**Compare the ways poets present ideas about conflict in ‘War Photographer’ and in one other poem from ‘Power and conflict’.**

The theme of conflict is presented clearly in both Duffy’s War Photographer and Hughes’ Bayonet Charge, despite the poems being written during different time periods.

Primarily, within War Photographer the theme of conflict is established from the poem’s title. The first word ‘war’ has solely negative connotations and can be seen as a last resort in times of conflict. The reader is likely to have subjective interpretations of the word dependent on their own experience. However, ‘photographer’ connotes not only a profession, but alludes to a moment of war, frozen in an image, allowing even those who have never experienced war an insight into a life in conflict. Despite the reference to these still images - which became increasingly prominent in the media following the Vietnamese war which was featured heavily in the popular Life magazine - Duffy seeks to present the reader with the idea that a photograph cannot tell us the full story, or that of the man behind it. Written in a narrative style, Duffy tells us that the photographer’s ‘hands, which did not tremble then / …seem to now’. The juxtaposition in the photographer’s physical state could be seen to allude to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of capturing ‘a hundred agonies’, suggesting that the conflict he has witnessed has had a large impact on his mental state.

Similarly, in Bayonet Charge, a theme of conflict is presented from the outset within the title. Despite the difference of being set in World War One, whereas Duffy’s poem focuses on more modern wars, the use of the noun ‘bayonet’ presents a violent conflict straight away. A bayonet was used during hand-to-hand combat, which could be seen to be much more personal; however, the poem then goes on to suggest that the man has become more like a machine – he is ‘suddenly’ running, having only just ‘awoke’. Hughes presents the idea that he has to wake up and be instantly in fighting mode through his adverb choice. Unlike War Photographer, there is a more intimate connection to the conflict as he focuses on a soldier in the midst of battle. References to time are used throughout the poem to show the pace at which the soldier acts, and reflect the chaos of war. This idea is further reinforced in the erratic structure of the poem.

In contract, Duffy uses a relatively regimented structure within War Photographer – her regular structure exemplifies how the photographer provides some sort of order to the chaos he witnesses, though there’s the suggestion that this is not enough. The internal rhyme of ‘tears’ and ‘beers’ in the poem’s final stanza indicates that whilst the ‘reader’s eyeballs prick with tears’ it is not enough to impact their day with their ‘bath and pre-lunch beers’. Duffy’s use of the verb ‘prick’ here can be seen to suggest that the tears do not fall – the photographs alone are not powerful enough for a person to understand the reality of the war they depict. Her listing of ‘Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh’ shows the extent of war globally, but this is juxtaposed with the photographer’s ‘rural England’ implying that it is easy to forget, or ignore, the conflict when it is not in one’s home country. By suggesting that the ‘blood stained into foreign dust’, Duffy reinforces the idea that people at home are able to separate themselves from the reality of conflicts across the globe, as the adjective ‘foreign’ implies a divide between here and there.

On the other hand, Bayonet Charge does not present the idea that conflicts are ignored, as it is set in a war that impacted everyone. It does, however, focus on one person’s experience, but with many poems of World War One the experience of one is akin to the experience of all. In the second stanza Hughes depicts a moment in time, a brief pause in the conflict, before the pace quickens again in the final stanza with an explosion of senses. The pause suggests that the man does not know why he is there – he is paused mid-step like a statue, as though he is momentarily frozen with fear, before he must continue with his ‘charge’. This shows the fear of soldiers in war, yet they must continue if they wish to survive.

The theme of survival during conflict is also presented by Duffy as she uses emotive imagery to contrast the English fields to those where they ‘explode beneath the feet / of running children in nightmare heat’. Duffy uses rhyming couplets, like ‘feet’ and ‘heat’, sporadically throughout her poem in order to present a bitter and regretful tone. This quotation can also be seen to present a hellish image with words such as ‘explode’, ‘nightmare’ and ‘heat’, contrasted with the innocence of ‘children’, exemplifying the cruel nature of conflict which affects more than just the soldiers. During the developing of the photograph, Duffy uses caesura to allow the reader to focus on what is appearing: ‘Something is happening. A stranger’s features / faintly start to twist before his eyes.’ Here, the use of the verb ‘twist’ can not only be seen to reference the developing photo, but could be used to imply the pain of the man within the photographer as ‘twist’ has connotations of discomfort. The further metaphor of him as a ‘half-formed ghost’ again has a dual meaning – it is both the photograph appearing and the implicit suggestion that the subject may have died as a result of the conflict, showing the true consequences of when conflict turns to war, and suggesting the real story behind the photos we see in the media.