T85 Funeral Blues

Auden wrote two different versions of this poem: the original version in five stanzas, which was a parody of a poem of mourning for a political leader written for the verse play The Ascent of F6 *(1936, written with Christopher Isherwood), and the 1938 version in four stanzas that became famous when it was recited in the film* Four Weddings and a Funeral *(1994).*

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking[1] with a juicy bone[2],
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum[3]
Bring out the coffin[4], let the mourners come[5].

Rhyme scheme:
....

5 Let aeroplanes circle moaning[6] overhead
Scribbling[7] on the sky the message He Is Dead.
Put crêpe bows[8] round the white necks of the public doves[9],
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
10 My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one[10],
Pack up[11] the moon and dismantle the sun,
15 Pour away[12] the ocean and sweep up[13] the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

1 **Prevent … barking.** Impedite al cane di abbaiare.
2 **juicy bone.** Osso succulento.
3 **with muffled drum.** Al segnale attutito del tamburo.
4 **coffin.** Feretro.
5 **let … come.** Fate entrare i dolenti.
6 **moaning.** Gemendo.
7 **Scribbling.** Scarabocchiando.
8 **crêpe bows.** Nastri di crespo (tessuto).
9 **public doves.** Piccioni.
10 **put out every one.** Spegnetele una a una.
11 **Pack up.** Imballate.
12 **Pour away.** Scolate.
13 **sweep up.** Spazzate via.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

1 WRITE a caption to describe the content of each stanza.

- Stanza 1: ....
- Stanza 2: ....
- Stanza 3: ....
- Stanza 4: ....

2 LOOK at the visual analysis of the text. Write down what each highlight and colour represents and fill in the missing details in the box next to the text.

(yellow)	....
(grey)	....
(green)	....
(pink)	....
(light blue)	....
(blue)	....
He	....
(salmon)	....

3 **DISCUSS** the following questions in pairs.

1 Why does the speaker use so many imperatives?

2 Why does the speaker want to silence the clocks and telephones?

3 Why do you think the speaker wants to remove the moon and the sun?

4 Auden draws together words in an unexpected way to achieve striking images. Can you provide some examples from the poem?

5 Describe the poet's attitude in line 12.

› COMPETENCE: PRODUCING A WRITTEN TEXT ON A GIVEN SUBJECT

4 **WRITE** a 10/12-line paragraph to draw a comparison between W.B. Yeats (→ 6.13), T.S. Eliot (→ 6.14) and W.H. Auden as regards

• choice of poetic forms;

• language;

• themes;

• view of the function of poetry.