

# War Photographer

## Key Learning:

Complete detailed annotation of 'War Photographer'



Duffy was inspired to write this poem by her friendship with a war photographer. She was especially intrigued by the peculiar challenge faced by these people whose job requires them to record terrible, horrific events without being able to directly help their subjects.

Duffy perhaps shares an affinity with these photojournalists - while they use the medium of photography to convey certain truths about the human condition, she uses words and language to do the same job.

Throughout the poem, Duffy provokes us to consider our own response when confronted with the photographs that we regularly see in our newspaper supplements, and why so many of us have become desensitised to these images.

By viewing this issue from the perspective of the photographer, she also reveals the difficulties of such an occupation.

Develops pictures here -  
quiet - contrast to the  
harsh light/sounds of war  
(explosions etc)

Sense of order and  
structure - trying to  
create order from the  
chaos of war. Also links  
to rows of graves =  
death.

Alliteration  
to  
emphasise  
how many  
photos of  
suffering he  
has.

In his dark room he is finally alone  
with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.  
The only light is red and softly glows,  
as though this were a church and he  
a priest preparing to intone a Mass.  
Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

Simile - sense of  
respect and devotion  
to the images of  
these people.

War zones. The  
full stops cause  
us to pause and  
reflect on idea  
that war is  
everywhere.

Biblical reference -  
links to simile and  
suggests the  
shortness of life.

Distances himself from horror - only way he can do this job.

Alliteration emphasises the developing process - 'slop' relates to his shaking hands - suggests the emotional effect on him.

Emotional reaction to the images - he is alone now and can let this out.

He has a **job to do**. **Solutions slop** in trays beneath his hands, which **did not tremble then though seem to now**. **Rural England**. Home again to **ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel**, to **fields which don't explode** beneath the feet of **running children in a nightmare heat**.

Contrast to war zones - seems calm and idyllic.

Our land is safe.

Horrors he has seen - children running for their lives from explosions and gunfire.

Negative view of our society - our concerns can be forgotten with good weather - contrast to the concerns of those in war zones.

Photo is developing -  
creates a sense of  
anticipation.

The person in the  
photograph.

Metaphor -  
the image  
is faint -  
also  
suggests  
the fact  
that this  
person is no  
longer alive.

Something is happening. A stranger's features faintly start to twist before his eyes, a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries of this man's wife, how he sought approval without words to do what someone must and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

Photo is  
becoming clear  
- 'twist' also  
suggests pain  
on face of  
person.

Literally - he remembers the blood shed from  
the victims of war.

Metaphor - the image is 'stained' into his  
memory - this is the effect it has had on him.

Metaphor - amount of photos - they all show pain and suffering.

Selecting which photos will be suitable for the newspaper article - censored so that our view of war is not the whole reality.

Cause sadness but not shown real horror - compare to 'cries of this man's wife' line 15.

A hundred agonies in black and white from which his editor will pick out five or six for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyeballs prick with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers. From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where he earns his living and they do not care.

Going to his next assignment - it is a cycle - war never stops.

Suggests our society don't really care - read about war but then go back to focusing on their own lives.

Readers' lives on a Sunday - contrasts to lives of people in the photos.

What is Duffy's overall message about the work of a war photographer?

Which line do you think conveys this message most?