

“Do Now” Work

How does Dharker present her ideas in 'Tissue'?

Be able to identify techniques and explore the effect on the reader.

Task:

Is paper important?

- What paper might you need to get a job?
- What paper might you need to buy a house?
- What paper might you need to go abroad?

In Silence Please

 **BOURNVILLE**
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- 'Tissue' doesn't have a literal meaning - it is full of symbolism.
- It is an extended metaphor for the fragility of the power of humans.
- The power explored in the poem is: religion, governments, countries' borders and money.

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'Tissue' is an extended metaphor, so there is no literal meaning. It is ambiguous, but we are looking at it as a Power and Conflict poem, so that can help.

The poem is a critique of human power, highlighting the fragility of man's power and the true power of nature. Paper is used to symbolise mankind both being fragile and powerful at the same time.

The title is ambiguous: Tissue is a **homonym**. It is both thin paper and material humans are made up of – human tissue. The title implies that human power is fragile like tissue.

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The speaker in this poem uses tissue paper as an extended metaphor for life. She considers how paper can 'alter things' and refers to the soft thin paper of religious books, in particular the Qur'an. There are also real life references to other lasting uses we have for paper in our lives such as maps, receipts and architect drawings. Each of these items is connected to important aspects of life: journeys, money and home. These examples demonstrate how important but also how fragile paper is.

In the final stages of the poem, the poet links the idea of a building being made from paper to human skin, using the words 'living tissue' and then 'your skin'. This is quite a complex idea, and the meaning is open to interpretation. She may be suggesting that the significance of human life will outlast the records we make of it on paper or in buildings. There is also a sense of the fragility of human life, and the fact that not everything can last.

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Key Words

- 'borderlines' – the lines between countries or geographical areas
- 'paper kites' – kite-flying festivals are associated with India and Afghanistan, among other places
- 'luminous' – giving light
- 'monolith' – a single column of stone, built as a monument

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<https://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zwg6nbk/revision>

Tissue

by Imtiaz Dharker

Paper that lets the light shine through, this is what could alter things.

Paper thinned by age or touching,

God / Allah

power of religious texts.

power of God vs power of humans.

enjambment.

the kind you find in well-used books, the back of the Koran, where a hand has written in the names and histories, who was born to whom,

Human, trying to have power. shift.

the height and weight, who died where and how, on which sepia date, pages smoothed and stroked and turned transparent with attention.

is it necessary to record this?

Care

conditional sentence

If buildings were paper, I might feel their drift, see how easily they fall away on a sigh, a shift in the direction of the wind.

imagine it building were paper, we'd see their fragility.

more power than man money, control, metaphor.

Maps too. The sun shines through their borderlines, the marks that rivers make, roads, railtracks, mountain folds,

man made.

Fine slips from grocery shops that say how much was sold and what was paid by credit card might fly our lives like paper kites.

An architect could use all this, place layer over layer, luminous script over numbers over line, and never wish to build again with brick

repetition

power of nature - continues when human structures have broken.

mocking human power pride doesn't last.

metaphor for human life we all have a heritage.

or block, but let the daylight break through capitals and monoliths, through the shapes that pride can make, find a way to trace a grand design

with living tissue, raise a structure never meant to last, of paper smoothed and stroked and thinned to be transparent,

turned into your skin.

ref. to creation

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lack of power

embodiment

God / Allah

power of God - more power than humans

power of religious texts.

family history.

humanity to have power

Care

power of man doesn't last.

conditional sentence.

nature more powerful than man.

receipts

simile.

metaphor



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Comprehension Questions

1. What does Dharker suggest 'could alter things'?
2. What is written in the back of 'well-used books'?
3. What colour do the hand written dates become?
4. What would happen if buildings were paper?
5. What features of maps does she list?
6. What does she suggest that shop receipts are like?
7. What human aspect does she compare with paper?

Deeper Thinking Questions

1. What is the significance of the title?
2. What do you think the structure of the poem represents?
3. What is important about the light in this poem?

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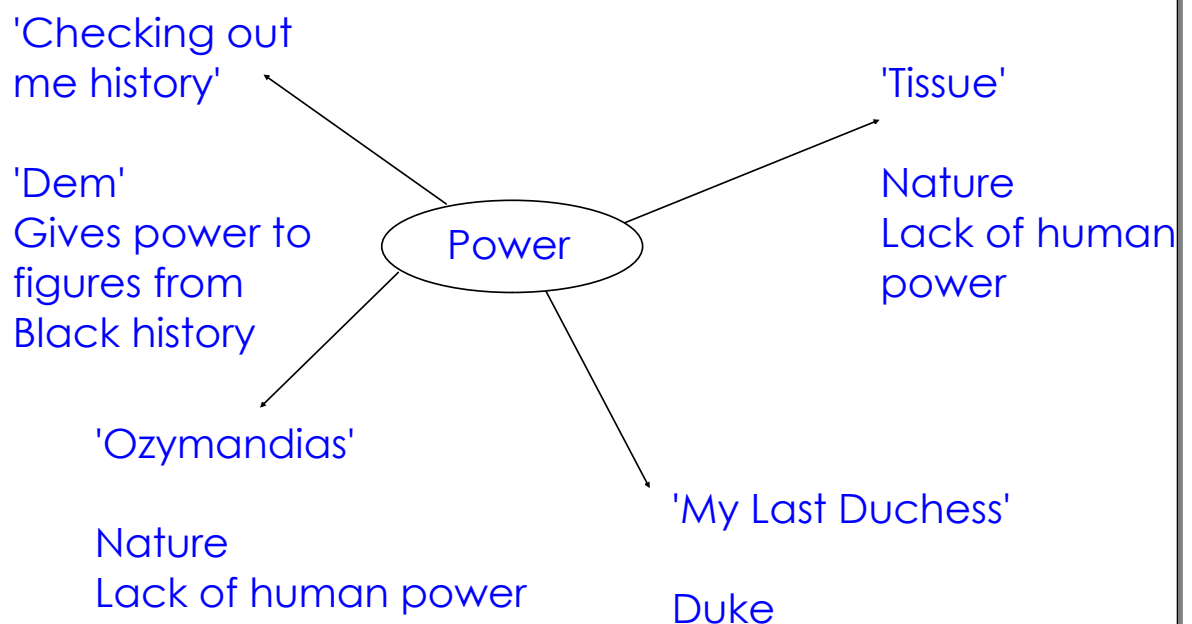
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Compare the ways poets present ideas about power in 'Tissue' and in one other poem from 'Power and Conflict'.

Both 'Tissue' and 'Ozymandias' explore the idea that human power is temporary, and it is nature that has true power. However, in 'Tissue', Dharker uses tissue as a metaphor for the fragility of man's power whereas Shelley mocks the Egyptian pharaoh Ozymandias' attempt at power.

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In 'Tissue', Dharker uses enjambment between the stanzas which gives a sense of freedom to the lines. This lack of control undermines the power mankind truly has as it implies that while mankind tries to have control or order, it cannot be achieved. Dharker reinforces this further by using free verse to show that man's attempt at power is futile.

Similarly, Shelley undermines the rules of language in 'Ozymandias'. However, Shelley does this by subverting the sonnet form. Shelley uses iambic pentameter to represent the power Ozymandias tries to have, but by breaking the iambic pentameter on a number of lines, Shelley undermines this attempt to have power. Shelley, like Dharker, appears to be mocking attempts at power made by humans.

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Compare the ways poets present ideas about power in 'Tissue' and in one other poem from 'Power and Conflict'.

"sun shines through
their borderlines"

power of nature

"lone and level sands stretch far away"

Write a PETERCETER paragraph comparing these poems using these quotations.

empty
space -

mocks 'look on my
works... and despair'

to desert lasts longer
than statue

emphasises
insignificance
of human
power.

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'Tissue' Dharker

Context:

Dharker was born in Pakistan and grew up in Scotland. She often writes about identity. In the poem, paper is an extended metaphor for life and how we record things. Attempts for humans to have power cause conflict - e.g. conflict over land borders and religion. 'Tissue' is from the collection, 'The terrorist at my table'.

Themes:

Identity
Power of nature

S There is a lot of enjambment in the poem which undermines the way humans try to have power and control.

P 'the sun shines through / their borderlines' - nature is more powerful than man as it shines through man-made borders on maps. This undermines the power of humans. This idea is reinforced by the enjambment and the repetition of this idea.

L "daylight break.. through the shapes that pride can make". This could be a criticism of human pride as man creates big buildings that are ultimately unimportant. Light lasts and has more power than man.

I 'fly our lives like paper kites' - simile - implies our lives are controlled by money; money dominates humans and has power.

T 'Tissue', 'Paper' and 'turned into your skin' - human skin and tissue paper are made to link together. The poem is an extended metaphor, showing that human power is fragile, like tissue. Our lives are controlled by paper - religious texts, maps, receipts - but their power is fragile compared to nature.