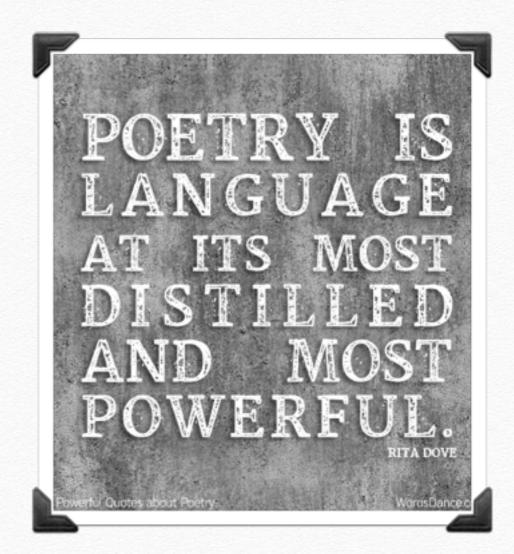
# Unseen Poetry

2013 - The Fist - Derek Walcott

## Tip

- Examiners are increasingly looking for an analysis of the language of the poem rather than a general personal response. In the next slide I have given a checklist you should look for in each poem. There will be examples of several of these in any unseen poem. Trust me!
- In each and every case, be prepared to talk about the <u>effect</u> of each feature of style.



# When analysing unseen poems, look out for...

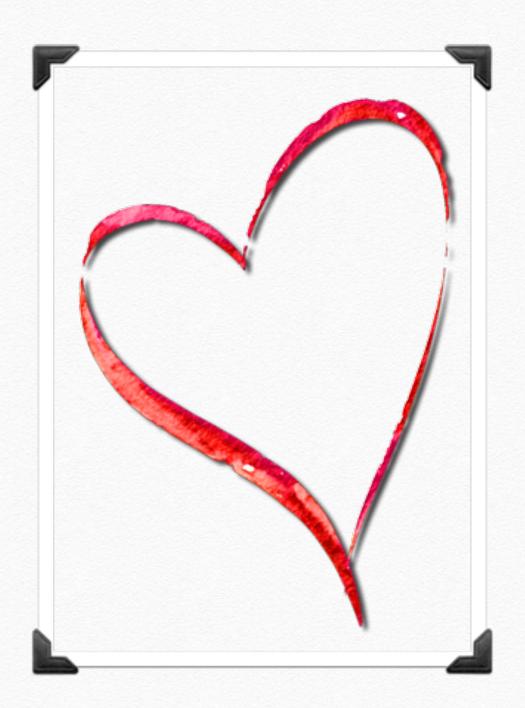
- The title: all possible meanings/connotations
- Simple or complex language (it is usually quite simple in unseen poems but may express a complex emotion)
- Metaphors and similes
- Personification
- Assonance/alliteration
- Harsh or soft vowel/consonant sounds
- Onomatopoeia
- Enjambment/Run-on lines
- Changes in rhythm and/or punctuation
- Negative/positive words

#### Title

- What does the title suggest?
- In this case, it could be <u>violence</u> or even <u>holding tight</u> to something.
- Do both or either of these meanings fit in with your understanding of the poem?

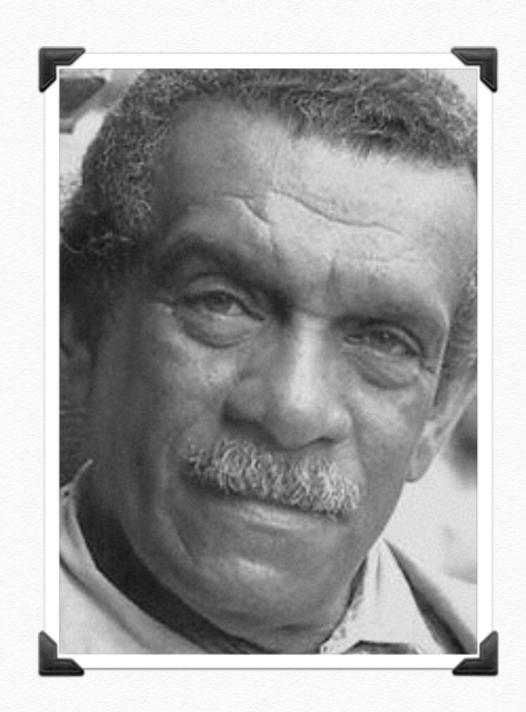
#### First Verse

- Pain of love is likened to a fist clutching his heart
- There is a sense that love might actually kill the poet
- There are moments of relief, like a drowning man breaking the surface of the water
- Relief is short-lived: the fist 'tightens again'



# Duality

- The poet says he has always loved the pain of love.
- There is a difference, however, between the bittersweet intensity of new love and the deeply painful and damaging.
- The poet feels he is crossing over into dangerous territory.



#### Second Verse

- Vivid and horrifying image
- Fist clutching 'the ledge of unreason'
- One slip and he will fall
- Enjambment adds to sense of emotions hurtling out of control
- Long vowel sound in the word 'howling' adds to sense of fear

#### Last Line

- Change
- Steady rhythm gives a sense of control regained
- Poet seems to be holding on to reason
- Addresses heart as if it were a separate entity - detaches him somewhat from overwhelming emotion
- Words 'at least' seem to indicate that the decision to 'hold hard' is not without its own pain and is merely the lesser of two evils



- Last line stands alone: does this emphasise the poet's determination to maintain a certain distance in his relationship?
- He does not want to be dragged down into 'the abyss' of his emotion
- Regular rhythm: iambic pentameter gives a clear and controlled ending to the poem; contrasts with highly-charged, emotional, fast- paced previous stanza.

- Rhythm mirrors a steady heartbeat: does this signal that his heart is not racing any more?
- Simple, monosyllabic words <u>add force</u> to his declaration
- Sad message in a way: intense love is painful

### Language

- Simple language to express a complex emotion
- Rhetorical question in first stanza draws us in and helps us to engage with Walcott's feelings
- Juxtaposition of 'pain' and 'love' as well as 'fist' and 'heart' make us think of love being connected with pain and emotional violence or hurt
- Startling metaphor comparing love to the 'strong clench / of the madman'

- Onomatopoeic word 'howling' with its long 'ow' sound effectively conveys the agony and fear the poet sees in surrendering to the 'mania' of this type of love
- Repeated 'h' sounds in the first alliterative sentence of the last line mimic the exhalation of breath - sense of relief / breathing freely?