Teach Poetry?

Teaching poetry is 'a social semiotic process' which develops 'meaning making through experiences, through participating in communicative acts with others, and making texts' (O'Grady et al., 2023; Halliday 1978). Therefore, when discussing how poetry is currently taught or included in curricula, it is important to consider many poems are multimodal and several pedagogies employed to teach reading, listening, writing and performing overlap in lessons (Andrews, 1991). This is because 'printed words of a poem have a visual dimension' in the form of language devices like similes and metaphors and 'implicitly' use the mode of sound in 'the head of the reader or in actual performance as a song' (Andrews, 2018).

3.2.1 Pedagogies Which Rely on Teacher - Led Reading

According to research, teachers often focus on analysing the meaning of words in poetry, which leads to focusing on language techniques in poems, primarily due to the literacy agenda in primary school curriculums (Simecek & Rumbold, 2016; Department for Education, 2006).

Acronyms and structured peer or self-assessment processes developed to guide student reading and writing about word meaning, which can lead to 'schooled responses' (Misson & Morgan, 2006) and create 'packages' of knowledge to fulfil exam criteria (Dymoke, 2017; Hirsh, 2012). This type of poetry reading led to teachers becoming what Xerri has coined 'gatekeepers to meaning' (2013). Teachers must view pupils-as-empty-vessel (Bruner, 1996; Rodriguez, 2012) waiting to be filled with teacher knowledge (Wilson, 2020). Educators start to assume the role of 'expert' and students must consider close reading of words and phrases in poetry as a 'puzzle' that must be decoded to be interpreted or appreciated (Dymoke, 2003, Stratta et al., 1973). Thus, the teacher is thought to hold the 'keys' to the meaning of poems and students become over reliant on the teacher's opinion instead of creating their own (Xerri, 2013; Burdan, 2004).

Several researchers concluded students start to guess about the poem's objective and their confidence in 'understanding' the poem is knocked to the point they fear poetry analysis and shy away from the entire subject (Pasquin, 2010; Strauss, 1993; Dias & Hayhoe 1988; Scott, 1989). Therefore, teachers assuming the role of 'gatekeeper' means students will never believe they can understand poems unless teacher are present, as they do not trust their own abilities to comprehend this type of literature (Xerri, 2013). Teachers also start to 'gatekeep' the meaning or analysis of a poem as 'confirmation of their own interpretation rather than encouraging […] pupils' personal search for meaning' (Peter Benton, 1986). This has led to questions about pre-service programmes and how they prepare new educators to teach poetry without stigma of previous experiences with poetry (O'hara, 1999).

3.2.2 Pedagogies Which Rely on Scaffolded Reading

Duke extends this theory by implementing defined reading journeys or questions in lessons, as students are not used to letting their experiences form their reading of poems (1990). These types of practices are defined as Directed Activities Related to Texts, otherwise known as DARTS, which allow pupils to interact with text via comprehension activities like cloze procedures where students fill in gaps of a text or sequence a text that has been jumbled (Verster, 2008). Other DARTS include using dictionaries to define tricky words in poems before reading them (Wrigg, 1991). These activities run the risk of becoming 'pre – figured reading,' when a student's attention is focused on things that can hinder or stop aesthetic reading altogether, such as too much contextual information or lesson objectives (Cushing, 2018; Giovanelli and Mason, 2015, 46; Mason and Giovanelli, 2017). It can also provide scaffolding to help students work out the meaning or ideas of poems.

3.2.3 Pedagogies Which Focus on Aesthetic Reading

Rosenblatt's 'transaction' theory, otherwise known as personal response pedagogy, contests the idea a poem has a fixed meaning (Wilson, 2020; Rosenblatt, 1978). She highlights "the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The 'meaning' does not reside ready-made 'in' the text or 'in' the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text" (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, a poem is shaped by prior knowledge and personal context, which inform a response (Rosenblatt, 1978; Sigvardsson, 2020).

Rossenblatt's theory supports aesthetic reading of poetry, or when 'the reader's attention is centered directly on what [she] is living through during [her] relationship with that particular

text' (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore this 'game of the imagination' can only be 'productive' when a reader 'brings their own faculties into play' (Iser, 1978) and a poem can only be as 'good' as the reader themselves (Sansom, 1994). Rosenblatt and Iser's work on aesthetic reading have influenced many scholars, inspiring several poetry pedagogies centred around personal response (Benton et al 1988; Benton and Fox 1985; P. Benton 1986).

Approaches which privilege personal response are often also associated with the privileging of pupil talk. This pedagogy suggests teachers should withhold their interpretations at first to allow students to come up with a personal response (Cushing, 2018). This can be achieved by letting students read and make notes together before a teacher leads a whole class discussion (Pike, 2003).

Chambers incorporates personal response pedagogy by 'teacher talking' as little as possible (2011), which inspired a teacher to create support groups for English as a Second Language students to foster pupil talk outside of a classroom where they otherwise would have been afraid to speak up in front of peers (Wilson, 2015). She started every poetry lesson with the phrase 'tell me…' and let students take the lead, which was deemed popular and eventually led to more support groups across the school (Wilson, 2015).

Some research calls for student discussions to be unchaperoned by teachers for effectiveness (Barnes et. al, 1969). Peter Benton's research recorded small groups of Year 9 students discussing specific poems in a separate room without teachers or peers or time limits (1986). This led to a 45-minute discussion unpicking several layers of meaning within a poem, which Peter Benton argues could have had a different outcome if a teacher was present (1986).

Students bring knowledge and ideas from outside the classroom (Martin, 2008; Catling and Martin, 2011; Little and Chesworth, 2017) and teachers should celebrate it (Wilson, 2020) as well as analyse it (Britton, 1983). Those who struggle with literacy can use talk to develop understanding (Skidmore, 2000) but need explicit teaching of speaking and listening skills to effectively discuss literature (Dunne, 2014). This was the case in Hawkins and Certo's work with boys in primary school, who were shown a range of poetry and developed how they perceived and talked about the poet's voice (2014). They were given specific tools to encourage feeling stuck, confused or frustrated with poetry and turned feelings into beneficial discussions (Claxton, 2007).

3.2.4 Pedagogies Which Focus on Form as Meaning

Gordon points out Ofsted's 2007 "Poetry in Schools' Report mostly focuses on poetry in printed mode, which fails to analyse form meaning, or teaching of rhyme, rhythm, pace and other techniques that structure a poem (2009). This contradicts the natural inclination of learning rhyme and rhythm through lullabies, chants, songs, and playground play which naturally links oracy and literacy in childhood (Perfect, 1999). The Department of Education states year 5 pupils might 'consider the impact of full rhymes, half rhymes, internal rhymes and other sound patterns' in their standards for English literature (1998). However, it is clear this emphasis on hearing and analysing form loses a place in Key Stage three and four curricula as it is mostly used as a means of constructing 'higher level' responses instead of understanding a poem's 'unfamiliar syntax forces us to slow down and hear the music implied by the wording of the poem.' (Shann et al., 2021).

It is argued students should be explicitly taught speaking and listening skills to discuss literature (Dunne, 2014). Many teachers have already embedded these skills into curriculums, which is exhibited in an English lesson S. Shann observed where students discussed ideas like 'the poet wants us to rest on meditative processes like pausing, discovering, being and entering as crucial to the noticing and feeling of this moment' (Shann et al., 2021).

3.2.5 Pedagogies Which Focus on Sound as Meaning

The meaning of form is often associated with the mode of sound, as many believe 'Sound comes first, understanding later' (Whitin, 1983). Poetry often features significant sound (Denman, 1988; Graves, 1992; Heard, 1989; Painter, 1970); and teachers often ask students to listen to a piece 'as if it were music' (Shann et al., 2021). Listening to or reading poems aloud leads to shared reading or sharing our experience of reading with others (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2013). Shared reading has been proven to improve mental, physical and emotional wellbeing (Billington, Davis, and Farrington, 2013; Longden et al., 2015) as it creates a sense of intimacy and is a crucial aspect of storytelling (Pennac, 2010). Sharing literature with others diverts from everyday interactions, offers diverse topics to explore (Dowrick et al., 2012) and requires 'presentness' to participate (Billington et al., 2016). There has been research on voluntary reading groups which prove reading a poem out loud together allows space for plurality or constructing meaning from shared personal experiences (Jones and Harvey, 2020).

Gordon's research harnessed technology and 'the semiotic resource of sound' by playing recordings of poems in lessons to facilitate discussions (2009). It resulted in students using simple 'everyday terms' to 'discuss deep comprehension of textual details' (Gordon, 2009)

which can be coined as ‘adequate language’ for discussing poetry (Ingles, 1969). It also proved when poems are re-played and pace, intonational patterns and volume are changed, new discussions evolved (Gordon, 2009). Others believe a poem needs to be re-read or played out loud several times to be fully understood (Naylor, 2013; Sumara, 1995). Voice readings can also afford ‘an immediacy and intimacy of contact with other (aesthetically rendered) identities’ as pupils often query accents and dialects, which ‘suggests the potential of listening to poetry for rich, mature and worldly learning’ likened to Citizenship Education (Gordon, 2009; DfEE, 2000).

3.2.6 Pedagogies Which focus on Writing Poetry

After reading or hearing poetry, students often want to write their own poems. Graves’ poetry workshops harnessed students’ desires to write poetry to develop student voice in schools (1983). The workshops influenced the National Curriculum and subsequently helped create the National Writing Project (1985 – 89) which focussed on ‘social practices rather than decontextualized skills’ (Maybin, 1994).

Peter Sansom’s ‘free writing’ approach (1994) built upon this idea of writing workshops and utilised Harris and De Bruin’s idea of a ‘creative ecology’ which encourages learning through risk taking, play and non-assessed, non-scaffolded tasks (2018). Sansom believed in poetry writing as a social endeavour and working together could ‘force a poem into being’ (1994). Sue Dymoke praises this approach with poetry workshops centred on free writing ‘word journeys’ where students were asked to write about a specific word without stopping for time or grammar, then chose favourite phrases from their writing and turned them into poems (Dymoke, 2021).

Xerri trialled a new type of poetry writing workshop by putting students in groups and giving specific scaffolded teacher input while they rewrote a poem (2011). This led to increased confidence in writing and re-reading poetry (Xerri, 2011). Lockney and Proudfoot highlighted the correlation between poetry reading and writing by pairing students up and justifying their work to each other after writing it, which enabled students to be both readers and writers (2013). In the next workshop, one teacher wrote a poem and another teacher responded to it as modelling of unseen poetry reading and writing (Lockney & Proudfoot, 2013). The idea that teachers must write poetry alongside students and model their 'work in progress' (Dymoke, 2003; Yates 1999; Carpenter, 2013; 2016) challenges teachers who feel uncomfortable with modelling (Cremin, 2006; Cremin & Baker, 2014; Dymoke, 2012b) or lack subject specific knowledge (Smith & Wrigley, 2012).

Though poetry writing workshops have been successful in promoting enjoyment of poetry, they still serve as a separate entity to exam driven curriculum and are often the first activities to be taken out of lessons due to lack of time (Shann et al., 2021). It's clear Key Stage Four curriculum often does not incorporate poetry writing, as Benton's research showed 67% of pupils were rarely or never asked to write poems in Year 11 (2000) and Ofsted's Poetry in Schools report stated, 'very few pupils wrote poems in English lessons during their GCSE course' (2007) or were given freedom to write poetry after GCSEs had finished (Stevens, 2007). Dymoke also discusses 'poetry as a means of stimulating original writing continues to be in decline at this level ... This represents a missed opportunity' (2003).

3.2.7 Pedagogies Which Focus on Performance

When students start to write poetry, they start to consider how a poem might be read aloud or performed. Pullinger and Whitley claim 'Speaking poetry aloud, whether from the page or from memory, in any context or setting' can bring new meaning to words on a page (2016). Reading aloud can include elements of drama, such as playing with tone, volume, movement and pace, which turns reading into a performance (O'hara, 1999). The act of 'performing' can promote voluntary reading of poems in classrooms, but only when the environment is calm (McCauley and McCauley 1992). Some have taken performances further and recorded students reading, then turned it into a podcast so they could feedback and discuss. This allowed 'time to practise being vocal, experimenting with the language and reading with emotion and tone' (O'Grady et al, 2023).

Choral reading, which lies somewhere between reading aloud and performance, has also been proven to impact students' perceptions of poetry (Brewer, 2016). Several theories state reading and re-reading poems through choral reading promotes oral fluency (Rasinski, 2003; Samuels, 2006) which can be beneficial for both native speakers and those learning English as a second language (Hadaway et al., 2001).

In high poverty urban schools in the United States, 'Whole Class Choral Reading' has 'successfully engaged African American students lacking reading fluency' (Paige, 2011). This has been trialled through reading poems in unison, students joining in on a refrain, call and response groups, multiple students saying multiple stanzas and singing poems (Hadaway et al., 2001) which led others to incorporate performance aspects such as dance (Petry, 2018) or pantomime, sound effects and using Sign Language (Chatton, 1993).

Brittany Morgan Brewer used choral reading to help students engage with nonfiction texts, where groups of four to six students in a class decided how to perform sections of a speech (2016). The groups chose which words or phrases they wanted to repeat, if one or more pupils would say parts of the text in unison, use movement, levels or change the pace and rhythm of the text, which encouraged engagement and overall enjoyment of the selected texts – even showing marked improvement in comprehension tasks after the workshops concluded (Brewer, 2016).

3.2.8 Pedagogies Which Rely on a 'Third Space'

To give students more freedom in reading poetry aloud, research suggests schools be given 'permission' in a radical way to 'open up' classrooms and create a 'third space' – a workshop, 'special day, week or project' which are 'independent from the ways' schools normally operate (Hall and Thomason, 2017). These 'third spaces' imply poetry needs special treatment due to its complexity, as students struggle to reach 'the uncomfortable place of unknowing' within the confines of lessons and classrooms (Green et. al, 2016). In these spaces, students are encouraged to engage in 'cognitive playfulness,' defined as pedagogy veering away from exam conditions like 'daydreaming, provoking, brainstorming and commemorating' (Tan and McWilliam, 2008).

Schools have opted to bring in creative artists to lead such workshops, but pressure on visiting artists 'to shine where experienced teachers might struggle' sometimes doesn't prove useful due to time constraints (Dymoke, 2021). 'Third spaces' have allowed space for transformative experiences in English classrooms regarding poetry, especially for voices typically silenced in school settings (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Fisher, 2007; Morrell, 2005).

A ‘third space’ could include the ‘Spoken Word Movement’ coined as various poetic and prose forms such as ‘rap’ and other ‘vernacular verbal forms’ (Damon, 1998) which draw upon oral traditions such as rhythm, rhyme and repetition (Dymoke, 2017). Participants in spoken word events often call themselves poets, coming from different backgrounds and cultures. Performance is an integral part of the movement, but often looks different from simply reading a poem – texts can be composed in various mediums like a notebook, on a phone or from memory, can range in length and can be brand new when performed for an audience. Events such as slam poetry competitions allow audiences to participate in poems with verbal responses (Clare, 2010) or use beat boxing or music to accompany poems. Educators like Peter Kahn, the teacher who brought the Spoken Word Education Programme to England, have harnessed this movement to help students voice ‘unspoken feelings’ and recognise their ‘stories’ and ‘voices matter to adults and to each other’ (Sutton, 2014). Spoken Word Educators trained to go into schools in several London boroughs from 2012 – 2015 but were brought in as ‘creative’ intervention specialists instead of teachers (Dymoke, 2017). This meant SWEs could use alternative methods of exploring, reading and writing poetry not dictated by exam conditions.

3.2.9 Pedagogies Which Rely on Technology as a Third Space

Poetry has long been known as ‘a multimedia-friendly genre’ (Chasar, 2020) and teachers have started to blend old and new media together to create new 'third spaces’ for students to experiment with poetry and performance (Cramer, 2015). Incorporating technology like songs, videos or podcasts to teach poetry moves toward ‘a curriculum more aligned with the digital lives of young people, that is inclusive of digital video and audio, and opens the way for

progressive education' (O'Grady et al., 2023; Cannon and Potter, 2019). Combining poems with technology 'is not a simple task to join visual images to words. It requires that the creator possess a new or different set of skills, including visual artistry and imagination' (Hughes, 2013). Hirsch & Macleroy celebrated multilinguism through spoken word poetry, which students worked together to incorporate into films (2020). Hewitt's research related poetry to forms such as the Blues, suggesting using songs as poetry could elicit better pupil responses to vocal play and form (2003).

Poetry has become a phenomenon on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, and teachers are incorporating poems or ideas found on these sites to initiate conversations about poetry in classrooms (Dera, 2024; Kovalik and Curwood, 2019). Computer scientists Lamb, Brown and Clark highlight new computer-generated poetry, which is 'a meeting of Artifical Intelligence and performance art' that could be utilised in classrooms as current generations of pupils grow up using AI (2018). These platforms show a poem multiple times with redactions or redrafting, which encourages the redrafting process of poetry writing (Edmond, 2019). Digital poetry encourages collaboration both in and outside of the school day (Dymoke & Hughes, 2009; Stein, 2010) and has led to exciting digital literacy projects like graphic novels (Lawrence, McNeal and Yildiz, 2009) and blogs (Boling et al., 2008).

It must be acknowledged students often have a better grasp of new technology and will be more fluent in digital literacy, but also may be open to new ideas and information introduced in this way (Kirkland, 2009). However, Gregory argues these types of digital literacy projects are still very teacher centred and only promote student agency to a certain extent (2013).

3.2.10 Pedagogies Which Focus on Student Agency

As poetry pedagogies develop in the age of digital literacy, there comes the question of what constitutes as poetry and 'what counts as socially valued' (Jewitt et al, 2009). Giving students opportunities to write or read poetry that resonates with them (Lewison & Heffernan, 2008) encourages connections between poetry and social justice (Jocson, 2006). It allows room for sharing personal stories or even trauma (Wissman, 2009) which has proven therapeutic or healing (Dutro, 2008, 2009; Dutro & Zenkov, 2008) and is used by counsellors to support self – understanding (Lorenz, 1998). Including 'popular cultural forms and youth-centred topics can act as a bridge to more canonical works and 'official' literacies' (Gregory, 2008; Mahiri, 1998).

Kinloch coined dialogue between students and teachers in a poetry classroom as 'Democratic Engagements', pointing out how conversations about poems decentralize authority in lessons (2005). 'Democratic Engagements' have been utilised in education through simple tasks like choosing the writing instrument used or the next book read (Dunlap et al., 1994; Moes, 1998). In Katharine Keil's article 'Rediscovering the Joy of Poetry,' students picked out an item from outside school and were asked to write a poem about it (2005). Catharine Almond (2021) helped students create anthologies where they chose poems based on themes, demonstrating 'the imaginative and creative scope of the subject; the possibility of forming ideas into words' (Marshall and Wiliam, 2006). Students wrote poetry and compared their work to the AQA Love and Relationships Anthology to explore individual interests and views 'within the context of study' (McCallum, 2012).

3.2.11 Conclusion

Clearly poetry pedagogy is against 'trivialising literature' or distracting teachers away from a 'proper concern with the language of a novel or poem' (Knight, 1989). Most research praises teaching poetry 'ecologically' or 'holistically' (Cliff Hodges, 2016). Reading, reciting, analysing or writing poetry 'is essentially relational or connective thinking' (Sterling, 2009) and the process of reading another text and writing something in return is 'direct engagement with real-life issues and experience, local communities, other people and nature – an engagement with the particular and real rather than just the abstract and invented' (Stibbe, 2008). Experiencing different types of poetry helps students 'bring shape to their lives' and 'take control … of the circumstances in which they live (McCallum, 2012).

3.3 How Has Poetry Pedagogy Changed in the Face of GCSE Examinations?

Many valuable approaches to teaching poetry have been developed, but due to GCSE examinations and time constraints, few are being used in classrooms. Assessments tend to drive English schools' poetry curriculum (Xerri, 2016; Benton, 2000; Elliott, 1994) and considering poetry a difficult genre makes it susceptible to being taught only for assessment purposes (Fleming & Stevens, 2015; Bullock, 1975). Such is the case in England, where the National Curriculum prescribed a set of poems to be taught in classrooms in 1990 and the 1998 GCSE examinations ensured two of those poems were analysed and compared (Benton, 2000; Department for Education, 2013). Both the National Curriculum and GCSEs were created to implement curricular uniformity across England, which resulted in pressure for schools to measure and 'package performance' (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2013; Hargreaves, 2003; Eisner, 2002). This created a 'risk averse' environment leaving artistic subjects like poetry at a

disadvantage, as their content was harder to standardise (Myhill & Wilson, 2013; Pike, 2004). Poetry curriculums across England were adapted into a 'one size fits all' formula to keep up the 'high stakes' national agenda (Doug, 2011; Pavlovich and Krahnke, 2008).

Michael Gove's reforms in 2015 further exacerbated the problem by altering several features of the English literature exams, one of which created a more 'rigorous' approach to analysing literature and required memorising 15 poems in an anthology to compare in examinations (Ofqual, 2013). Several researchers argued memorising poems added extra stress onto already tedious exam revision and could adversely affect SEND students still struggling to compare poetry (House of Commons, 2017; Bleiman, 2015; Dymoke, 2002). Goodwyn also claimed memorising poetry would make the curriculum 'scripted' because students were only interested in 'finding the right answer' (2012). Teachers, whose pay increasingly became linked to GCSE results (Marsh, 2017), started to rely upon 'safe' pedagogy such as language analysis and modelling, which creates pupil passivity and promotes teachers as 'gatekeepers to meaning' mentioned previously (Xerri, 2013; Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2013). This 'generic formula' of poetry left teachers with a sense of losing control and a tendency to depart from creativity for the sake of 'teaching to the test' (Dymoke, 2012; Doug, 2011; Ball, 2003). The omission of creativity for the sake of time and examination constraints means poetry remains elusive, and students still consider it hard to decipher (Snapper, 2013; Sekeres & Gregg, 2007).

3.3.1 Conclusion

Many researchers agree poetry can only hold a positive place in the English classroom if teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and find ways to harness creativity within the confines of the

national agenda (Xerri, 2014; Hanratty, 2008). Several concerned teachers and researchers have tried to amend the lack of creativity in poetry curricula by creating their own anthologies (Almond, 2021) utilising slam poetry and implementing other types of poetry competitions (Jaques, 2019). Others have developed poetry immersion courses to attempt to bring cultural capital back into lessons (Schillinger et al., 2010).

Pressure on teachers from policies and students alike, coupled with anxiety around knowledge of poetry and inadequate preservice training in the subject has created the ultimate 'problem with poetry' defined by Blake and Snapper (2022).

3.4 To What Extent Have Performance Approaches Been Used in the Current National Curriculum and GSCE context?

Earlier, I wrote in general terms about pedagogies which employ performance. Here, given my interest in developing these pedagogies, I look more closely at recent debates about performing poetry in a GCSE context.

Performance approaches are particularly promising because they combine activity, analysis, orality, sound and creativity. This means they include all ways of making poetry meaningful and accessible. This is why research and reports have called for implementing poetry performance in English curricula since the 1970's and possibly even before that (Gordon, 2009; HMI, 1987; DES, 1975). Listening and performing poetry has been somewhat implemented and acknowledged in primary education (Gordon, 2009; Ofsted, 2007; DfEE, 2000). However, the British National curriculum and subsequently Ofsted's survey of poetry in 2007 both state poetry in secondary education is mainly taught as a print based medium, though pupils take pleasure

from poetry as ‘sound’ and ‘enjoyed learning poems from heart and performing them’ (Ofsted, 2007). Teaching strategies like ‘setting poems to music’ or ‘prepared reading of poems’ was recommended and seen as successful practice (Gordon, 2009; Ofsted, 2007).

Exam boards also reported students could only achieve higher marks if they understood effects of presentational techniques upon the reader, which could only be explored through ‘speaking and listening activities using poems as stimulus’ (AQA, 2008; OCR, 2008). However, Gordon’s research argues these ‘high mark’ responses may not be high marks at all, as students are not given opportunities within the curriculum to experience spoken poetry or perform poetry enough to identify the effects within examination (2009). Students are asked to memorise selected poems in an anthology instead of connecting with texts, which McGuinn argues ‘the reader is positioned more as collector and classifier than as engaged participant’ (2005).

3.4.1 Memorisation

Pullinger and Whitley’s Poetry and Memory Project highlighted the lifelong value memorisation of poetry can have as it connects readers with texts on a personal level (Pullinger, 2012). Bayley’s work states McGhilcrist’s theory of the brain’s two halves having different functions – the left side being logical and the right being creative – work together when memorising poems (2009) which creates pleasurable experiences cemented in our long-term memories (2016). The use of the Memory Theatre method, where specific images come to mind when memorising poems, has been praised by several poets, researchers and practitioners (Bayley, 2016; Hughes, 1997). This has been utilised in Gove’s Poetry by Heart competition, in which students choose a poem to memorise and perform (Ofqual, 2013). The competition, funded by the British

Government, gives students autonomy over poetry as they 'independently engage with poetry by browsing, reading and selecting poems that appeal to them' thus storing a poem they love into long term memory (Blake and Shortis, 2018).

However, due to a long history of rote memorisation in classrooms, sometimes used as punishment for misbehaviour (Rubin, 2007) many in the field struggle to get students to participate in poetry performance, which is coupled with time constraints and strict rules of GCSE closed book examinations (Marsh, 2017). Jaques and Whitley acknowledge these constraints on performing memorised poems whilst highlighting rhythm and rhyme can be understood in new ways when a poem is internalised, which cannot be taught when looking at a poem on the page (2019).

3.4.2 Changing Sounds

Traditionally poems selected to be read aloud or memorised are considered rich in 'sound texture' (Jaques and Whitley, 2019) or 'conventionally melodious' so they are 'easy' to read aloud (Sorby, 2005). Interestingly, the Poetry by Heart Anthology, consisting of a range of poetry hand-picked by students across England, shows students are no longer selecting 'easy' poems (Blake et al., 2014). Instead, they are picking pieces like Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale,' which is long in length and hard to make sense of, as well as 'Gawain and the Green Knight,' written in Middle English (Jaques and Whitley, 2019). Students also chose to perform traditional poems in a different metrical sense, offering different interpretations of meter and rhyme and showcasing the beauty of interpreting an internalised poem in an individual way (Jaques and

Whitley, 2019). This was practiced by the 'Talk the Poem' competition, where students created new renditions of Carribbean poetry on Youtube (2018).

Understanding or acknowledging rhythm 'controls both elements of the poem, meaning and sound' (Aviram, 1994) proves 'a twin-track approach to pedagogy' suggesting sound and meaning can exist 'without collapsing the two into each other' (Pullinger and Whitley, 2013). This 'ownership' and 'sharing' of poetry through performance (Dyas and Hayhoe, 1988) is what Danby argues should be the sole purpose of teaching poetry (1940). Therefore the 'sensory experience' of memorising and performing a poem aloud should hold a place of its own in lessons as 'even if one forgets [the poem] afterwards,' it can be said '...one's body doesn't forget' (Levertov and Spears Brooker, 1998).

3.4.3 Implementing Elements of Drama

Various works of research have proved the importance of performing poetry aloud, or with bodily movement, as a way of appreciating and valuing poetry (Rumbold and Simecek, 2016). Bessell and Riddell's 'Embodiment and Performance' considers bodily movement paired with memorisation of poems as a means of reciting or recalling poems accurately and igniting discussions about embodied cognition in education (2016). O' hara encourages 'using the theatrical trappings of lights, rostra and sound' as well as 'dramatic shapes and forms such as dramatisation, improvisation, movement and mime' which can be employed through activities like 'hot-seating, conscience alley and thought tracking' (1999). These activities can be classed as process drama (Taylor and Warner, 2006). Process drama 'employs elements of both free flow

play and theatre and involves the creation of shared fictitious worlds' allowing learner agency as well as time and space to create imaginative concepts (Cremin et al., 2006; Craft et al., 2012).

As mentioned previously, dramatic elements such as choral reading and movement have been used to teach poetry (Rasinski, 2003; Samuels, 2006; Hadaway et al., 2001; Paige, 2011; Brewer, 2016). Others have employed activities using facial features and expressions to teach literacy (Kempe and Holroyd, 2004) or incorporated dance into performances (Jusslin & Hoglund, 2020; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1995). Blanche (1974) and Mattevi (2005) have used drama to teach English as a Second Language learners in an alternative and efficient way. Green, Ellis and Simecek experiment with various texts, such as news articles, literary prose and poems being retold by students and found pupils used different utterances, multiple interpretations and various sounds when telling poetry in their own words (2016).

3.4.4 How Students Perform Poetry

It becomes apparent through each piece of research students are often urged to read aloud or perform poems in a secondary classroom. However, performance is often a means of identifying poetic techniques such as rhythm, rhyme and pace, which are used to analyse and write about poems (Pullinger, 2013; Filreis, 2010; Andrews, 1991). Little research has been conducted on how to teach students to perform poetry, which leads to appreciation of poems on a deeper level (Hayhoe and Parker, 1988). It also suggests examination boards should steer away from memorisation of poetry and poetic techniques to prioritise speaking and listening tasks as an assessment of poetry in future (Gordon, 2004; 2009).

4 Research Questions

Based on my reading of the literature, particularly regarding emotional responses and enjoyment of poetry, my research questions were:

1. To what extent do Year 11 students enjoy and understand poetry as it is currently taught in the department?
2. Do Year 11 students think different approaches to teaching could help them enjoy and understand poetry further?
3. To what extent does enjoyment progress understanding?
4. To what extent does performing enhance the teaching of poetry?

To adequately answer the research questions, it is important to understand the rationale and findings in literature which led to my research design, which can be seen in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Rational for Research Questions

Events which inspired the design of this study		
• **September 2022 – September 2023 –** Year 1 research on perceptions of poetry in Year 11 showed students' resistance to poetry in Key Stage Four • **September 2023** – Appointed Head of English Department • Literature suggested teachers and students in Key Stage Four focused on prescriptive teaching of poetry, resulting in pedagogy lacking performance of poems		
RQs	**Rationale for RQs**	**Key Findings in literature that aided design**
RQ1	-Explore students' responses to current teaching and the extent to which they reflect	-Literature suggests students rely on teachers as gatekeepers to meaning of poetry -Literature suggests examination constraints on poetry limit students' enjoyment of poetry

	broader trends in student response -Identify elements which should be addressed in interventions	
RQ2	-Explore students' willingness to experiment with poetry pedagogy that is new to them	-Literature suggests giving students autonomy over how poetry is taught or which poems they are learning increases enjoyment of poetry
RQ3	-Identify how far the new unit plan increases enjoyment of poetry in Year 11	-Literature suggests utilising creative approaches when learning poetry increases enjoyment -Literature suggests increased enjoyment increases understanding and accurate analysis of poems -Literature suggests accurate analysis or in depth understanding of poetry might be improved when poetry is said, heard or performed aloud due to intricacies of rhythm and rhyme -Literature suggests Directed Activities Related to Texts are helpful when teaching poetry -Literature suggests a holistic approach to teaching poetry is a beneficial way to increase enjoyment
RQ4	-Review benefits of performing poetry within lessons as pedagogy for future unit plans	-Literature suggests performing poetry in various ways – such as incorporating movement, choral reading and dramatic elements increases enjoyment and understanding of poems -Literature suggests accurate analysis or in depth understanding of poetry can only occur when poetry is said, heard or performed aloud due to intricacies of rhythm and rhyme -Literature suggests students will have more opportunities to store poetry in long term memory if performed

5 Methodology

5.1 Research Design

To investigate the research questions, I decided on a practitioner research project in which I carry out a small-scale study focusing on an evidence-based intervention with my own students (Cordingley, 2004). This is why I chose to conduct a small-scale study from my own perspective (Fox et al., 2007).

I have chosen to focus on Year 11 specifically as they are revising the AQA Power and Conflict Anthology and studied poetry multiple times in school. The entire year group was taught the new Power and Conflict scheme of work to ensure consistency of the order we taught the poems in case students moved class during the term.

I split the research into three phases and the timeline of each phase is in table 2 listed below. Further details of each phase of the study, including instruments used and collaborations with other members of staff, are included in the following sections.

Table 2: Phases of Research

Months	Activities	Collaborations	Data Collection
October (Phase One)	-Student Questionnaire 1	-2nd in Department introduced questionnaire in class -English Department meeting to review unit plan	-Microsoft forms data collected into Excel spreadsheet and coded/tabulated into table
November (Phase Two)	-New Power and Conflict Poetry Unit Plan	-English Department teaching collaborative unit	-Feedback from teachers in department meetings
December	-New Power and Conflict Poetry Unit Plan	-English Department teaching collaborative unit	

January	-New Power and Conflict Poetry Unit Plan	-English Department teaching and revising collaborative unit	-Feedback from teachers in department meetings
February (Phase Three)	-Year 11 Mock Examinations -Student Questionnaire 2 -Poetry Interventions 1 and 2	-English Department reviews poetry examination answers -Head of Drama hosts intervention sessions in lesson time	-Feedback on which poems to use for intervention via student questionnaire -Poetry intervention sessions conducted and field notes taken
March	-Poetry Interventions 3 and 4	-Head of Drama hosts intervention sessions in lesson time	-Poetry intervention sessions conducted and field notes taken
April (Phase Four)	-Student Interviews -Student Questionnaire 3		-Field notes taken -Microsoft forms data collated into Excel spreadsheet and tabulated into a table
May		-English Department and Head of Drama reviews intervention feedback and discusses next steps	-Research diary notes reviewed
June			-Drafting of dissertation
July		-English Department reviews dissertation -Head of Drama reviews dissertation	-Final draft and review of dissertation

Four types of qualitative data were conducted, which provided evidence of the interventions impacting enjoyment and understanding of poetry through performance.

Firstly, I planned to gather opinions of Year 11 students on their enjoyment and experience of poetry in Key Stage Three and Four through questionnaires. This would allow me to understand

experiences and perceptions of poetry students had before teaching the AQA Power and Conflict anthology. I also discussed and created the new poetry unit plan in collaboration with my department.

Secondly, our department implemented the new unit plan in response to the literature review as an attempt to increase enjoyment of the poems. This was the first time Year 11 students interacted with these poems and we wanted a term to teach them in two-part lessons.

Thirdly, I worked with the Head of Drama to host four intervention sessions focused on performing poetry within class. The sessions were held after mock examinations and were an hour each, which were spread throughout two weeks due to the timetable of the two classes. Two sessions were held in my classroom and two were held in the drama room, which will be discussed in the intervention section below.

Fourthly, I conducted student interviews to collect feedback on the enjoyment of the unit plan and the interventions. I also discussed the poetry unit and student responses to interventions with the department in our planned meeting time to gauge interest for hosting poetry interventions in unit plans in the future.

5.2 Participants

For phases three and four of the research, I selected two Year 11 classes as my sample. Our school sets by ability in Key Stage Four. I worked with two classes, each in a different set. The classes have 31 students each, with 20 boys and 11 girls in Class A and 22 boys and 9 girls in

Class B. These are both my classes, but I have taught one class through Year 10 and Year 11 and the other class is a top set created in November to ensure high achievers were in one class and being challenged effectively. I chose to conduct research in both classes to examine differences between a class who worked with me for multiple years and a class new to both my teaching and each other. The difference in ability was also an interesting comparison.

I am conducting research in a short time frame, which makes it beneficial to work with students I already know and have developed relationships with (Farrimond, 2017). This is the case with both classes, as I was previously their Head of Year for two years and know each student well.

5.3 Collaborators

I collaborated with my English department to create and implement the new Power and Conflict poetry unit with Year 11. The English department is made up of 9 teachers, which includes myself, two Early Career teachers, four part time teachers and three teachers that have been at our school for an average of 15 years or more. They were informed during a department meeting of my research being conducted during this unit as part of my Master's and gave verbal permission for minutes of our meetings to be used for the study. The dynamic of power as their Head of Department was acknowledged and they were told my research could be challenged or questioned at any point (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2020). They were given the option to collaborate on the unit plan and take part in the interventions with their classes. All teachers agreed to collaborate on the unit plan but said they would wait to see if the interventions made a difference in the case study before conducting interventions in their lessons.

The Head of drama was contacted separately to collaborate on phase three of the research, as she would be leading the sessions to create a 'third space' where students could create and perform without the constraints of an English or drama lesson (Dymoke, 2017). She agreed to conduct four intervention sessions during my lessons as I observed and took field notes. She also created the intervention lesson plans and reviewed the activities with me after every session.

5.4 Ethics

Ethical considerations are important to note in each phase of this study as it involves human participants who are under the jurisdiction of our school and its safeguarding policies as well as England Department of Education's ethical guidelines. Throughout the planning and implementation of my research, I followed the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines to ensure all participants involved were protected and any data was handled in an ethical way (BERA, 2018; CUREC, 2020). To comply with these guidelines, an application with the title, research questions and explicit details on the types of data that would be collected were submitted to the Central University Research Committee (CUREC) (Appendix 1).

Once approved, my Head Teacher was presented with a letter detailing the study following the University's guidelines and procedures and asked for his consent (Appendix 2). Letters were also sent out to all Year 11 parents outlining the study and an opt-out form if they did not wish for their student to participate (Appendix 3). A study outline was also provided to students participating in the study, which used jargon that followed University guidelines and policies when explaining research to students (CUREC, 2022).

My dual role as researcher and teacher could cause tension regarding confidentiality of the data (BERA, 2018). This was rectified by asking my 2nd and 3rd in Department to review all data in the research, ensuring there was no bias and the data was stored and deleted properly. My 2nd in Department also introduced the research to the Year 11 students and handed out student information sheets. She was provided with an information sheet on the study and given a guide as to how to ask for consent from students. She was given verbal consent by all students in each class to proceed with the study. She also came back in to ask students to participate in interviews and a Teaching and Learning Assistant who has been with an SEN student joined one of the interviews due to SEN guidelines.

Students were made aware of the nature of the research and any issues regarding privacy of their data before agreeing to complete the online questionnaires. The Microsoft Forms were linked in an optional assignment on Microsoft Teams. This gave students the opportunity to participate or to opt out of the questionnaires. The forms were created within our IT department's infrastructure, which is guarded by our Trust's internet safety and safeguarding policies. Students had to use their emails to complete the questionnaire, but all student names and emails have been omitted per the BERA and CUREC guidelines on data privacy (BERA, 2018; CUREC, 2022). All students were made aware Microsoft Outlook, Forms and Teams are third party applications, and though they have been approved by the CUREC Information Security team, data collected could last longer than the research conducted. When exporting this data to Excel, each spreadsheet is locked with a password to keep all answers and notes secure.

5.5 The Intervention

The new Power and Conflict poetry unit was implemented in lessons to facilitate enjoyment of poems and can be considered an intervention used to collect qualitative data. The same could be said about the Head of Drama's intervention lesson plans, as activities provided created field notes for my researcher diary (Ary et al., 2010).

5.5.1 Unit Plan

As a significant part of this study relies on the extent to which students enjoy poetry, it is important to consider how the poetry unit attempted to enhance student enjoyment of the 15 Power and Conflict poems in the AQA anthology. This 'split screen thinking' was employed to ensure I was developing the curriculum whilst keeping students' best interests in mind (Claxton, 2007).

Firstly, the unit is comprised of 31 Powerpoint lessons, which are used for every lesson in our school due to Trust policies as Powerpoints are 'the most prevalent types of technology being used in the classroom' (Atkins-Sayre, Hopkins, Mohundro, & Sayre, 1998). Each teacher in our school is given a work laptop which connects to an interactive whiteboard, as 'computer-based teaching' is standard in our Trust and in schools in our borough (Bryant & Hunton, 2000).

When focusing on student enjoyment, the arousal theory (Weiner, 1990, 1992) states there is a positive link between heightened arousal and learning, as media including motion (Detenber & Simons, 1998), color (Farley & Grant, 1976), vivid images (Biocca, 2002), and music (Seidman, 1981) lead to high levels of sensory stimulation (Grabe, 2000) and increased human emotion. As

mentioned previously, I wanted to differentiate 'enjoyment' of poetry, being defined as an immediate and usually emotional reaction to art, with 'appreciation' being a critical analysis and deeper knowledge of art (Ray, 1999). Therefore, it was necessary to split teaching each poem into two lessons – one focused on 'enjoyment' and evoking emotions from initial reading of a poem coupled with a video of the poem being performed and one which allowed students to 'appreciate' the poem more with analysis and discussions.

The first lesson opened with a Directed Activity related to the Text, where students would fix the grammar of a short blurb of the previous poem we read (Verster, 2008). From there, another DART defining vocabulary from the poem would be used to predict the poem's message (Wrigg, 1991). Students would be asked 'a big question' they would later need to answer independently, which was paired with a picture symbolising the main idea of the poem. These activities employed Paivio's dual coding theory, where teachers used a combination of verbal and visual information to create a picture of the poem before watching a performance of it (1990). After that, we would watch a video of the poem twice, as poems often need to be heard multiple times to enhance comprehension (Naylor, 2013; Sumara, 1995). Students would be asked to discuss interpretations after watching it once and again after watching it twice. As suggested in the literature, this required a sense of presentness (Billington et al., 2016) and allowed students to discuss the poem in their own words, which Gordon suggested creates a deeper level of enjoyment and understanding (2009). Due to safeguarding policies, I couldn't leave them unchaperoned to discuss themselves (Barnes et. al, 1986) so I would start with the open-ended question 'Tell me what you feel,' emulating the teacher from Wilson's research starting every lesson with 'Tell me…' prompts (2014). I would set the timer and let them discuss without interrupting or leading to encourage personal responses (Rosenblatt, 1978). The lesson would

end with ten minutes of DART centred 'free writing' from the perspective of a certain character in the poem or from the poet's point of view (Sansom, 1994).

The second lesson would start with a closed writing DART summarising the poem (Verster, 2008). They would be shown the 'big question' again to answer at the end of the lesson independently. I would ask one student to volunteer and read the poem aloud again to refresh their memories and experience the sounds of the poem in a different way (Gordon, 2009). After, students would be given a 'reading journey' or questions leading them towards ideas, themes and techniques (Duke, 1990). However, I would allow them to discuss after they had written down answers with a partner, as I didn't want to stop aesthetic reading of the poem (Cushing, 2018; Giovanelli and Mason 2015, 46; Mason and Giovanelli 2017). I would encourage student autonomy by setting up the visualiser with the poem and asking if anyone wanted to lead class annotations (Pike, 2003). Often, they would ask me to annotate the poem, but I would contribute to annotations as little as possible (Chambers, 2011). After they were satisfied with their annotations, I would add another layer and ask *why* their annotations mattered or *what* techniques do for us when heard aloud. Then I would let them write answers to 'the big question' in their words and read some aloud.

We did these lessons until the middle of our second half term, where we started discussing how to compare poems we had already compared verbally. This gave students the chance to enjoy poems holistically before learning to compare or contrast ideas, themes and techniques in other poems.

5.5.2 Interventions Sessions

Inspired by the idea of a 'third space' where students are given free range to create through non scaffolded, non-assessed tasks (Hall and Thomason, 2017) I asked the Head of Drama to come into my classroom for eight lessons and host one-hour interventions incorporating dramatic elements into performances of three Power and Conflict poems. Interventions are defined as 'those activities or strategies that are different from, or additional to, those employed routinely with pupils' (Campbell and Stanley, 1966). The Educational Endowment Fund suggests promoting collaborative learning and pupil-led talk in interventions instead of long term, routine interventions used to help underachieving students hit target grades (2018). With this in mind, we chose to do four one-hour sessions with two classes within designated lesson times, as we did not want to disrupt other lessons or keep them during breaks or lunches. We also wanted to see if there was a difference in how the classes responded to the interventions or if they became comfortable performing when given multiple opportunities to participate in a 'sensory experience' (Levertov and Spears Brooker, 1998). We placed the intervention sessions after February mock examinations, as they memorised and wrote about poetry as a summative assessment. I also wanted to make sure there were no examination pressures on the sessions, which is similar to Stevens conducting research at the end of Year 11 (2007). Using previous verbal feedback, I carefully selected a list of five poems I thought they would enjoy performing or interpreting in a different light. I then sent another optional Microsoft Form asking the two classes which poems they wanted to perform. The idea of letting students choose poems for the sessions gave back some agency over the interventions (Dunlap et al., 1994; Moes, 1998). Their responses are displayed in the graph Microsoft Forms created (Appendix 4).

From this data, I picked ‘Ozymandias’ and ‘London’ as two that many would want to perform and ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ because no student had written about it in the exam as several confessed they did not understand it or thought it too long.

When creating lessons for the four intervention sessions, I asked the Head of Drama to focus on incorporating dramatic elements students would have used before, as all students take drama in Key Stage Three. I mentioned I wanted to focus on choral reading and incorporating movement as I had found literature proving both were useful in enhancing enjoyment and understanding of poems (Rasinski, 2003; Samuels, 2006; Hadaway et al., 2001; Paige, 2011; Brewer, 2016). I also shared the Powerpoint slides from our unit plan with her to emulate the same ideas in her lessons and understand the poems before teaching them. I mentioned I wanted three to four Powerpoint slides per session to maintain consistency in how we were presenting new information or ideas to the students.

We were able to get cover for the Head of Drama’s classes so she could host the intervention sessions as a ‘creative’ intervention specialist instead of a teacher (Dymoke, 2017). I stayed in the back of the classroom and did not interact with students to record field notes for my researcher diary and limit my ‘teacher talk’ (Chambers, 2011). The students were allowed to ask me questions and I watched their performances but did not take part in helping with ideas or leading discussions as this would have hindered what happened in the intervention (Benton, 1986).

We tried to place the intervention sessions both on the same days or within the same week to allow field notes to be compared in an efficient time frame (Cohen et al., 2018). Class A had their first session during period 2 on the 4th of March and their second session during period 5 on the 5th of March. Class B had their first session during period 2 on the 6th of March and their second session during period 5 on the 7th of March. We chose the same period times for each class to ensure reliability in data collection, though reactions and energy levels would be influenced by different variables such as time of day, outside events and the time students ate lunch (Lawson & Philpott, 2008). We then chose to do the third sessions during periods 4 and 5 on the 11th of March and the fourth sessions during period 3 and 4 on the 13th, as those were the only times the Head of Drama had available during that week and we were working on 'Charge of the Light Brigade' in the two sessions, so they had to be done as closely to each other as possible.

The first intervention included two recall activities to help students remember concepts of choral reading and movement from Key Stage Three Drama. It was especially useful to have GCSE drama students in each class, as they naturally helped other students refresh their memories. The rest of the activities and key findings from literature that aided design of the interventions are listed in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Intervention Design

Intervention Session	Date and Time	Activities	Key Findings in literature that aided design
Intervention 1 - Ozymandias	Class A – Period 2, 4th March Room 106	-Recall Dramatic Techniques from Key Stage Three	-Literature suggests incorporating dramatic techniques into English

	Class B – Period 2, 6th March Room 106	-Create Freeze Frames based on images of 'Ozymandias' -Create Freeze Frames in groups of three based on lines in poem -Free Writing – Diary entry from Ozymandias' point of View	literature teaching is beneficial for enhancing enjoyment and understanding of poetry -Literature suggests using drama in literacy and literature curriculum helps student inhabit and explore texts
Intervention 2 - London	Class A – Period 5, 5th March Room 106 Class B – Period 5, 7th March Room 106	-Recall dramatic techniques from last lesson -Freeze frames in groups of three based on lines in poem -Add choral reading as a class to Freeze Frames -Decide on type of choral reading in groups and perform one at a time, completing the poem -Free writing letter from someone in 'London' on life in the dirty city	-Literature suggests process drama and structured improvisation are beneficial to all subjects in education -Literature suggests choral reading aids understanding of poems in lessons -Literature suggests incorporating different rhythms, sounds and readings of poetry enhance enjoyment of poems -Literature suggests free writing is beneficial to reading and writing poetry
Intervention 3 – Charge of the Light Brigade	Class A – Period 4, 11th March Room 106 Class B – Period 5, 11th March Drama Room	-Played 'Boom Chicka Boom' as warmup -Freeze frames in groups of three based on lines in poem -Different types of choral reading decided in groups	-Literature suggests process drama and structured improvisation are beneficial to all subjects in education -Literature suggests choral reading aids

		-All groups performed one after the other, finishing the poem -Performed a 'news report' of the battle in groups	understanding of poems in lessons -Literature suggests incorporating different rhythms, sounds and readings of poetry enhance enjoyment of poems -Literature suggests incorporating different mediums like news reports into performance or creation aids with learning poetry
Intervention 4 – Charge of the Light Brigade (Continued)	Class A – Period 3, 13th March Room 106 Class B – Period 4, 13th March Drama Room	-Played facial expression game 'mirror' with partners, using mime techniques -Each group given an entire stanza to perform using drama techniques discussed -Lights in drama room used to aid performance in Class B -Music used in background to aid performances in both classes -Free Writing a letter home from point of view of a soldier	-Literature suggests process drama and structured improvisation are beneficial to all subjects in education -Literature suggests choral reading aids understanding of poems in lessons -Literature suggests incorporating different rhythms, sounds and readings of poetry enhance enjoyment of poems -Literature suggests free writing is beneficial to reading and writing poetry

It was made clear interventions would only ask students to perform in groups using choral reading, where students read the poem aloud together and incorporate movement, levels and

tones. Those who didn't want to participate could sit and watch or join another English class if they did not feel comfortable being in the room. However, we urged students to participate in whatever way they could, even if it meant standing with a group whilst performing or deciding what the group would perform and then sitting out. This promoted student autonomy (Dunlap et al., 1994; Moes, 1998) whilst creating a safe enough space for interventions to take place (McCauley and McCauley, 1992).

5.6 Instruments

As outlined in Table 2 previously, this is a small-scale practitioner study which involved mixed methods of research (Gorard & Taylor, 2004). I chose to collect only qualitative data as I felt I would be able to explore student interpretations I did not anticipate in a calm environment I have worked hard to create (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2004). This data was collected from department meeting minutes, student group interviews and a researcher diary of field notes (Ary, et al., 2010).

5.6.1 Questionnaires

As mentioned previously for ethical reasons, the self-completion questionnaire (Bryman and Bell, 2011) was created in Microsoft Forms and set as optional homework on Microsoft Teams. I chose a questionnaire as I did not want students directly interacting or verbally answering questions directly to me, as this would potentially change answers and create an unwanted power dynamic (Phillips & Clancy, 1972). This ensured each student received the questions in the same way (Bernard, 2011) and the digital format helped maintain anonymity as I

could have recognised handwriting if it was in a written format. I chose a digital questionnaire because students are accustomed to using Microsoft Forms in school and all homework is set on Microsoft Teams. This means there was a higher probability of students completing the questionnaire if it was presented to them digitally, as they use the platform frequently. Online questionnaires are popular in education (Ball, 2019) and have minimal costs, less data analysis and less data entry errors (Callegaro et al., 2015). I chose this platform as data can be exported into an Excel spreadsheet and Microsoft Forms codes responses into descriptive statistics, which generates graphics of percentages of students using specific words or phrases (Rowley, 2014; Lawson & Philpott, 2008). This means I did not have to code responses myself (Alessi & Martin, 2010).

The purpose of the pre-unit plan and intervention questionnaire were to conduct profiling and descriptive research, as well as create qualitative data to analyse (Rowley, 2014). After consulting with my tutor and the English Department, I chose to include four open-ended questions for students to complete. Although the questions were pre-determined, stemming from my prior investigations, this method nevertheless allowed students to write their lived experiences of poetry and performance in their own words (Lawson & Philpott, 2008).

Since the questionnaire would be completed independently, I tried to make the language of the questions as simple and straight forward as possible (Cohen et al, 2018). The questionnaire was meant to take around five minutes to complete so students didn't feel fatigued by the length of the questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2018).

The questionnaire questions were as follows:

Q1: To what extent have you enjoyed the poetry you have studied in school?

Q2: Did hearing poems aloud (either performed by the teacher or via video) enhance your enjoyment of poems in Key Stage 4 English?

Q3: If you found the study of poetry at KS4 more enjoyable, would this help your appreciation and understanding of the poems?

Q4: Do you think performing designated poems will enhance your enjoyment of poetry in Key Stage 4 English? Why or why not?

Baker and Foy (2008) suggest 'piloting' or testing the questionnaire before sending it out, so I sent it to my 2nd and 3rd in Department for completion before sending it to students. After their approval, I set the questionnaire as optional homework. Since it is a case study and I am a novice researcher, I only asked my two classes to complete the questionnaire, which is approximately 62 students (Lee and Lings, 2008). This can be classed as purposive non-probability sampling, as I hand-picked the classes that would complete the questions (Baker and Foy, 2008). However, their answers and the sample size were indicative of the year group, as I had done similar surveys with both first and second sets as a Head of Year. This provided validity when choosing this type of instrument (Ball, 2019). The students were shown the questionnaire by my 2nd in Department when being introduced to the study and made aware the questionnaire was optional and they did not have to complete it.

After agreeing, I gave the option to complete it in the last five minutes of a lesson on phones. Although this would have an impact on learning time, it likely led students to reflect on

their learning (Callegaro et al., 2015). This was also a way to show them the questionnaire and encourage completing it outside of class time.

I gave two verbal reminders in lesson about the questionnaire over the span of two weeks to optimise responses (Gray, 2009). This could have conversely affected the data as they could have shared answers or completed it with friends (Alessi & Martin, 2010). I then closed the questionnaire and used the same questions and steps listed above for the questionnaire students were asked to complete at the end of the study to see if answers had changed regarding enjoyment and understanding of poetry (Rowley, 2014).

5.6.2 Interviews

Peter Benton's research suggested students will discuss poetry and literature in greater detail without a teacher present (1986). I initially considered this type of interview, but quickly realised it could not be done due to CUREC guidelines (2022). I wanted interviews to withhold 'teacher talk' as much as possible (Chambers, 2011) and respect the power dynamic between myself and the students (Bragg, 2007; Farrimond, 2017; Powell, 2020). This is why I decided to conduct qualitative unstructured interviews (Birmingham & Wilson, 2003) where I asked students to discuss the poem, then students guided the interview with questions to each other.

I conducted interviews in small groups as this type of interview is efficient for time constraints and interactions they create (Cohen et al., 2018; Ary et al., 2010). They can also 'decrease the influence of the interviewer…[and] recognise the importance of peer culture and the social construction of meaning' (Groundwater et al., 2015). Students were allowed to pick their groups as listening to others could help form ideas and being with friends could increase comfort and

flexibility in answers (Ary, et al., 2010). However, there is always a risk of bias when volunteering as some students who have relationships with me might give up more of their time.

Students were given choice over when interviews would be held, but it was made clear they would be conducted outside of class time (Farrimond, 2017). Therefore, I had my 2nd in Department ask students to take part in interviews, where she explained there would be no repercussions to honest answers if taking part. Three groups of students volunteered, so I had one group interview per break for three consecutive days. Each interview lasted fifteen minutes or less to make sure it was not hindering students' time (CUREC, 2022).

For practical reasons (timescale to gain ethical approval and transcription), notes were made during interviews instead of recordings. I tried to write down exactly what students said during interviews so as not to standardise language (Powell, 2020).

5.6.3 Field Notes

Taking field notes is widely regarded as essential to qualitative research as it enhances data and provides necessary context (Creswell, 2013; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2005; Mulhall, 2003; Patton, 2002). I completed field notes before, during and after every intervention and interview to achieve 'methodical triangulation' (Cohen et al., 2018). This allowed me to add comments on body language, movements and facial expressions I might have missed during interventions or interviews (Sandelowski, 1994) and allowed me to analyse reoccurring non-verbal cues to reflect motivations and attitudes of students towards the interventions (Hall et al., 2019). I tried to make them as clear as possible, so the notes made

sense after a long period of time (Cohen et al., 2018) and created a key which helped mark where I added nonverbal commentary (Sandelowski, 1994).

I kept names of students anonymous in accordance with CUREC guidelines (CUREC, 2022) and to protect the rights of participants (Tsai et al., 2016). I also acknowledged my role as an instrument that shaped the results (Berger, 2015; Thoresen & Ohlen, 2015) and reflected on my biases, thoughts, feelings and actions during every intervention and interview (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Watt, 2007). These types of bias could be revealing to other researchers when reading the field notes (Ottenberg, 1990).

5.7 Data Analysis

As mentioned previously, I opted for a mixed methods approach when researching as it gave me a wealth of data to analyse and discuss. I also only used qualitative data, as my research questions are exploratory, and department meetings, field notes taken during interventions, student interviews and longer answers from the questionnaires were rich and insightful in different ways, all of which were essential to discussing the research (Ary et al., 2010). Choosing qualitative methods also left room for longer, more in-depth answers, in which I could analyse data which otherwise would have been missed (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2004).

I used thematic content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2002) and created a code log pertaining to my research questions, then transcribed both the interventions and interviews accordingly. I initially created two codes - enjoyment and understanding - from Wittgenstein's theory of 'enjoyment' being an emotional reaction to art and 'appreciation' being a critical analysis of art

(1996). Examples of these codes can be found in Appendix 5 and the coding log can be found in Appendix 6.

Whilst coding, I remained open to any new patterns of pupil talk correlating with theories in my literature review or research questions. I added in a code about memory, as students talked about memorising and remembering quotes for exams as something important to them. I wanted to explore this theme as memorisation was part of several pedagogies explored in my literature review.

6 Findings and Discussion

I have chosen to use my research questions to organise and discuss my findings. Under each question, I have discussed different sections of the data thematically. In this way, I have attempted to triangulate the data by showing similarities and differences between ideas and perceptions emerging. Details of which data has been analysed in each section can be seen in the table below:

Table 4: Data Used in Findings and Discussions

Research Questions	Data Used	Timeframe
RQ1	-Pre-intervention questionnaire -Department meeting notes	-Before the Interventions
RQ2	-Pre-intervention questionnaire -Department meeting notes -Unit plan field notes -Intervention session field notes	-Before the Interventions
RQ3	-Intervention session field notes -Unit Plan field notes -Interview field notes	-During the Interventions
RQ4	-Intervention session field notes -Interview field notes -Post-intervention questionnaire	-After the Interventions

6.1 To What Extent Do Year 11 Students Enjoy and Understand Poetry as it is Currently Taught in the Department?

To ensure students could accurately respond to all questions in the questionnaires and interviews, the definitions of 'enjoyment' as an emotional reaction to poetry and 'understanding' as analysing language in poetry were explained in explicit detail. The answers from the pre-intervention questionnaire were helpful in conveying how students felt about poetry before participating in the interventions.

6.1.1 'Packaging' Poetry for Examinations

There were some students who had enjoyed studying poetry in school, but they seemed in the minority, as many responses to the questionnaire included strong opinions about pressure of examinations on the subject. Several felt it hindered their experience of poetry within school and did not appreciate the stress it put upon them leading up to summer examinations:

I feel like reading the poetry is enjoyable but when we go in depth and prepare for exams it ruins it and the enjoyment of it. It doesn't help that we have to learn so many just for a couple to come up in our exam

Here we see evidence the effects of GCSE examinations may have led to undue pressure upon students to learn and memorise poems for more points in exams - which seems a monumental

task to many students, especially those with SEN needs (House of Commons, 2017; Bleiman, 2015; Dymoke, 2002).

In line with the 2007 Ofsted report on poetry within schools, this statement suggests our school has focused on poetry in printed mode to teach students how to write in the very 'packaged' and specific way examiners are looking for (Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2013; Hargreaves, 2003; Eisner, 2002). This could be why the student does not enjoy going 'in depth' to 'learn' poems for one question in the exam.

This 'packaged' type of learning could also be why there were minimal answers to the questionnaire involving the study of sound or form. This could be interpreted as a lack of exposure to learning poetry through pace, rhyme, rhythm or tone, which hints they have either not listened to poetry read aloud enough in lessons (Denman, 1988; Graves, 1992; Heard, 1989; Painter, 1970) or have been led to believe form is not a crucial part of a poem's meaning or does not receive 'higher marks' they hope to achieve, so should be left out or ignored altogether (Shann et al., 2021). This indicates our curriculum is not helping students explore all aspects of poetry and could be contributed to lack of time allotted to poetry in our curriculum, lack of resources which inspire students to interact with poetry, or teachers' and students' pre-conceived notions of the subject influencing their attitude to learning poems.

6.1.2 Fixed Mindsets

There are no questionnaire answers where students discussed initial reactions to poetry or listening to a poem without understanding it or 'finding' the answer written between the lines. This is surprising because our school has incorporated fixed and growth mindset theories into our PSHCE curriculum for three years now – but these answers, amongst other factors, show some students in lessons currently do not know how to enjoy poetry or have a fixed mindset and are unwilling to step outside their comfort zone (Claxton, 2007). This could be the case with the following student's comment:

Some I didn't enjoy because they were difficult to understand

This statement suggests our poetry curriculum has led students to believe they must 'find the right answer' when trying to decipher the message of poems (Goodwyn, 2012) or they have not 'enjoyed' it – which suggests our aims of teaching poetry are not being realised.

This fixed mindset around poetry in our curriculum could also be affecting how students interact with longer poems. This was mentioned by a student in our study:

Overall I find poems somewhat boring and uninspiring, as they are long and monotonous.

It may well be true, as Jaques and Whitley claim, that in the context of Poetry By Heart students are currently choosing longer and more complex poems (2019). However, in the context of our exam-oriented classrooms, students are shying away from longer poems, identifying them as 'boring' or 'uninspiring.'

6.1.3 Teachers' Influence

The short amount of time available for learning and revising the AQA Power and Conflict Anthology leaves little room for creativity in our curriculum (Snapper, 2013) and could suggest educators in the department are 'teaching to the test' (Dymoke, 2014) or jumping straight to analysing poetry to cover everything before examinations.

Without time to sit with poems and experiment with different feelings, interpretations or ideas, students could become reliant on teachers' explanations of poems, making educators the 'gatekeepers' to the interpretation examination boards are looking for (Goodwyn, 2012). Therefore, students could notice when a teacher or outside factors influence their perception of the subject:

It's been ok depending on the teacher

This supports several researchers' claims that poetry can only have a positive impact in a classroom if a teacher is enthusiastic about the subject and finds a way to harness creativity within the confines of GCSE examinations (Xerri, 2014; Hanratty, 2008).

Three students commented that visuals teachers had shown in lessons aided their enjoyment of poetry:

I especially enjoyed the videos with the pictures you could look at whilst listening to the prom being read. It gave it a greater atmosphere and sense of realism rather than being another poem that we just had to "learn" whilst also making you understand it better

The use of multimedia platforms like Tik Tok and Instagram outside of school have obviously impacted these students' perception of art and how they enjoy it (Dera, 2024). The resurgence of poetry on these platforms led these students to interact with older poems in a new way (Cramer, 2015) and create new tools to increase enjoyment of the art form (Hughes, 2013). It is nice to hear that somewhere in our curriculum, we have managed to harness these new tools and spark enjoyment and interest in at least three students (O'Grady et al., 2023; Cannon and Potter, 2019).

6.1.4 Pupil Talk Aiding Understanding

Other students can also influence students' perception of poetry. Some enjoy discussing poems with peers instead of analysing independently:

I have enjoyed poetry when discussing as a class however I find it slightly tedious studying poetry independently.

This contrasts the idea our curriculum has not given time for students to sit with poems and discuss interpretations or ideas. It is nice to hear some classes and teachers have included

discussions around poems and allowed space for pupil talk to lead students' understanding of poems (Pike, 2003). However, this statement also suggests previous teachers did not direct class discussions in a way that was conducive to writing about the poem or attempting to read poetry independently.

6.1.5 Breaking Fixed Mindsets

Only one student felt their enjoyment of reading poetry outside of school influenced her experience with the curriculum:

I personally have really enjoyed poetry in school. I've also enjoyed poetry for leisure outside of class but I have found that getting to study it in school makes it all the more interesting since you get to discuss the ideas which the poet is exploring.

As is often common in the field of English education, this student who reads outside of school considered studying poems in class to be enjoyable and rewarding – which could mean they already experienced a strong emotional reaction to a different text in the past and identified the same positive emotion when reading poetry during lessons. This validation of feelings suggests outside experiences and ideas influence initial reactions to poetry (Martin, 2008; Catling and Martin, 2011; Little and Chesworth, 2017) and teachers should find a way to celebrate this within classrooms (Wilson, 2020). It also suggests our aims for teaching poetry have been realised with at least one student, which helped us remain hopeful the interventions could positively impact some pupils.

6.2 Do Year 11 Students Think Different Approaches to Teaching Could Help Them Enjoy and Understand Poetry Further?

6.2.1 Hearing Poetry

As stated previously, students initially did not acknowledge any emotional reactions when considering personal enjoyment of poetry. However, when asked if they enjoyed hearing poetry read aloud in previous poetry lessons, answers quickly changed:

They make you feel the way you need to feel to understand the poem other than trying to figure it out yourself

This response is the first time a student acknowledged 'feeling' something about a poem. This implies they are more 'present' when listening to a text read aloud (Billington et al., 2016). It also supports the notion students can use everyday terms like 'feel' to express themselves in a deeper, more profound way that requires exploration in the classroom (Gordon, 2009). The second part of the answer implies they feel more comfortable listening to a poem read aloud rather than reading in their heads, which supports the idea that hearing a poem with the class allows for connectiveness and plurality through shared experiences (Jones and Harvey, 2020).

6.2.2 Considering Emotions of Poets

Students also started to consider emotions of the poet when discussing poetry read aloud:

Hearing poems sometimes helped with understanding the emotions of the writer, which makes me enjoy the poem more.

It was interesting hearing the poem enabled several pupils to consider not only their feelings, but those of the writer. This could be perceived as sound contributing to holistic understanding (Whitin, 1983), helping students engage with real life experiences and issues (Stibbe, 2008) and considering others' lives or traumas, which develops 'worldly learning' and links to Citizenship Education in the National Curriculum (Gordon, 2009; DfEE, 2000). The student also implies their understanding of the writer's motives or feelings in the poem contribute to their enjoyment of the poem. It could be stepping into someone else's mindset and considering another view of the world resonates with them in some way, helping validate feelings and ideas (Billington, Davis, and Farrington, 2013). It could also remind them of storytelling from childhood, which offers intimacy and nostalgia correlated with positive emotions (Pennac, 2010).

6.2.3 Listening Aids Understanding of Form

Similarly, listening to poems helped students recognise elements of form in a nuanced way:

I was able to recognise the different tones and paces of the poems that I wouldn't notice had I just read the poem.

These new ideas about 'pace' and 'tone' mirror S. Shann's observations from an English lesson focused on listening to poetry – students pick up elements of form like rhythm and rhyme when

listening to a poem, as it is treated more like music – which means they start to consider pauses and flow of a poem in an alternative way (Shann et al., 2021). The perception that these features of a poem will not be picked up when reading the poem on a page hints at the accuracy of Ofsted's 2007 report that poetry is primarily read and analysed in printed mode, which prohibits 'the semiotic resource of sound' (Gordon, 2009) and subconsciously triggers connections to lullabies or childhood rhymes learned on the playground (Perfect, 1999), promoting 'cognitive playfulness' and developing stronger positive connotations of poetry (Tan and McWilliam, 2008).

6.2.4 Fear of Performing

It was important to establish a difference between hearing poems aloud and performing them, as we wanted to understand students' perceptions to performing poetry before starting the interventions. When asked about potentially performing poems, a few students expressed fear around performing in class:

Performance can be embarrassing and make me not even want to do poetry at all

Several students were averse to performing alone as they worried about stage fright. This is not surprising, as a plethora of research points out every person has experienced stage fright at one point or another and it is a common fear among society (Washington, 1983). However, it has been proven feelings of 'being alone', or 'being put in a position where others will scrutinise and evaluate' can be put at ease when performing in a group (Washington, 1983). Considering these

findings about performance, we were able to adapt our methodology for the intervention. This sentiment was echoed in a student answer:

If a respectful and supportive environment among students can be established, then performing poetry can help both listeners and performers to find meaning in the words that they are reading.

It was clear students were willing to do interventions with their class, but did not want to incorporate other members from their year group. It is assumed they were only willing to reach 'the uncomfortable place of unknowing' (Green et. al., 2016) or experiment with poetry and its meaning in various ways if they were around pupils they trusted (O'Grady et al., 2023).

6.2.5 Outside Experiences Shaping Motivations

Those taking music, dance or drama as a GCSE subject were excited to get started with interventions. Their responses to potentially performing were filled with positivity:

I think it will be fun because I enjoy performing and I believe it will help me understand the tone of the poem

The positive response to performing poetry in class, along with a strong sense of trust between students in the class allowed us to employ process drama (Taylor and Warner, 2006) in a calm environment (McCauley and McCauley, 1992) with the Head of Drama, who had worked with

the students in Key Stage 3. Students verbally praised ideas of a 'third space' in which they were not assessed and could construct new meanings of poems together (Jones and Harvey, 2020) transcending current knowledge and embarking on a transformative, enjoyable experience (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Fisher, 2007; Morrell, 2005).

6.3 To What Extent Does Enjoyment Progress Understanding?

In this section, I will examine the extent to which students' enjoyment of the interventions progressed their understanding. Their enjoyment can be discussed in five thematic sections.

6.3.1 'Enjoyment' as Emotional Reactions

Firstly, I will focus on the difference between students' reactions during the first two intervention sessions and the last two sessions. As mentioned previously, field notes were taken during the sessions and students' non-verbal responses were also noted. These were particularly helpful in depicting whether they were 'enjoying' the sessions, which is why I have included them.

It was relatively apparent during the first two sessions both classes were not interested in discussing or performing poetry, which contrasted their answers in the pre-intervention questionnaire. Our school often discusses a sense of apathy amongst students as they only work on tasks pertaining to final GCSE scores. Since this had no correlation to scores, there was an array of eye rolling, sighing and lack of willingness to participate in the first two sessions.

6.3.2 The 'Third Space'

Secondly, students did not initially respond well to a 'third space' intervention where they were allowed to think creatively and explore new methods of learning (Hall and Thomason, 2017). This could be because the Head of Drama lead the sessions, and many had her as a teacher in Key Stage Three or associated her with drama. It could also be because she was someone associated with school and scores, instead of someone brought in as 'an expert' from outside school (Dymoke, 2021).

6.3.3 Examination Stress

Thirdly, both classes were tired from recent mock examinations and did not want to do anything related to them. Such sentiments were discussed in one group interview after the session:

We did it after mocks and I would much rather work on stuff we didn't work on in our mocks

It was also mentioned in another interview the first session based on 'Ozymandias' was 'boring' because it was a 'very easy' poem and wasn't long or challenging enough to interest them:

We should have done more challenging poems at first

This opinion is intriguing as it offers a different perception from what students said about poetry in the questionnaire before starting the intervention. Their distaste for 'longer' or more

'monotonous' poems that didn't initially make sense to them ended up being the poems they enjoyed picking apart and performing the most:

I didn't understand charge of the light brigade, but now I remember it

This response leads to the two final poetry intervention sessions based on 'Charge of the Light Brigade.' It became apparent at the start of these sessions the Year 11s were becoming comfortable with each other, and in turn, with the activities they were being asked to perform. Where they were stiff and laughed at each other when they did still images or choral reading in the first sessions, they were silent and more open to discussing 'what went well' with group performances in the last two sessions. There were less snickers and raised eyebrows in the final sessions and more willingness to cooperate or jump into their group's re-enactment of the battle. This could also be because we had more sessions to unpack 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' which is mentioned in a student's interview response:

Also, the first two sessions were a poem per lesson, one poem over two lessons worked better

Giving students time to unpack the poem in the first lesson and incorporating movement into choral reading was beneficial and elicited several positive verbal remarks at the end of the session, such as 'I really liked this time' and 'I didn't feel rushed.' This suggests pairing movement with poems and unpicking them at a slower pace increased engagement with the lesson (Rumbold and Simecek, 2016).

6.3.4 Incorporating Elements of Drama

Fourthly, students had not interacted with elements of drama since Year 9, as that was the last time they participated in drama classes, which are compulsory in Key Stage Three. This is mentioned in the first student interview and in intervention field notes:

I wish it had been closer to when we took drama (in years 7 -9), it would have made more sense in year 10 when it was still fresh in our heads

This meant students struggled at first to remember what freeze frames, thought tracking, choral reading and choral movement entailed. However, once explained again and re-enacted by two drama students in each class, they started to give the intervention a chance and most students performed.

Each session the Head of Drama asked students to get into five groups and give them one stanza each, which they used to create a freeze frame – where they stood still and depicted a picture representing the stanza. This was a warmup to choral movement and was used at the beginning of every session. The freeze frames would be performed in order, then the Head of Drama would incorporate choral reading – which is described as 'simultaneous group reading structured to accomplish a communicative effect on listeners' (Bowen et al., 1972). Students could choose how they recited their stanza and took pride in what type of tone or how loudly they said the stanza. Then in later sessions, they could add choral movement to their stanza, making a moving video to tell part of the poem's story. All dramatic elements added a layer of meaning to the poems and became a source of pleasure and amusement for pupils to perform together. Their

shared sense of ownership and collective experience depicted a sense of intimacy with poetry we rarely see in our poetry lessons (Dyas and Hayhoe, 1988).

By the third session, they seemed more willing to treat it as a source of fun instead of something they 'had to do' to get a certain grade (Xerri, 2013). Even students who originally would not perform had so enjoyed watching that they took part in the final two sessions, as friends gently encouraged them to join and showed how 'easy' it was to perform in groups.

Their comfortability with the sessions, the Head of Drama and time to unpack poems led to asking to use the drama room for the last sessions, allowing more space and use of lights and music as part of performances. It was interesting the classes asked for this, as we never mentioned including these aspects into the sessions. This implied they were enjoying interacting with the texts and each other to the point where they wanted to incorporate more elements of drama to 'make meaning' through 'a communicative act' (O'Grady et al., 2023; Halliday, 1978). The final performances of the poems included red light, gun shots and distant drumming in the background. The students bought into the performance and acted in a way which suggested they were more inspired when theatrical elements were included (O'hara, 1999).

6.3.5 Incorporating Creativity

Fifthly, students seemed to enjoy the 'wrap up' activities just as much as performing poems and showcased great understanding through skits and writing. During 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' groups were asked to perform a skit reporting live from the battlefield. This lent itself to

comedic relief, as one student would often be the reporter, one would be the cameraman and others would be interviewed on the scene. The reporter made some relatively funny remarks:

Uh, it was 600 men we lost. Was it a great battle? Um, we lost 400 horses along with it. So let's say the team were on their lows, but over there, they seem to be pretty happy with the loss.

Then, when asked to create a TV advertisement as a means of propaganda to join the war, this student's performance is even more funny:

Are you fat and lazy and fat? Alright. Join the army. You can kill people. Just peachy.

Another group of students perfect the art of guilting the audience into joining the war effort:

Hey. Have you ever thought yourself, wow. All these people are going off to war for a day. And I'm just sat here by myself…

In my field notes, I made a point of recording non-verbal cues like students using eyebrows and facial features to make their audience laugh at these tongue and cheek remarks, which suggests they are thinking about manipulating language to entertain or explore the topic in a new light (Wrigg, 1991).

The extended writing tasks at the end of each lesson asked students to pick a point of view from the poem (The statue from 'Ozymandias' or a beggar in 'London') and free write for ten minutes. Several students were eager to read out their responses:

I chimney sweep the night away. Rats on my blanket, they play. A hint of sick.

I smell myself, and my life is grinded in this work. Meager trembling, we get no rest. We're the cogs that turn to make the selfish look their best.

Though this case study is primarily looking at performance, it was clear this student's remarkable writing needed to be included to highlight the enjoyment and understanding that has come from these sessions. Without meaning to, giving students this space to share ideas, try new things and step out of their comfort zone ended up stimulating incredible original writing (Dymoke, 2003) and allowed students to unknowingly create poetry through different mediums. This could support the idea that performance both in person and on the page could be therapeutic and healing (Dutro, 2008, 2009; Dutro & Zenkov, 2008) and lead to better self-understanding (Lorenz, 1998) whilst understanding world views of those around us (Stibbe, 2008).

6.4 To What Extent Does Performing Enhance the Teaching of Poetry?

The post intervention questionnaire is telling when discussing students' enjoyment and understanding of poetry through performance.

6.4.1 Positive Emotional Reactions to Performing

Firstly, performing selected poems from the Power and Conflict anthology led to increased emotional reactions to the poems, which improved students' enjoyment of the poems. Several students expressed their positive views of the sessions:

I don't really enjoy learning about poetry in general, but this was fun.

The responses were very different from the initial pre-intervention questionnaire and many students agreed they now enjoyed poetry more after the interventions. It was exciting to see pupils consider their emotions when hearing and performing poetry, as this was one of the main outcomes we were hoping to achieve with this case study.

6.4.2 Connecting with Poets

Secondly, they started to consider emotions of the poet when writing poetry, which meant engaging with opinions, feelings and values of someone else (Hawkins & Certo, 2014). This allowed for different interpretation of poems, unlocking new connections and connotations associated with each poem (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1995). This can be seen in the interviews when students were talking about performing poetry:

You make choices about how you're going deliver those lines. And one actor to the next might make different choices for the same character, and that would be absolutely fine because it's your interpretation, but you need to think about why you're playing in that way

Thus, reading poetry aloud together becomes a shared, intimate experience, connecting students with the text and each other on a more intimate level (Dyas and Hayhoe, 1988). The ability to practice 'experimenting' with delivery of lines in terms of tone, pace and emotion allowed students to manipulate language and create new meanings on top of existing ones discussed in previous lessons (O'Grady et al, 2023). Considering world views of poets and how they would want poems performed encouraged tapping into the context of poems and considering others' ideas in a mature manner, making sure they were doing the poets and poems justice (Gordon, 2009). On the other hand, the student mentions 'playing' with lines, which can be linked to 'cognitive playfulness' and relishing in twisting words to their liking - bringing back freedom and enjoyment of poetry we tend to push aside in the face of examinations (Tan and McWilliam 2008). Figuring out how to deliver a line also helped students understand how poets and actors might portray certain characters or ideas, which linked well to plays studied and written about in GCSE literature examinations (Hawkins & Certo, 2014).

6.4.3 Considering Sound

Thirdly, considering how the poem would be performed meant students started to discuss meaning in the form of sound:

Performing was helpful for meter and some structure

This statement came from a student who struggled with understanding meaning of poems during our unit plan. This could prove performing poetry uses sound to aid understanding (Whitin, 1983) as those who barely understood meter, rhyme and pace before interventions suddenly

considered poetry's 'music' (Shann et al., 2021) and wanted to change the way the poem was heard by others to create new meanings (Jaques and Whitley, 2019). They also experimented with accents and dialects (Gordon, 2009) and started to link imagery like 'the clip clopping of hooves' in interventions with the rhyme scheme or 'the marching of drums' with beats per line. This helped students understand the importance of interpreting a poem in an individual way (Jaques and Whitley, 2022). Their understanding that rhythm brings new elements of meaning to a poem (Avirim, 1994) was also evident in worksheets completed during revision focusing on sounds (See Appendix 7). The same students who struggled with structural devices could recall the beats per line and the rhyme scheme in poems we performed. They could also locate lines in the poems where sibilance, assonance and consonance added extra layers of implications on the poet's meaning (Hawkins & Certo, 2014).

6.4.4 Expressing Ideas Through Movement

Fourthly, students showed both enjoyment and understanding when incorporating movement into performances:

Having to perform poetry has given me a greater line by line understanding of the poems since it forced us to tell the message of the poem through physical imagery.

Incorporating dramatic elements into performance meant students had to embody poems to express their interpreted meanings (O'hara, 1999). Process drama became another form of 'playing' (Taylor and Warner, 2006) where students could use their bodies to create collective ideas and concepts (Cremin et al., 2006; Craft et al., 2012). Using bodily movement to perform a

poem is another way of valuing a poem and the poet's message (Rumbold and Simecek, 2016) which aided comprehension of selected poems (Jusslin & Hoglund, 2020). It was also mentioned in later revision sessions students could accurately recall certain lines in poems we performed due to muscle memory (Bessell and Riddell, 2016). In fact, though retention was not the point of this case study, several Year 11s mentioned they remembered quotes better after the sessions:

I do think the repetition of the lines that came with performing them was useful.

Many responses positively mentioned linking elements of drama from the interventions to memorisation for GCSEs. Still images created by the groups lend themselves to the Memory Theatre method, where one can recall certain images when reading certain words or phrases from poems (Bayley, 2016; Hughes, 1997). Thus, students are subconsciously interacting with a poem on a personal level (Pullinger, 2012) and submitting it to long term memory (Bayley, 2016).

6.4.5 Positive Peer Modelling

Fifthly, watching peers perform stanzas also benefitted students' experience with poetry:

I did not enjoy videos as much as someone performing it because I find them less engaging but I enjoy it when someone performs it because it makes the experience more interesting

Observing peers' performances made the poems more engaging for several pupils. Positive peer modelling also inspired others in the class to participate and strengthened listening skills (Dymoke, 2017). Students with stage fright found comfort in group performances within class time:

I liked how we performed in the class amongst our friends

Those students afraid to join in for fear of being 'alone' and subjecting themselves to 'the dread of evaluation' found group performances beneficial and less taxing than having to stand up solo in front of their peers (Washington, 1983). Even without independent performances, students were unknowingly building confidence in speaking and listening skills, which enabled an easier transition into GCSE speeches in the next term (Dunne, 2014). Allowing students to pick their groups also promoted student agency, which added an extra layer of comfort to the sessions. This sentiment is evident in the field notes of the sessions when a student exclaimed 'Oh my god!' or another said 'This will be sick' after learning they could group with friends. Nonverbal cues, such as shoulders falling with relief and laughing with each other whilst coming up with ideas for still images, could be observed as increased engagement and enjoyment due to student input (Hall et al., 2019).

However, it became apparent in the post-intervention questionnaire a few from each class were still averse to performing in front of peers:

For me performing the poem made poetry less enjoyable because I dislike performing, especially in front of other people.

Performing in front of others, whether it was peers or strangers, proved to be a hurdle some could not overcome. This could pose as a challenge to future poetry interventions or any research pertaining to performance of poetry within lessons, as stage fright is still a fear many young adults have and could alter enjoyment of sessions meant to improve the perception of the art form (Petry, 2018). This sentiment was echoed in the student interviews through both verbal and physical responses:

I thought it was pointless – I thought I preferred going through them, I don't like acting

It is evident those who did not like drama in Key Stage Three did not want to recall elements of drama for the interventions. This student's physical response to whether he enjoyed performing – noted eye rolling, shrug of shoulders and shifting in his chair in the field notes – represented a level of discomfort connected to performing in general (See Appendix 2). However, their recall of the poems when discussing and writing about them later in the year were directly linked to aspects of performance employed during the intervention sessions, which suggests they benefitted from the intervention.

Another challenge when including poetry performance into Key Stage Four curriculum could be engagement with students who are stressed by upcoming examinations and will not take the activities seriously:

Yeah, it wasn't serious enough because we don't care and are too stressed by the exams

Though we tried to create a space outside of graded answers and examination constraints, students struggled to allow themselves to enjoy performing. This could be because they cannot get away from stress of examinations (Marsh, 2017) or feel performing will not help them achieve higher level answers – which is interesting, as AQA's Poetry in Schools report states the opposite (AQA, 2008; OCR, 2008) and our study has shown students can write about a poem's rhythm and rhyme better when they performed poems (Gordon, 2009) as some poetic device cannot be taught when simply seeing the poem on a page (Jaques & Whitley, 2019).

7 Conclusion

This study, examining a small-scale class-based intervention to improve enjoyment and understanding of poetry through performance, has allowed me to draw a number of worthwhile conclusions.

7.1 Creating a 'Third Space'

Creating a 'third space' where Year 11 students could get away from examination stress increased engagement with poetry and enjoyment of the AQA Power and Conflict Anthology. Giving the classes room to get creative and play 'the game of imagination' (Iser, 1978) with certain poems meant students stepped away from the teacher's interpretation or 'right answer' to develop personal responses (Xerri, 2013). Bringing in the Head of Drama, an 'expert' and outside source instead of the teacher, helped promote freedom with interpretations of poems (Dymoke, 2017). With her help, students became comfortable in 'the place of unkowing' and were taught how to embody a poem (Green et. al, 2016). Those who struggled with literacy were

able to talk about poetry using everyday terms (Gordon, 2009) or retell poems in their own words (Skidmore, 2000).

7.2 Heightened Emotions

Students' emotional reactions to selected AQA Power and Conflict poetry were heightened after performing poems in class. Their emotions were evoked by two separate elements of drama – the sounds of the poem and the movement employed to perform the poem. Students had to be 'present' to interpret their reactions to lines so they could accurately convey their feelings to the audience (Billington et al., 2016). To present their emotions, students had to experiment with sound, pace and rhyme (Gordon, 2009). Incorporating choral reading gave students autonomy and enhanced aspects of their peformances (Brewer, 2016). Hearing the same lines read in different ways meant students had more chances to understand the poem (Naylor, 2013; Sumara, 1995) and created a shared sense of intimacy or ownership of poems groups had performed together (Pennac, 2010).

Employing movement when performing poetry helped students consider how to convey their emotions as well as the poet's (Jusslin & Hoglund, 2020). Attaching physical imagery to certain stanzas increased engagement and connectedness to lines of poetry they had to embody (Cliff Hodges, 2016). Choral movement and still images leant themselves to a deeper understanding of themes, emotions and devices used by each poet to take readers on a meaning making journey (Jusslin & Hoglund, 2020).

7.3 Improving Confidence

Performing in groups during class time promoted confidence in public speaking and helped those with stage fright (Petry, 2018). Observing others in class performing also encouraged active participation and inspired others to join performances (Hawkins & Certo, 2014). It also inadvertently promoted retention of certain lines and stanzas and helped students remember poems when revising later in the year (Brewer, 2016).

Overall, incorporating performance into Key Stage Four English poetry lessons positively affects students' holistic experience of poetry, which includes both enjoyment and understanding of the art form (Cliff Hodges, 2016). This is because students are allowed to be imaginative when directly engaging with real life experiences of others (Stibbe, 2008). Reading, interpreting and reciting poetry in groups helps students interact with poems, 'bringing shape' to words on the page, 'taking control' of how the narrative is portrayed, and creating their version of poems which will live on in their memories for much longer than the GCSEs ever will (McCallum, 2012).

7.4 Collaboration

Working with the Head of Drama to deliver the intervention sessions led to newfound cross-curricular lessons. Our work in the drama room helped decide how to conduct poetry performance within English lessons and embed speaking and listening sessions into the English curriculum throughout Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. It was also beneficial to include my department in delivering the unit plan and discussing the questionnaires, as their feedback was invaluable and

started conversations during curriculum and professional development where teachers felt more comfortable asking for change by including research as evidence.

7.5 Limitations

There were several limitations when collating and analysing data from the interviews, field notes and questionnaires. *Firstly*, the open-ended questions on the questionnaires led to somewhat similar responses that overlapped in themes. *Secondly*, due to the nature of the unstructured interviews, responses were similar and less in depth than the questionnaire answers. However, this allowed room for different ideas and interpretations of enjoyment and understanding of poetry, which led to new codes in the transcriptions. *Thirdly*, my field notes focused heavily on nonverbal actions throughout the unit plan and interventions, which means there are a lack of opinions in the data.

If I were to design the research instruments again, I would use different open-ended questions, which would allow for more diverse answers in the questionnaires. I would structure interviews with specific questions to help students keep going with discussions when they did not know what else to talk about. I also would have recorded intervention sessions to pick up more verbal transcriptions.

Notwithstanding the claims made in this study, students' engagement and enjoyment of poetry through performance can be impacted by multiple limitations. A general fear of stage fright remained throughout the course of the intervention, which meant a few students were not willing

to participate in performing in front of a large group (Hawkins & Certo, 2014). Students still stressed over looming examinations and felt they could not take the sessions seriously when they would rather revise aspects of English relevant to the GCSEs (Xerri, 2013; Hennessy & Mannix McNamara, 2013, Perfect, 1999). It should also be mentioned students struggled to remember elements of drama at the beginning of the interventions, which means Year 11s are too far removed from compulsory GCSE drama to benefit from performing poetry. It is clear students benefit from performing literature in Key Stage Three, but time constraints and the amount of poetry teachers must cover in Key Stage Four means performing is the first thing to be cut out of unit plans (Snapper, 2013; Sekeres & Gregg, 2007). Therefore, it might be a better idea to incorporate poetry performance into Year 9 or 10 English lessons to ensure students are well versed in aspects of drama they will need to perform.

7.6 Implications

My research has positively impacted my practice in multiple ways. *Firstly,* as a teacher, it has offered a different approach to teaching poetry and allowed me to harness my own creativity for lessons. *Secondly,* it has improved my outlook on leadership and helped my department question how we embed performance into our curriculum to benefit students' understanding of literature. It has also helped my department remember the role of teachers as researchers, bringing in their ideas with evidence for future implementation. We will be presenting this research, as well as others my department have brought to meetings, to Senior Leadership for next year's curriculum. *Thirdly,* I have found a passion in research and will be considering further research in the field of education, as I would like to look closely at how aspects of drama and performance can be used as formative assessments in English literature.

Above all, this research has suggested performing poetry can help students enjoy and understand an art form which usually has a poor reputation. As Constantine (2013) says:

> 'Poetry is for everyone. Little by little, if they wish it, all readers can be inducted into the knowledge – the connectedness – that will make their reading more enjoyable and productive.'

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9 Appendix

9.1 Appendix 1 - CUREC Approval Form

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk; staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk [redacted]
[redacted]

Department of Education, Social Sciences Division
University of Oxford 13 December 2023

Dear [redacted],

Research ethics approval

Research title: Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance

Research ethics reference: EDUC_C1A_23_296

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Education Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the University's procedures for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of the information provided to the DREC, ethics approval has now been granted for this study.

Please note the following:

Personal data: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all personal data collected during the project is managed in accordance with the University's guidance and legal requirements.

In-person activities: Any data collection involving in-person interactions with participants must have an up-to-date fieldwork risk assessment in place; further guidance is available from the Safety Office's website.

Amendments: Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval, as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available on the SSH IDREC webpage.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk / student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk or ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

9.2 Appendix 2 - CUREC Headteacher Consent Form

Department of Education
[redacted]
Department of Education
University of Oxford
Email: [redacted]

[redacted]

27.10.2023

Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance
Ethics Approval Reference: EDUC_CIA 23 296

Dear Mr[redacted]

As you are aware, I am undertaking an Msc in Learning and Teaching at the University of Oxford, supervised by Dr [redacted]. In my research study, Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance, I will explore how a performance-based intervention can enhance perceptions and enjoyment of poetry in Year 11.

The research will take place with two Year 11 classes. They will take in three intervention sessions within lesson time to enhance perceptions and enjoyment of the AQA poetry anthology. These sessions would not be audio recorded Students will also be interviewed briefly before and after the intervention cycle — this will not be audio or visually recorded.

By participating in the research, your school would be contributing to research that will aim to provide further strategies for schools to incorporate performance into English for enhanced enjoyment of the subject.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research with teachers and students, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. Before beginning the research, I would inform parents/guardians about the research and offer the students and parents/guardians the opportunity to refuse to participate. Throughout the research, students and parents/guardians will be able to refuse to participate at any time.

All participants, including students, teachers and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor and myself and not used other than specified without the further consent of all involved being obtained. I have enclosed copies of the information for parents/guardians and students with this letter.

If your school would like to take part in the study, or you need more information about what is involved, please contact me. Whether or not you feel it would be appropriate for your school to participate, I would be grateful if you would complete the pro-forma below, and return it to me.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

[redacted]
Department of Education
University of Oxford
[redacted]

AP15 v2.0 Letter to Head Teacher - Date and Version No:

Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance

[redacted]
University of Oxford
Department of Education

Mr [redacted]

☐ We do not wish to participate in this project.

☐ We would like to find out more about this project.

X We would like to take part in this project.

If you would like further information, or are interested in taking part, please give the name of a contact person for your school, and details of the best way to contact him or her

Contact name: [redacted]

Contact email: [redacted]

Contact telephone number: [redacted]

Thank you for your help.

9.3 Appendix 3 - CUREC Parent Information Sheet and Opt Out Form

[redacted]
E-Mail: [redacted]

Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

I am [redacted] and I am studying for a Master's degree in Learning and Teaching at the University of Oxford. [redacted] has agreed to take part in a study investigating the perception of poetry through performance. I would like to invite your child to be part of this study. I very much hope you would like your child to take part, but before you decide, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve.

What are we trying to find out?

In 2017, the Government instated a closed book policy regarding the Power and Conflict Poetry Anthology. This led to an academic conversation surrounding the validity of memorising poetry as a means of assessment. This project is looking at the perceptions students have about the memorisation of poetry and how the perception shifts when they are given the opportunity to perform the poems.
We will be observing four lessons and conducting three group interviews with my Year 11 English class to analyse the data from the lessons. We hope that our findings will allow us to identify if performance of the Power and Conflict Anthology produces a shift in perceptions towards poetry in Key Stage Four English.

Why has my child been invited to take part?

We are inviting your child to take part because they are a young person, aged between14 and 15 years, attending [redacted].
We are inviting 32 young people to take part.

Does my child have to take part?

No. You can ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not to allow your child to participate. If you do agree to participation, you may withdraw your child and their data from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty, by advising the researchers of this decision.

What will happen if my child takes part?

- The student will be partaking in the research project for four lessons.
- The research will span until June of 2024.
- They will need to attend three voluntary interviews and discussions as well as complete two questionnaires;
- These will all take place in room 106 either after school or in break or lunch times;
- The students will be asked specific questions regarding their perceptions of poetry and the

anthology.

What happens to the data provided? [1]

The information you or your child provide during the study is the **research data**. Any research data from which you or your child can be identified is known as **personal data**. No personal data is being collected in this study.

Consent forms will be retained by the school for the duration of the study, and for as long as the school determines appropriate after research activities have concluded at the school.

Other research data will be stored for 3 years after the submission of the research to the University of Oxford by the supervisor of this research.

Myself and my supervisor will have access to the research data. Responsible members of the University of Oxford may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the research.

Will the research be published?

The research will be written up as a student's assignment. This assignment will not be published.

Who is conducting this research?

The research project is organised by [redacted] of Oxford University, who is a postgraduate student. This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee.

What if there is a problem?

I If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact [redacted] at [redacted] or [redacted] at [redacted], and we will do our best to answer your query. I/we will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Chair, **Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your child's personal data and, as such, will determine how your child's personal data is used in the study.

The University will process your child's personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest.

[1] Please refer to CUREC's Best Practice Guidance on Data Collection and Management (BPG 09)

Further information about your rights with respect to your child's personal data is available from https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

What should I do next?

Please fill in the enclosed form and return it to your child's class teacher if you **would not** like your child to take part in this study. Please remember that you may withdraw your child at any time, without penalty and without giving a reason, by notifying the researcher.

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

[redacted]
Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY
Email: [redacted]

Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance

OPT-OUT FORM

If you **DO NOT** want your child to participate in the above-named research study please fill out the form below and return it to the school by 11.13.2023

If we do not receive an opt-out form from you by this date, your child may be invited to take part in this study, as described in the accompanying information sheet.

I, the undersigned, hereby DO NOT give permission for my child to take part in the study titled: Assessing Perceptions of Poetry Through Performance

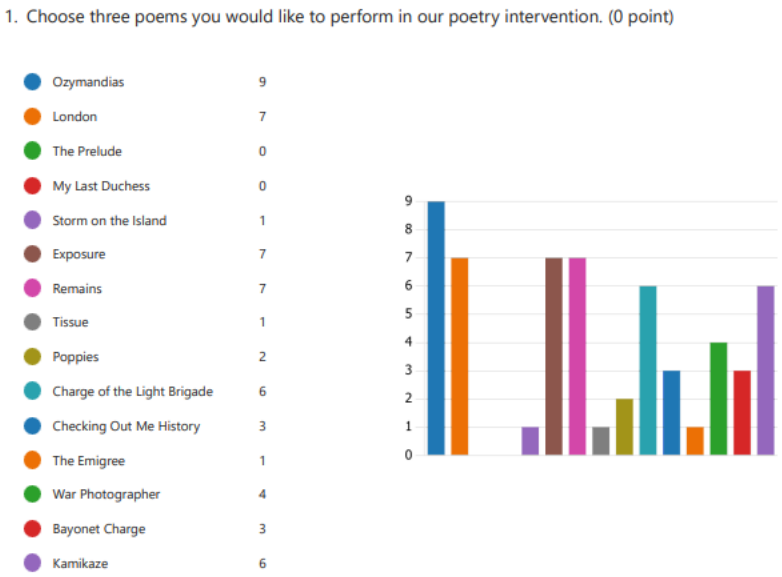
Name of child: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of researcher:

9.4 Appendix 4 – Microsoft Forms Pre-Intervention Poem Selection Graph



9.5 Appendix 5 - Example of Codes and Non-Verbal Cues in Field Notes

How did you like the poetry interventions?

- 1 - Not really, I thought it was pointless – I thought I preferred going through them, I don't like acting #Makes a disgusted face, looks unsettled, moves around in chair#
- 2 - I think it was a lot more fun than normal lesson, #laughs nervously# but it should have been introduced in Year 7 instead of Year 11. Because we are focused on our exams right now, we didn't concentrate and didn't take it seriously to an extent #looks down#
- 3 - Yeah, it wasn't serious enough because we don't care and are too stressed by the exams #nodding in agreement with student 1#
- 2 – I wish it had been closer to when we took drama (in years 7 -9), it would have made more sense in year 10 when it was still fresh in our heads
- 3 – yeah, we don't really care about it except for our scores
- Student 1 - I don't think we should have done it when we did it. We did it after mocks and I would much rather work on stuff we didn't work on in our mocks #looks slightly annoyed, can't stay still, looking at student 2 a lot as they are best friends #
- #A bit of silence, looking uncomfortably at teach other to see which student will ask the next questions#

- 2 – which poems did you like performing best?
- 2 - I liked London more, because I got to see to see Student 1 perform #Smiles, thinks he is being cheeky, giggles#

9.6 Appendix 6 - Example of Coding Log

Short Description	Enjoyment
Detailed Description	Any emotion evoked from the poem or reaction from the performance of the poem or intervention itself
Inclusion Criteria	Mention of any emotion they felt during before, during or after the poetry intervention
Exclusion Criteria	Talking about enjoyment of other things in the curriculum such as English itself or another aspect of the unit
Typical Exemplars	'I think it was a lot more fun than a normal lesson'

Short Description	Understanding
Detailed Description	Understanding the deeper contextual knowledge of a poem through critical analysis (i.e. language or structural techniques)
Inclusion Criteria	Mention of any techniques they discovered during the intervention or 'understanding' a poem more due to intervention
Exclusion Criteria	Talking about understanding for exam purposes
Typical Exemplars	'I didn't understand charge of the light brigade'

Short Description	Examination Stress
Detailed Description	Undue pressure or stress from upcoming GCSE English examinations in Year 11
Inclusion Criteria	Mention of words relating to exams such as 'stress' or 'scores' or 'mocks'
Exclusion Criteria	Talking about other external factors that led them to dislike poetry
Typical Exemplars	'We don't care and are too stressed by the exams'

9.7 Appendix 7 - Example of Post-Intervention Student Revision Worksheets

