

Power and Conflict quotes, in plain words

Every big quote from the fifteen poems. Which poem, which poet, and what it means. Start with the ones marked with a dot.

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Learn these twenty first

Short. Easy to remember. Between them they cover every theme and every main character.

- **Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!**

Shelley · [Ozymandias](#) · [power of humans](#) · [power of nature](#)

The king's boast on his statue. Look at what I built and be afraid. Around it there is nothing.

- **Nothing beside remains**

Shelley · [Ozymandias](#) · [power of humans](#) · [power of nature](#) · [loss](#)

The statue is broken. The empire is gone. The sand is what lasts.

- **mind-forg'd manacles**

Blake · [London](#) · [power of humans](#) · [identity](#)

Chains made in the mind. The people of London are locked up by their own thoughts and by the powerful.

- **a huge peak, black and huge**

Wordsworth · [Extract from The Prelude](#) · [power of nature](#) · [memory](#)

A boy steals a boat. A mountain rises up behind him. He repeats huge because he has no other word for it.

- **I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together**

Browning · [My Last Duchess](#) · [power of humans](#) · [conflict](#)

The Duke had his wife killed because she smiled at everyone. He says it calmly, in passing.

- **Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die**

Tennyson · [The Charge of the Light Brigade](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

Soldiers do not ask why. They obey and they die. Someone made a mistake and they paid.

- **But nothing happens**

Owen · [Exposure](#) · [conflict](#)

The line at the end of four stanzas. They wait. They freeze. Nothing happens. That is the horror.

- **Bullets smacking the belly out of the air**

Hughes · [Bayonet Charge](#) · [conflict](#)

Bullets punch the air itself. The soldier runs through it.

- **his bloody life in my bloody hands**

Armitage · [Remains](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

Bloody as blood and bloody as a swear word. The last line. It echoes Macbeth.

- **spasms of paper red**

Weir · [Poppies](#) · [conflict](#) · [loss](#) · [memory](#)

Paper poppies on a blazer. Spasms sounds like pain. A mother pins one on her son.

- **A hundred agonies in black and white**

Duffy · [War Photographer](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

A hundred photos of pain. The editor will pick five or six.

- **turned into your skin**

Dharker · [Tissue](#) · [power of humans](#) · [identity](#)

Paper that becomes skin. Maps, receipts and records are all thin. So are we.

- **I am branded by an impression of sunlight**

Rumens · [The Emigrée](#) · [memory](#) · [identity](#)

She left her city as a child. Her memory of it is all sunlight. It is stamped on her.

- **Dem tell me Dem tell me Wha dem want to tell me**

Agard · [Checking Out Me History](#) · [identity](#) · [power of humans](#)

They taught him their history and hid his. The beat is a drum.

- **a shaven head full of powerful incantations**

Garland · [Kamikaze](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

The pilot's head is full of the words that sent him to die.

- **We are prepared: we build our houses squat**

Heaney · [Storm on the Island](#) · [power of nature](#) · [conflict](#)

The islanders build low and strong. They think they are ready for the storm.

Every quote, in order

All 49, in the order they happen.

Power of nature and of humans 20 quotes

Conflict and its effects 23 quotes

Identity, memory and place 6 quotes

Power of nature and of humans

- **Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!**

Shelley · [Ozymandias](#) · [power of humans](#) · [power of nature](#)

The king's boast on his statue. Look at what I built and be afraid. Around it there is nothing.

- **Nothing beside remains**

Shelley · [Ozymandias](#) · [power of humans](#) · [power of nature](#) · [loss](#)

The statue is broken. The empire is gone. The sand is what lasts.

The lone and level sands stretch far away

Shelley · [Ozymandias](#) · [power of nature](#)

Flat empty desert in every direction. Nature outlasts every king.

sneer of cold command

Shelley · [Ozymandias](#) · [power of humans](#)

The face on the statue is cruel and proud. The sculptor caught it. The king did not notice.

● mind-forg'd manacles

Blake · [London](#) · [power of humans](#) · [identity](#)

Chains made in the mind. The people of London are locked up by their own thoughts and by the powerful.

In every cry of every Man, In every Infant's cry of fear

Blake · [London](#) · [power of humans](#) · [loss](#)

Everyone is crying. Even babies are afraid. Blake hears it on every street.

Every black'ning Church appalls

Blake · [London](#) · [power of humans](#)

The church is going black with soot and shame. It does nothing for the poor.

the hapless Soldier's sigh Runs in blood down Palace walls

Blake · [London](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

The soldier's sigh turns into blood on the palace. The rich send the poor to die.

● a huge peak, black and huge

Wordsworth · [Extract from The Prelude](#) · [power of nature](#) · [memory](#)

A boy steals a boat. A mountain rises up behind him. He repeats huge because he has no other word for it.

And measured motion like a living thing, Strode after me

Wordsworth · [Extract from The Prelude](#) · [power of nature](#)

The mountain seems to walk after him. Nature has become alive and angry.

huge and mighty forms, that do not live Like living men

Wordsworth · [Extract from The Prelude](#) · [power of nature](#) · [memory](#)

For days after, he sees giant shapes in his mind. Nature has changed how he thinks.

● I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together

Browning · [My Last Duchess](#) · [power of humans](#) · [conflict](#)

The Duke had his wife killed because she smiled at everyone. He says it calmly, in passing.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall, Looking as if she were alive

Browning · [My Last Duchess](#) · [power of humans](#)

He shows off her portrait like a possession. As if she were alive. She is not.

I choose Never to stoop

Browning · [My Last Duchess](#) · [power of humans](#)

He would not lower himself to tell her what annoyed him. So he had her removed.

● We are prepared: we build our houses squat

Heaney · [Storm on the Island](#) · [power of nature](#) · [conflict](#)

The islanders build low and strong. They think they are ready for the storm.

Spits like a tame cat Turned savage

Heaney · [Storm on the Island](#) · [power of nature](#)

The sea is a cat that turns wild. Nature that seemed tame is not.

Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear

Heaney · [Storm on the Island](#) · [power of nature](#)

The last line. Wind is nothing you can see. It is still what they fear.

● turned into your skin

Dharker · [Tissue](#) · [power of humans](#) · [identity](#)

Paper that becomes skin. Maps, receipts and records are all thin. So are we.

Paper that lets the light shine through

Dharker · [Tissue](#) · [power of humans](#) · [power of nature](#)

Thin paper lets light in. Dharker wants buildings and borders made that way too.

Maps too. The sun shines through their borderlines

Dharker · [Tissue](#) · [power of humans](#)

Borders are lines on paper. The sun does not see them.

Conflict and its effects

Half a league, half a league, Half a league onward

Tennyson · [The Charge of the Light Brigade](#) · [conflict](#)

The beat of the horses. The poem gallops. The men ride into the guns.

● Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die

Tennyson · [The Charge of the Light Brigade](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

Soldiers do not ask why. They obey and they die. Someone made a mistake and they paid.

Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred

Tennyson · [The Charge of the Light Brigade](#) · [conflict](#) · [loss](#)

Six hundred men ride into a valley of death. The line comes back again and again.

Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred!

Tennyson · [The Charge of the Light Brigade](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

Tennyson asks us to honour them. He praises the courage and skips the blunder.

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us

Owen · [Exposure](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of nature](#)

The cold is the enemy, not the Germans. The wind cuts like a knife.

● But nothing happens

Owen · [Exposure](#) · [conflict](#)

The line at the end of four stanzas. They wait. They freeze. Nothing happens. That is the horror.

Slowly our ghosts drag home

Owen · [Exposure](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#) · [loss](#)

The men imagine going home. Only their ghosts can go.

For love of God seems dying

Owen · [Exposure](#) · [conflict](#) · [loss](#)

Owen loses faith out there. God's love seems to be dying too.

● Bullets smacking the belly out of the air

Hughes · [Bayonet Charge](#) · [conflict](#)

Bullets punch the air itself. The soldier runs through it.

In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations

Hughes · [Bayonet Charge](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

Mid-run he wonders what machine put him here. Stars, nations, cold clockwork. He is a part in it.

King, honour, human dignity, etcetera

Hughes · [Bayonet Charge](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

The big words for why he is fighting. Etcetera. They fall away when the bullets come.

Probably armed, possibly not

Armitage · [Remains](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

The soldier shot a looter. He does not know if the man had a gun. The doubt is what stays.

● his bloody life in my bloody hands

Armitage · [Remains](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

Bloody as blood and bloody as a swear word. The last line. It echoes Macbeth.

He's here in my head when I close my eyes

Armitage · [Remains](#) · [memory](#) · [conflict](#)

He came home. The dead man came with him.

● spasms of paper red

Weir · [Poppies](#) · [conflict](#) · [loss](#) · [memory](#)

Paper poppies on a blazer. Spasms sounds like pain. A mother pins one on her son.

I was brave, as I walked with you, to the front door

Weir · [Poppies](#) · [loss](#) · [conflict](#)

The front door is her front line. She has to be brave to let him go.

the world overflowing like a treasure chest

Weir · [Poppies](#) · [loss](#) · [conflict](#)

To the son, leaving is exciting. To the mother it is loss.

● A hundred agonies in black and white

Duffy · [War Photographer](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

A hundred photos of pain. The editor will pick five or six.

spools of suffering set out in ordered rows

Duffy · [War Photographer](#) · [conflict](#) · [memory](#)

The film rolls in his darkroom. Suffering, filed neatly.

they do not care

Duffy · [War Photographer](#) · [conflict](#)

The readers look at his photos over breakfast and forget. The last words of the poem.

• a shaven head full of powerful incantations

Garland · [Kamikaze](#) · [conflict](#) · [power of humans](#)

The pilot's head is full of the words that sent him to die.

he must have wondered which had been the better way to die

Garland · [Kamikaze](#) · [conflict](#) · [identity](#) · [loss](#)

He turned back and lived. His family never spoke to him again. The last line asks which death was worse.

a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous

Garland · [Kamikaze](#) · [power of nature](#) · [memory](#)

Looking down at the sea, he remembers his father's fishing boat. The sea wins.

Identity, memory and place

• I am branded by an impression of sunlight

Rumens · [The Emigrée](#) · [memory](#) · [identity](#)

She left her city as a child. Her memory of it is all sunlight. It is stamped on her.

There once was a country

Rumens · [The Emigrée](#) · [memory](#) · [identity](#) · [loss](#)

The first words. Like a fairy tale. The country she remembers may not exist any more.

They accuse me of absence, they circle me

Rumens · [The Emigrée](#) · [identity](#) · [conflict](#)

The new place blames her for leaving the old one. Her city stands behind her.

● Dem tell me Dem tell me Wha dem want to tell me

Agard · [Checking Out Me History](#) · [identity](#) · [power of humans](#)

They taught him their history and hid his. The beat is a drum.

Bandage up me eye with me own history Blind me to me own identity

Agard · [Checking Out Me History](#) · [identity](#) · [power of humans](#)

School wrapped a bandage over his eyes. He could not see who he was.

I carving out me identity

Agard · [Checking Out Me History](#) · [identity](#)

The last line. He is making his own story now, with a knife.
