CAPITOLO

2

Faith and Doubt: Tennyson, Browning and Arnold

"There lives more faith in honest doubt, / Believe me, than in half the creeds." — Alfred Tennyson, In Memoriam A.H.H. (1850), XCVI (XCIV in the first edition)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can explain how geology and Darwin's *Origin of Species* changed Victorian ideas of time, nature and faith, and place the main events on a timeline.
2. I can describe the poetry of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold and explain what a dramatic monologue is.
3. I can analyse extracts from "Ulysses", "My Last Duchess" and "Dover Beach", and read a poem aloud with attention to stress, pauses and intonation.
4. I can use advanced concessive structures (*much as, strange as it may seem, try as he might, admittedly … even so*) in speech and writing.
5. I can write a dramatic monologue with a writer's note, and build a quotation bank for the colloquio.
6. I can compare Tennyson's Ulysses with Homer's, Dante's and Pascoli's, and Arnold's Sophocles with a chorus of *Antigone*.

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Capitolo 2: Faith and Doubt: Tennyson, Browning and Arnold · pagine 49–78 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

In the autumn of 1833 a young Cambridge poet received a letter telling him that his closest friend had died suddenly in Vienna, aged twenty-two. Alfred Tennyson spent the next seventeen years writing poems about that loss, and about a question that every educated Victorian would soon have to face: if the earth is millions of years old, and whole species have lived and vanished on it, what is the place of one human life — and of God — in that story? A generation later Charles Darwin gave the question its most famous form.

This chapter follows three poets who answered it in three different voices. Tennyson's old Ulysses refuses to stop; Browning's Duke talks too much and reveals a crime; Arnold, on a beach at night, hears faith withdrawing like a tide. Behind all three stand two other voyagers you know well from your Italian and Greek classes: Homer's Odysseus and Dante's Ulisse. The language point — *concession*, saying "yes, but…" — is the grammar of an age that kept accepting new facts and holding on to old hopes.

2.1 History and Society: Science and Faith, 1830–1870

In chapter 1 you saw Victorian Britain as a society of railways, factories and reform. The same decades changed something less visible: the way people imagined time, nature and their own origins. The changes came from rocks and fossils before they came from Darwin, and they reached the public through books, lectures, sermons and poems.

2.1.1 Deep time

Most Christians in 1800 still read the Bible's account of creation as history, and many accepted calculations that put the creation of the world a few thousand years in the past. Geologists had already begun to doubt this. The Scottish geologist James Hutton had argued in 1788 that the earth's rocks showed no trace of a beginning, and in Lyme Regis Mary Anning (you met her in English 1, Unit 8) dug out the skeletons of sea reptiles that no longer existed anywhere. Fossils proved that species could become *extinct*.

The decisive book was Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (three volumes, 1830–33). Lyell argued that the forces we can observe today — rain, rivers, waves, volcanoes, the slow rise and fall of the land — are enough to explain every feature of the earth, if we allow them enough time. This principle, called **uniformitarianism** (*uniformitarismo*; the word was coined by William Whewell in 1832), replaced **catastrophism** (*catastrofismo*) — the belief that sudden, worldwide disasters such as great floods had shaped the earth — with slow change over almost unimaginable periods. Today we call that vast past **deep time** (*tempo profondo*) — a twentieth-century phrase for a Victorian discovery. Lyell's readers found that the human story was a tiny final

chapter in the history of the planet. Figura 2.1 places these discoveries, and the poems of this chapter, on one time axis.

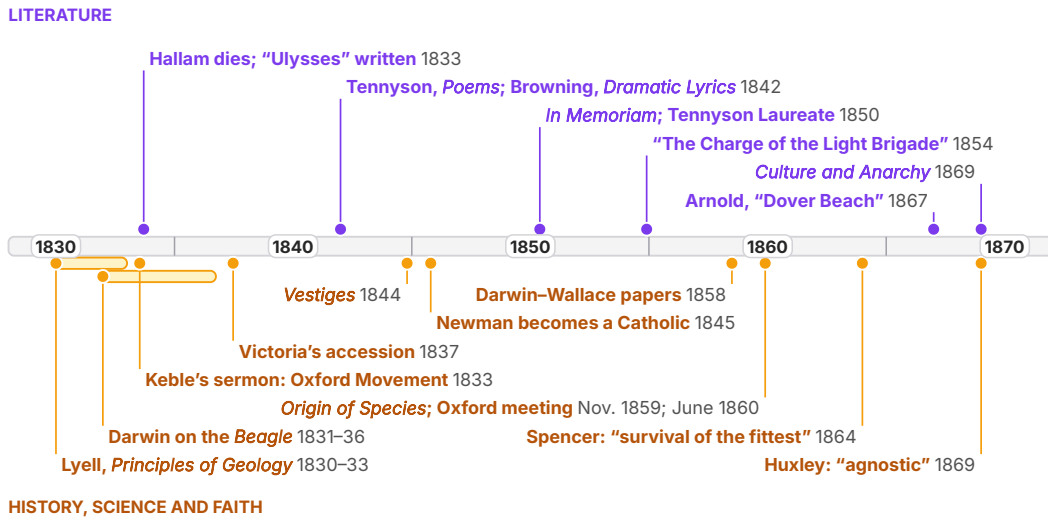


Figura 2.1 Science, faith and poetry, 1830–1870, on a proportional time axis (ticks every 5 years). Above the axis, literary events (violet); below it, events in science, religion and society (amber). Bars show events that lasted more than a year.

2.1.2 Darwin and the *Origin*

Charles Darwin (1809–1882) carried the first volume of Lyell on board HMS *Beagle* when he sailed round the world as the expedition's naturalist (1831–36; you followed the voyage in English 1). Back in England he filled notebooks with questions about the birds and tortoises of the Galápagos Islands, read Thomas Malthus on population in 1838, and slowly built a theory. He was cautious: for twenty years he collected evidence and published nothing about it. In 1858 the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace sent him an essay from the Malay Archipelago with the same idea. Papers by both men were read at the Linnean Society in London on 1 July 1858, and on **24 November 1859** Darwin published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

His argument, in plain words, has four steps. Individuals of a species *vary*; many variations are *inherited*; more young are born than can survive, so there is a constant struggle for food and space; and the individuals whose variations suit their environment survive and reproduce more often. Repeated over thousands of generations, this process changes populations and splits one species into several. Darwin called the result **descent with modification** (*discendenza con modificazioni*): all living things are branches of one family tree. The famous phrase "survival of the fittest" is not Darwin's: the philosopher Herbert Spencer coined it in 1864, and Darwin adopted it only in the fifth edition of the *Origin* (1869).

The *Origin* hardly mentions human beings. Its single sentence on the subject — "Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history" — was enough. Readers saw at once that people, too, must be part of the tree, and Darwin said so openly in *The Descent of Man* (1871). He never said that humans descend from monkeys: humans and the other apes share common ancestors, as cousins do.

> **DA RICORDARE**
>
> **Science and faith at a glance.** Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (1830–33): deep time · Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (24 November 1859): natural selection · "survival of the fittest": Spencer (1864), adopted by Darwin in 1869 · the Oxford meeting of the British Association (June 1860) · "agnostic": coined by T. H. Huxley (1869).

2.1.3 A Church in question

Victorian Britain was a deeply religious country. The Church of England was the established (state) church; millions of **Nonconformists** (*non conformisti*) — Protestants outside the Church of England, such as Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists — worshipped in their own chapels; and the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 ("Catholic emancipation") had given Catholics most civil rights. Religion shaped schools, charity, Sunday rest and private conscience.

Within the Church there were deep divisions. In July 1833 John Keble preached a sermon in Oxford that is usually taken as the start of the **Oxford Movement** (*Movimento di Oxford*): a group of Oxford clergymen, led by John Henry Newman, who wanted to restore the authority, rituals and traditions that the Church of England shared with Catholicism. They wrote *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41), and in 1845 Newman himself became a Catholic. At the opposite pole, German scholars were reading the Bible as a collection of historical documents written by human authors in particular times — an approach called **higher criticism** (*critica biblica storica*). David Friedrich Strauss's *Life of Jesus* reached English readers in 1846 in the translation of a young woman called Mary Ann Evans, later known as George Eliot (chapter 3). When seven liberal authors, six of them clergymen, published *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, accepting some of these methods, the book at first caused more scandal than the *Origin*.

Geology, biblical scholarship and evolution together produced what historians call the Victorian **crisis of faith** (*crisi della fede*) — a label, not a fact about everyone. Many scientists remained believers; many believers accepted evolution as God's method; and most people's religious life went on much as before. But for a visible minority of writers and thinkers, certainty became impossible. In 1869 the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley invented a word for his own position: **agnosticism** (*agnosticismo*), the view that we cannot know whether God exists. Women's lives were shaped by the same religious ideals — the home as a sacred "sphere" — as you will see in chapter 3.

APPROFONDIMENTO

The Oxford "debate", 1860: what do we really know? In June 1860 the British Association for the Advancement of Science met in Oxford, in the new University Museum. After a paper on Darwin's theory, Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, attacked the *Origin*; Huxley and the botanist Joseph Hooker defended it. A famous story says that the bishop asked Huxley whether he was descended from a monkey on his grandfather's or his grandmother's side, and that Huxley replied that he would rather have a monkey for an ancestor than a man who used his gifts to hide the truth.

The exchange is **not reliably recorded**. Nobody took it down at the time; the press reports are short and differ; the best-known versions were written years later by Darwin's supporters. Historians now treat the famous version as a legend that grew because it told a simple story — science against religion — which the real history does not support. When you report it, use reporting verbs that keep your distance: *Huxley is said to have replied…; according to later accounts…*

2.2 Literature: Victorian Poetry — Tennyson, Browning and Arnold

The Victorian age is remembered for its novels, but its poets were famous public figures, read aloud in families, quoted in Parliament and learned by heart at school. They inherited the Romantic lyric (English 4) and changed it in two ways. Some, like Tennyson, made the lyric speak for a whole society's grief and doubt; others, like Browning, gave the poem to a character who is clearly *not* the poet.

2.2.1 Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892)

Tennyson was born in Somersby, Lincolnshire, the son of a clergyman, and studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, where his closest friend was Arthur Henry Hallam. Hallam's sudden death in Vienna in September 1833 was the central event of his life as a poet. Within weeks he wrote "Ulysses" (published in *Poems*, 1842), in which the old hero refuses to sit at home waiting for death. Tennyson later said that the poem gave his feeling about "the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" after Hallam's death (his son printed the remark in the *Memoir* of 1897). It is written in blank verse (English 3) and spoken by Ulysses himself, so it is often read as an early dramatic monologue, although for most of the poem we cannot tell who is listening.

Tennyson's long elegy *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850) gathers more than 130 short poems written over seventeen years. They move from shock and despair, through doubt, to a hesitant hope. Every section uses the same form, now called the **In Memoriam stanza**: four lines of iambic tetrameter rhyming *abba*, so that the first rhyme returns only after the second, like a thought that circles back. In section LVI Nature seems indifferent to the human creed that God is love:

> Who trusted God was love indeed
> And love Creation's final law—
> Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—
>
> Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850), LVI, ll. 13–16 (numbered LV in the first edition: two sections were added later); text of the first edition (Moxon, 1850), Project Gutenberg eBook #70950. *ravine*: plunder, prey.

The phrase "red in tooth and claw" is now quoted in almost every book about Darwin, but it was published in **1850, nine years before the *Origin***. Tennyson had read Lyell and the anonymous *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), a best-selling book that already proposed a kind of evolution. The poem made him the national poet: in November 1850 he succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate (English 4). He wrote public poems such as "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), on a disastrous cavalry attack in the Crimean War, and the Arthurian *Idylls of the King* (1859–85), and was made a baron in 1884.

2.2.2 Robert Browning (1812–1889) and the dramatic monologue

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell, south London, and educated largely in his father's enormous library. His early long poems were thought obscure, and fame came slowly. His great invention was a form in which a single invented character speaks at a decisive moment. A **dramatic monologue** (*monologo drammatico*) is a poem with three elements: a **speaker** who is not the poet; a **silent listener** (*interlocutore muto*), present but never heard, whose reactions we deduce from what the speaker says; and a **revealing situation**, in which the speaker shows more of himself than he intends. Unlike a soliloquy (English 3), the speech is addressed to someone; unlike a lyric, its "I" is a mask that the reader is invited to judge.

"My Last Duchess" appeared in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) with a single word under the title: *Ferrara*. The speaker is usually identified with Alfonso II d'Este, fifth Duke of Ferrara, whose young first wife, Lucrezia de' Medici, died in 1561, three years after the wedding; the Duke then negotiated a second marriage. In the poem he shows a portrait of his dead wife to the envoy who has come to arrange that marriage. Figura 2.2 shows how the form works.

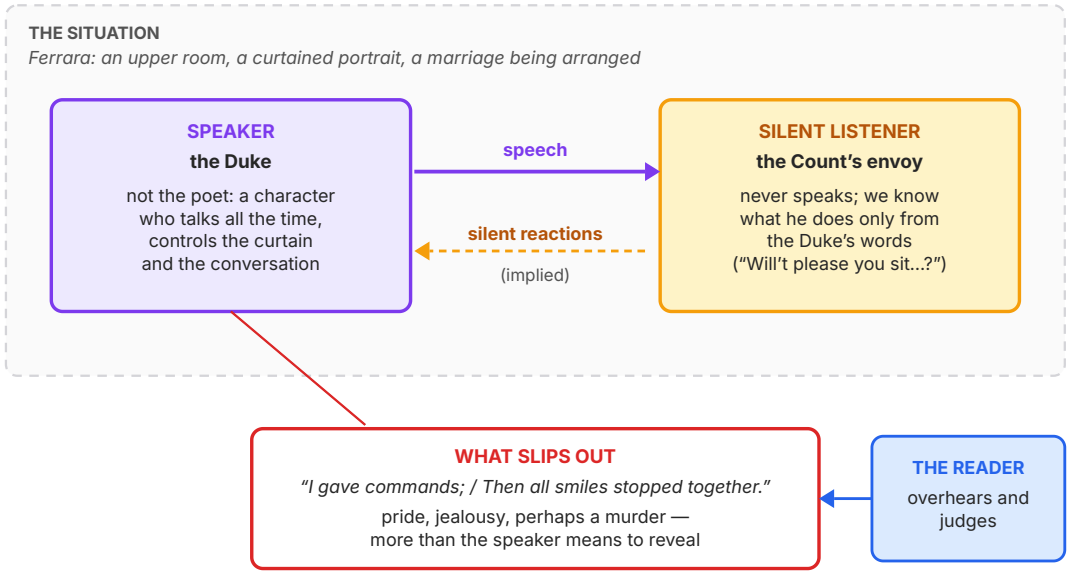


Figura 2.2 The dramatic monologue, as in Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842): a speaker, a silent listener whose reactions we infer, the situation that frames them, and what the speaker reveals without meaning to — which only the reader, overhearing, can judge.

In 1846 Browning secretly married the poet Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861), then more famous than he was, and took her to Italy. They lived in Florence, in an apartment called Casa Guidi, where she wrote poems in support of Italian independence. Her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850) — the "Portuguese" was a disguise for herself — include the line "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." After her death in Florence in 1861 Robert returned to London. His *Men and Women* (1855) and *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), a Roman murder trial of 1698 told by ten different speakers, pushed the monologue to its limits. He died in Venice in 1889 and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

2.2.3 Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

Matthew Arnold was the son of Thomas Arnold, the reforming headmaster of Rugby School — and an editor of Thucydides. For thirty-five years (1851–86) he worked as an inspector of schools, travelling the country and writing reports; he was also Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1857–67). His most famous poem, "Dover Beach", was probably begun in 1851, the year of his marriage, but he published it only in *New Poems* (1867). On a calm night the speaker listens to the waves on the shingle and hears in them the "eternal note of sadness" that Sophocles heard, and the retreat of the "sea of faith". The answer he offers is not religious but personal: "Ah, love,

let us be true / To one another!" The poem's irregular line lengths and rhymes are unusual for its time.

After 1867 Arnold wrote mostly prose. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) he argued that culture — "the best which has been thought and said in the world" — could give a society the shared values that religion was losing. That idea shaped the teaching of literature in British and American schools for a century.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Tennyson scrisse "red in tooth and claw" dopo aver letto Darwin.» → ✓ Il verso è in *In Memoriam* (1850), **nove anni prima** dell'*Origin* (1859): Tennyson reagisce alla geologia di Lyell, non a Darwin.

✗ «Nel monologo drammatico parla il poeta.» → ✓ Parla un **personaggio**: il Duca non è Browning. Scrivi *the speaker* o *the Duke*, mai *Browning says* per le parole del Duca.

✗ «*Ulysses* di Tennyson…» → ✓ "Ulysses" (tra virgolette) è la poesia di Tennyson; *Ulysses* in corsivo è il romanzo di Joyce (capitolo 8).

IN SINTESI

Tabella 2.1 Three Victorian poets at a glance

	Tennyson	Browning	Arnold
Key poem here	"Ulysses" (1842)	"My Last Duchess" (1842)	"Dover Beach" (1867)
Form	blank verse; monologue of a mythical hero	dramatic monologue in rhyming couplets	irregular lines and rhymes
Other works	*In Memoriam* (1850); *Idylls of the King*	*Men and Women* (1855); *The Ring and the Book*	*Culture and Anarchy* (1869)
Faith and doubt	doubt overcome by will and hope	moral judgement left to the reader	faith withdraws; love remains
Link to Italy and Greece	Homer, Dante	Ferrara, Florence	Sophocles, Thucydides

2.3 Texts: a Voyage, a Portrait and a Retreating Sea

The three poems are quoted from editions published in the poets' lifetimes or from their final texts, as stated under each extract. Read each one aloud before you analyse it: all three were written for the ear.

2.3.1 T1 · Alfred Tennyson, “Ulysses”

Context. The last section of the poem. Ulysses has handed Ithaca to his son Telemachus and now speaks to his old sailors at the harbour, as evening falls.

Tabella 2.2 T1 — Tennyson, “Ulysses” (written 1833, published 1842), ll. 56–70. Text of J. Churton Collins (ed.), *The Early Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (1900), Project Gutenberg eBook #8601, checked against the 1842 text as reprinted on poets.org.

Come, my friends,	56
’Tis not too late to seek a newer world.	
Push off, and sitting well in order smite	
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds	
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths	60
Of all the western stars, until I die.	
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:	
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,	
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.	
Tho’ much is taken, much abides; and tho’	65
We are not now that strength which in old days	
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;	
One equal temper of heroic hearts,	
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will	
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.	70

Glosses. *smite / The sounding furrows*: strike the noisy waves with the oars (the sea is a field ploughed by the ship) · *purpose*: firm intention · *the baths / Of all the western stars*: the ocean where the stars seem to set · *gulfs*: deep seas, whirlpools · *the Happy Isles*: the Islands of the Blessed, where in Greek myth heroes live after death · *abides*: remains · *temper*: character, and the hardness of tempered steel.

Analysis

Form. Blank verse with strong enjambment (ll. 58–61 run on without a pause) and heavy caesuras in the middle of lines (l. 65 “much abides; and tho’”). Notice how line 55 had slowed down

with monosyllables and colons — "The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs" — before the call "Come, my friends" speeds the verse up.

Language. The verbs of the last line form a rising series of four infinitives, three positive and one negative: *to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield*. Two sentences begin "It may be…": the voyage might end in death or in glory, and Ulysses accepts both. Line 65 is built as a concession — *Tho' much is taken, much abides* — that admits a loss and then denies that it is final (see section 2.4).

Themes. Old age and the will; knowledge as a voyage with no end; leadership ("my friends", "we"). The poem can be read as heroic, as Tennyson's comment suggests, or as the speech of a restless man who abandons his duties: earlier in the poem he calls his wife "aged" and his people "savage". Both readings exist; your answer must use the text.

1. Where is Ulysses, and to whom is he speaking? Which words tell you?
2. Find two images of the end of the day. How do they prepare the call to sail?
3. What are the two possible outcomes of the voyage (ll. 62–64)? Which tone does "It may be" give them?
4. Explain l. 65 in your own words. What has been "taken", and what "abides"?
5. Is the final line heroic, stubborn or both? Give one reason from the text for each reading.

2.3.2 T2 · Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess"

Context. The Duke of Ferrara shows the envoy of a Count a portrait of his dead wife, painted on a wall and hidden by a curtain. The envoy has come to discuss the Duke's next marriage, to the Count's daughter. We read the opening and three lines from the end.

Tabella 2.3 T2 — Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842), ll. 1–13 and 45–47. Text of F. T. Baker (ed.), *Browning's Shorter Poems* (1899), Project Gutenberg eBook #16376, checked against the *Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works* (Project Gutenberg eBook #50954), which differs only in punctuation; […] marks the cut.

Ferrara	
That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,	1
Looking as if she were alive. I call	
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands	
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.	
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said	5
"Frà Pandolf" by design: for never read	
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,	
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,	
But to myself they turned (since none puts by	
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)	10
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,	
How such a glance came there; so, not the first	
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not	
[…]	
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;	45
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands	
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet	

Glosses. *Frà Pandolf*: an imaginary painter-monk · *by design*: on purpose · *countenance*: face · *puts by*: moves aside · *durst*: dared (old past of *dare*) · *ask thus*: ask in this way · *commands*: orders. In the omitted lines the Duke complains that his wife smiled at everyone and thanked the "officious fool" who broke a branch of cherries for her as she thanked the Duke for his "nine-hundred-years-old name".

Analysis

Form. The poem is written in rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter (*wall / call, hands / stands*), but almost every sentence runs over the line end, so the rhymes are hardly heard: the strict form is hidden under a natural, controlling voice, just as the portrait is hidden under a curtain.

The speaker and the listener. We know what the envoy does only from the Duke: he is invited to sit (l. 5), he looks at the painting with a question in his face (ll. 11–13), he is asked to rise (l. 47). The Duke controls the curtain, the conversation and, once, a life. Lines 45–46 are the centre of the poem: three short words, "I gave commands", followed by a result, "Then all smiles stopped together". Browning never says what the commands were in the poem; years later, asked by a reader, he is reported to have answered that they were to have her put to death — "or he might have had her shut up in a convent". The silence is the point.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analysing a line step by step (PEE: Point, Evidence, Explanation). Question: *How does Browning let the Duke reveal more than he intends in ll. 45–46?*

1. **Find the turn.** The rhythm breaks: after the long complaint, two short clauses separated by a semicolon. The change of pace is your first piece of evidence.
2. **Point.** *The Duke presents his wife's death as a simple matter of household management, and this calm is what condemns him.*
3. **Evidence.** "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." (ll. 45–46)
4. **Explanation.** *The commands are never stated, so the reader must supply the crime; "all smiles" turns a woman into the smiles he disliked, and the same line moves on at once to "There she stands", as if the portrait had replaced the person. The Duke thinks he is praising a work of art; he is confessing.*
5. **Link back.** Connect the detail to the form: in a dramatic monologue the speaker never hears himself as we do.

1. Who is the "you" of l. 5? What has he come to Ferrara to do?
2. Why does the Duke say that he named the painter "by design" (l. 6)? What does this reveal about him?
3. Find two details that show that the Duke likes to control what others see.
4. Lines 45–46 can be read in at least two ways. Which ones? Which do you find more convincing, and why?
5. Rewrite ll. 1–4 in modern prose as the envoy might report them in a letter to the Count.

2.3.3 T3 · Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"

Context. A man and a woman at a window above the beach at Dover, on a calm night; the French coast is visible across the strait. In the first two stanzas the speaker has listened to the sound of the pebbles dragged by the waves and remembered that Sophocles heard the same sound on the Aegean. We read the last two stanzas.

Tabella 2.4 T3 — Arnold, "Dover Beach" (published 1867), ll. 21–37. Text of *Poems by Matthew Arnold*, New and Complete Edition (New York: Crowell, n.d.), Project Gutenberg eBook #54985; the poem was first published in *New Poems* (London, 1867).

The sea of faith	21
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore	
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.	
But now I only hear	
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,	25
Retreating, to the breath	
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear	
And naked shingles of the world.	
Ah, love, let us be true	
To one another! for the world, which seems	30
To lie before us like a land of dreams,	
So various, so beautiful, so new,	
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,	
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;	
And we are here as on a darkling plain	35
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,	
Where ignorant armies clash by night.	

Glosses. *at the full*: at high tide · *girdle*: belt · *furled*: rolled up, folded · *drear*: dreary, sad · *shingles*: beaches of small round stones · *certitude*: certainty · *darkling*: in the dark (poetic) · *alarms*: calls to arms, sudden fears.

Analysis

Form. Lines of two to five stresses, rhymes that come back at irregular distances (*faith / breath* is a half-rhyme, English 4; *shore / roar*, *furled / world*): the verse imitates the movement of the waves rather than a fixed pattern. Stanza 3 is one long sentence that ebbs like the tide; stanza 4 begins with an appeal and ends with a battle.

Language. The central image is an extended metaphor: faith is a sea that once surrounded the earth "at the full" and is now withdrawing, leaving the world's beaches "naked". Count the negatives in ll. 33–34: six times *neither / nor*, against the three positive adjectives of l. 32. The

last image is usually connected with Thucydides' account of the night battle at Epipolae, near Syracuse (VII.44), in which the Athenians could not tell friends from enemies — a book that Arnold's father had edited.

Themes. The loss of religious certainty; love as a private refuge in a public darkness; the modern world as confusion. Arnold does not attack faith; he mourns it.

1. What happened to the "sea of faith"? Find the words that describe its past and its present.
2. Which sounds (vowels, consonants) help you hear the "withdrawing roar" in ll. 25–28?
3. Lines 30–34 contrast appearance and reality. Which verbs express each?
4. What does the speaker ask of the person he loves? Is it a solution or a refuge?
5. Compare the end of T3 with the end of T1. Which poem is more hopeful? Use one quotation from each.

2.4 Language: Concessive Clauses at B2+

A **concessive clause** (*proposizione concessiva*) admits a fact that seems to work against the main statement, and then says that the main statement is true all the same. You already use *although, even though, despite* and *in spite of* (English 2) and *however hard*, *whatever*, *no matter how* (English 4, chapter 11). Formal and literary English has more compact ways of conceding, and they are exactly what you need when you write about texts and ideas that are not simple. Tennyson gives the model: *Tho' much is taken, much abides.*

Tabella 2.5 Concessive structures at B2+: form and use

Structure	Form	Example
much as	*much as* + subject + verb (often *like, admire, love, want, regret*)	*Much as he admired science, Tennyson could not accept a universe without purpose.*
adjective / adverb + *as / though*	adjective or adverb + *as* (or *though*) + subject + verb	*Strange as it may seem, "red in tooth and claw" predates Darwin.* *Hard though she tried, the Duchess could not please him.*
try as I might	verb + *as* + subject + *might / may / will*; the main clause states a failure	*Try as he might, Arnold could not recover his faith.*
however + adjective / adverb	*however* + adjective / adverb + subject + verb (recall)	*However cautious Darwin was, his book shocked many readers.*
whereas / while	contrast between two facts (recall); *while* can also concede	*While I accept that the Duke never confesses, the poem leaves little doubt.*
sentence adverbials	*admittedly …* ; *granted (that) …* ; *… Even so / All the same, …*	*Admittedly, "Ulysses" praises courage. Even so, its hero abandons his people.*

2.4.1 Inverted concession: adjective + *as*

In *Strange as it may seem* the adjective moves to the front and *as* (or, a little less formally, *though*) follows it. The meaning is "although it may seem strange". The same pattern works with adverbs (*Hard as he worked…*) and, in literary English, with a noun without an article (*Child as she was, she understood*) — recognise that last one, but do not imitate it. Modal verbs are common in the concessive clause: *may, might, will* add the idea "whatever the degree". With *try as he might* the main clause almost always says that the effort failed.

Much as means "although very much": *Much as I like Browning, I find Sordello unreadable.* It is followed by a full clause, never by a noun. Informal English also uses *as strange as it may seem*, with a first *as*: correct, but less elegant in an essay.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Le concessive avanzate. Tutte esprimono "anche se…, tuttavia…". *Much as* + frase = *per quanto* + congiuntivo (*Much as he admired science… = Per quanto ammirasse la scienza…*). Aggettivo / avverbio + *as* = *per quanto* + aggettivo (*Strange as it may seem = Per quanto possa sembrare strano*; non tradurre parola per parola). *Try as he might = Per quanto si sforzasse*, sempre con un esito negativo. *Granted (that) = ammesso che, d'accordo che* (nel senso di "lo riconosco"); *admittedly = bisogna ammettere che*; *even so / all the same = eppure, ciononostante*.

Confronto con l'italiano. In italiano *benché, sebbene, per quanto* vogliono il congiuntivo; in inglese il verbo resta all'indicativo (o prende un modale: *may, might*). Il gerundio concessivo italiano (*Pur ammirando la scienza…*) si rende con *While admiring science…* o, meglio nei testi formali, con *Much as he admired science…*

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *As strange it may seem, …* → ✓ ***Strange as*** *it may seem, …* (aggettivo prima, poi *as*).

✗ *Much as his admiration for science, …* → ✓ *Much as* ***he admired*** *science, …* (dopo *much as* serve una frase con soggetto e verbo).

✗ *Although Darwin was cautious, but his book shocked readers.* → ✓ *Although Darwin was cautious, his book shocked readers.* (in inglese non si mette *but* nella reggente).

✗ *Try as he might, Ulysses convinced his sailors.* → ✓ *Try as he might, he* ***could not*** *convince them.* (*try as he might* annuncia un fallimento).

✗ *However he tried hard, …* → ✓ *However* ***hard*** *he tried, …* (*however* + aggettivo/avverbio, poi soggetto e verbo).

2.4.2 Conceding across sentences: the shape of an argument

In essays and in the colloquio, concession is more than a clause: it is a move in an argument. You state the opposite view fairly, then turn. The pattern **concession → turn → claim** uses the sentence adverbials in the table: *Admittedly / Granted, … . Even so / All the same, … . Granted* can introduce a clause (*Granted that Tennyson read Lyell, the image is still his own*) or stand alone with a comma. Avoid piling up two concessions in a row; one fair admission makes your claim stronger, three make it disappear.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Building a concessive paragraph for an essay. Task: *Is "Ulysses" a heroic poem?*

1. **Concede:** *Admittedly, Ulysses abandons his wife and his people, and calls them "aged" and "savage".*
2. **Turn:** *Even so, the poem's final lines speak for every reader who has lost something and must go on.*
3. **Compress with a B2+ structure:** *Selfish as its hero may be, "Ulysses" ends with one of the most heroic lines in Victorian poetry.*
4. **Support with evidence:** *Much as time has weakened him, his will remains "strong" — "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (l. 70).*

Check: one concession, one turn, one claim, one quotation. The adjective-*as* clause (step 3) does the work of steps 1 and 2 in a single sentence.

2.5 Skills: Reading Poetry Aloud and Writing a Dramatic Monologue

2.5.1 Vocabulary: belief, science and doubt

The debate of 1860 still goes on today, in classrooms, newspapers and online. These are the words you need to take part in it.

Tabella 2.6 Belief, science and doubt

Word	Class	Example	Italian
faith	n.	*Arnold describes faith as a withdrawing sea.*	fede
doubt	n. / v.	*In Memoriam moves from doubt to hope.*	dubbio / dubitare
evolve	v.	*Species evolve over thousands of generations.*	evolversi
species	n. (sing. = pl.)	*One species can split into two.*	specie
survival	n.	*Survival depends on food, climate and luck.*	sopravvivenza

ancestor	n.	*Humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor.*	antenato
theory	n.	*In science a theory is a tested explanation, not a guess.*	teoria
evidence	n. (uncountable)	*Darwin collected evidence for twenty years.*	prove
sceptical	adj.	*Many scientists were sceptical at first.*	scettico
reconcile	v.	*Some Victorians reconciled faith with evolution.*	conciliare

Two traps: *evidence* is uncountable (*a piece of evidence*, never ✗ *an evidence*), and *species* is the same in the singular and the plural (*one species, two species*). Useful collocations: *lose / keep one's faith, have doubts about, weigh the evidence, reconcile A with B, a struggle for survival, put forward a theory*.

Word formation: Greek and Latin roots

Most scientific words in English are built from Greek and Latin roots, often combined in the nineteenth century: *biology* entered English in the early nineteenth century, and Whewell proposed *scientist* in 1833–34. A classico student can decode them at sight — and should check the meaning, because some roots have moved a long way from the original.

Tabella 2.7 Greek and Latin roots in English

Root	Origin	Meaning	Examples
-logy	Greek λόγος	study, discourse	*biology, geology, theology, ideology*
-graphy	Greek γράφω	writing, description	*geography, biography, photography*
bio-	Greek βίος	life	*biology, biography, antibiotic*
geo-	Greek γῆ	earth	*geology, geography, geometry*
chrono-	Greek χρόνος	time	*chronology, chronic, synchronise*
theo-	Greek θεός	god	*theology, atheist, enthusiasm*
-cide	Latin *caedere*	killing, killer	*genocide, insecticide, suicide*

Notice the hybrids: *genocide* joins Greek γένος and Latin *-cide*, and so do *television* and *automobile*. And notice the stress, which moves with the suffix: *PHOtograph* /ˈfəʊtəgrɑːf/, *phoTOgraphy* /fəˈtɒgrəfi/, *photoGRAPHic* /ˌfəʊtəˈgræfɪk/. Say each family aloud when you learn it.

2.5.2 Listening: Two Ulysses

Before you listen. In third year you read *Inferno* XXVI in Italian. What do you remember about Dante's Ulisse: where is he, and why? Note three facts. Then listen (books closed) while two

classmates read the script: an episode of the Link Reading Club's podcast, in which Sam, now studying English in Manchester, talks to Giulia in Turin.

Tabella 2.8 Listening script — Two Ulysses (The Link Reading Club podcast)

Sam	Welcome back to the Link. This week I've got a seminar on Tennyson's "Ulysses", and I asked Giulia to help, because my reading list says "compare Dante", and Giulia has actually read Dante.
Giulia	In Italian, in third year, with footnotes. Much as I love Canto XXVI, I wouldn't call myself an expert.
Sam	You're more of an expert than me. So — Dante's Ulysses. Where is he?
Giulia	In Hell, in the eighth circle, among the fraudulent counsellors. He's inside a flame, together with Diomedes, because of the tricks they played at Troy — the wooden horse, for example.
Sam	But the bit everyone remembers isn't about Troy.
Giulia	No, it's his last voyage. He tells his old companions that they weren't made to live like animals but to follow virtue and knowledge. They sail through the Strait of Gibraltar, out into the ocean, and after five months they see a mountain. Then a whirlwind sinks the ship.
Sam	And Tennyson took that speech and made a whole poem of it. His Ulysses is at home in Ithaca, old, bored with being king, and he says almost the same thing: "To follow knowledge, like a sinking star."
Giulia	Yes, but the tone is different. Dante admires him and condemns him at the same time. Brave as he is, Ulisse is punished, and he tells the story after the disaster. Tennyson stops before the voyage, so we never see the ending.
Sam	Our lecturer said exactly that — that the poem ends on a promise, not a result. And Tennyson wrote it just after his best friend died, so it's partly about carrying on.
Giulia	That changes it. Granted, the old man wants adventure. All the same, it sounds like someone who refuses to give up after a loss.
Sam	So what about Homer? Does Odysseus ever go on a last voyage there?
Giulia	Not in the poem. In Book Eleven the prophet Tiresias tells him that, after he gets home, he must travel inland with an oar until he finds people who don't know the sea. Then he'll die gently, in old age. Dante couldn't read Greek, so his voyage is his own invention.
Sam	Three poets, three endings. Try as I might, I can't choose a favourite.
Giulia	You don't have to. Just don't mix them up in your essay.

After listening. 1) Answer: Why is Dante's Ulisse in Hell? What does Dante's voyage end with? Why does Sam's lecturer say that Tennyson's poem "ends on a promise"? What does Tiresias predict? 2) Find four concessive structures in the script and say which type each one is. 3) Giulia says Dante "admires him and condemns him at the same time". Do you agree? Use one line from *Inferno* XXVI (section 2.6).

2.5.3 Speaking: reading a poem aloud

Reading a poem aloud is a performance of your interpretation. Three things carry the meaning: **stress** (content words are stressed, function words reduced), **pauses** (a short pause at a caesura, a longer one at a full stop or at an **end-stopped line** (*verso con pausa finale*), a line whose sense ends with the line, usually marked by punctuation; at an enjambment you keep the voice up and go on), and **intonation** (falling for statements and commands, rising or level when the sentence continues). Before reading, mark the text: **/** short pause, **//** long pause, underline the stresses, **→** where a line runs on.

Tabella 2.9 Useful language — reading aloud and commenting on a reading

Purpose	Language
Marking pauses	*There's a caesura after "abides", so I pause briefly. / The line runs on, so I don't stop at the end.*
Choosing stress	*I stress "will" because it's the contrast with "weak". / The key word here is "commands".*
Pace and volume	*I slow down on the monosyllables. / I lower my voice for the last line.*
Giving feedback	*You rushed the enjambment in line 58. / Your pause before "Then all smiles" was very effective.*
Linking to meaning	*Reading it slowly makes the tide sound like it's withdrawing. / The rhythm sounds like a march.*

1. **Pair work.** Mark ll. 65–70 of T1, then read them aloud twice: once as a heroic speech, once as the words of a tired old man who is trying to convince himself. Your partner says which reading was which, and which words you stressed differently.
2. **Performance.** Read T2, ll. 1–13, as the Duke, to a classmate who plays the silent envoy and reacts only with gestures. Then explain in one minute how your reading interpreted the Duke. **Colloquio link:** from "Ulysses" to Greek (Homer's Odysseus) — say in two sentences how you would move from one to the other.

2.5.4 Writing: a dramatic monologue

Your writing task in this chapter is creative. A dramatic monologue lets you study a form from the inside: to write one, you must decide what your speaker wants, who is listening, and what he or she reveals without meaning to. Here is Giulia's model, written for Prof.ssa Rossi's class after reading the *Odyssey* Book XIX again. The speaker is Penelope; the silent listener is a beggar who has just arrived in the palace.

Tabella 2.10 Model text — Giulia Ferraro, "Penelope, to the Stranger" (a dramatic monologue in free lines; 23 lines, 226 words) and writer's note (68 words)

Ithaca, the night before the contest of the bow

Sit closer to the fire, old man. No — keep your hood;
the maids will talk, and I have heard enough talk
for twenty years. You say you met my husband
in Crete, and that he wore a purple cloak
with a golden brooch: a hound, a fawn. You know
too much for a beggar, and too little for a liar.
Strange as it may sound, I am not asking for proof.
I wove a shroud by day and unwove it by night
for three years, and nobody asked me what I knew.
They see a woman waiting. Waiting is a kind of work.
Tomorrow I will set the bow before the suitors:
whoever strings it and shoots through the twelve axes
may take me — that is what I told them. Much as
they laugh tonight, not one of them will bend it.
Why do you look at the floor? Your old nurse
looked at the floor too, when she washed your feet,
and then she dropped the basin. Clumsy, she said.
I have grown wise in other people's silences.
Keep yours a little longer. Let them drink.
When the hall is quiet, I will tell the servants
to move our bed outside the room — the bed
that no one living can move. If you are who
I think you are, you will be angry. Good night.

Writer's note. My Penelope speaks to the disguised Odysseus in Book XIX, but she reveals what Homer leaves open: that she has already recognised him. She never says it; it slips out in "your feet" and in the test of the bed, which in Homer comes later. I used free lines with a loose five-stress rhythm, two concessive clauses, and a final threat that is also a declaration of love.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analysing the model.

- **Speaker and listener**: Penelope speaks; the stranger is silent, but his actions are reported ("keep your hood", "Why do you look at the floor?").
- **Situation**: one night, one place, one decision — the contest of tomorrow.
- **What slips out**: the shift from "my husband" (l. 3) to "*your* old nurse" and "*your* feet" (ll. 15–16) and "*our* bed" (l. 21) tells us she knows.
- **Language**: short imperatives, everyday words, two concessive clauses (ll. 7, 13–14), one image that sums up the character (l. 10).
- **Note**: it explains the choices without retelling the poem.

Checklist. ✓ a speaker who is not you · ✓ a silent listener whose reactions we can deduce · ✓ one situation, one moment · ✓ something revealed indirectly · ✓ 20–30 lines, blank verse or free lines · ✓ a writer's note of 60–80 words on what the speaker reveals and how.

Task. Write a dramatic monologue of 20–30 lines with a writer's note of 60–80 words. Choose: a) Telemachus speaks to his father on the morning Ulysses sails (T1); b) the Count's envoy, back home, speaks to the Count's daughter about her future husband (T2); c) a figure from history at a moment of choice, speaking to someone who cannot answer (for example, Darwin to his wife on the night before the *Origin* is published). **TIC:** post your monologue on the Link Reading Club forum and reply to one monologue by a classmate abroad with two questions about the speaker.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Building a quotation bank for the colloquio. In the colloquio you will not have the texts in front of you, and you will start from a material chosen by the commission. Short quotations, learned exactly, let you prove a point in seconds. Keep one bank for the whole year, in four columns:

Tabella 2.11 A quotation bank (first entries)

Quotation	Author, work, line	Theme	Link
"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."	Tennyson, "Ulysses", l. 70	the will; knowledge	Italian: Dante, *Inf.* XXVI.120
"I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together."	Browning, "My Last Duchess", ll. 45–46	power; what is unsaid	Art: the Renaissance portrait
"The sea of faith / Was once, too, at the full"	Arnold, "Dover Beach", ll. 21–22	doubt	Philosophy: Nietzsche
"red in tooth and claw"	Tennyson, *In Memoriam* LVI	nature	Science: Darwin

Rules: no quotation longer than two lines; always the exact reference; one theme word; one link to another subject. The same method works for Italian (Leopardi, Pascoli), Latin (Seneca, Tacitus) and Greek: learn three words of the original and their meaning, not a whole passage. Revise the bank aloud once a week.

2.6 Connections: Ulysses in Dante, Pascoli and Homer

2.6.1 Dante's Ulisse and Tennyson's Ulysses

Tennyson's editors noticed long ago that the spirit of "Ulysses" comes less from Homer than from Dante's *Inferno* XXVI. There Ulisse tells how, in old age, he left home and family and persuaded his few remaining companions to sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules with a short speech — "questa orazion picciola":

Tabella 2.12 Dante, *Inferno* XXVI.118–120 (text as on Wikisource, checked against Project Gutenberg eBook #1012), with a translation by the editors

Italian	English (translation by the editors)
«Considerate la vostra semenza: fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza».	"Consider your origin: you were not made to live like beasts, but to follow virtue and knowledge."

The two speeches have the same structure: an appeal to the companions, a reminder of who they are, a goal of knowledge. But the frames are opposite. Dante places the speech in Hell and calls the voyage a "folle volo" (a mad flight, XXVI.125): it ends in shipwreck within sight of the mountain of Purgatory, because human knowledge without grace goes too far. Tennyson cuts the frame and the ending, so the same desire becomes a heroic, modern refusal to stop. Figura 2.3 compares the three Ulysses.

	HOMER *Odyssey* XI Greek epic	**DANTE** *Inferno* XXVI early 14th century	**TENNYSON** "Ulysses" written 1833, published 1842
Where we meet him	in the Underworld, alive, asking the dead prophet Tiresias how to get home	in Hell, among the fraudulent counsellors, speaking from a flame	at home in Ithaca, old, a king who is bored with ruling
What he wants	to reach Ithaca and his wife and son	"virtute e canoscenza": experience of the unpeopled world	"To follow knowledge, like a sinking star"
Where he goes	home; then, Tiresias says, inland with an oar, to people who do not know the sea	west through the Strait of Gibraltar, then south to a distant mountain	"beyond the sunset" — the poem ends before the ship sails
How he ends	a gentle death in old age, "ἐξ ἁλός" (away from / out of the sea)	a whirlwind sinks the ship; he tells his story as one of the damned	unknown: "It may be…"; the last word is "yield"

Dante could not read Homer in Greek; Tennyson knew both Homer and Dante.

Figura 2.3 Three Ulysses compared: Homer's, in Tiresias's prophecy (*Odyssey* XI); Dante's, in the eighth circle of Hell (*Inferno* XXVI); Tennyson's, at home in Ithaca ("Ulysses", 1842). The arrows show the order of the texts, not a chain of direct sources.

Sixty years after "Ulysses" was published, Giovanni Pascoli imagined a third last voyage in "L'ultimo viaggio" (*Poemi conviviali*, 1904). His old Odysseus sails back to the places of his youth to find out whether they were real. He reaches the Sirens and begs them for one truth before he dies:

Tabella 2.13 Pascoli, "L'ultimo viaggio", XXIII ("Il vero"), from the 1905 edition of *Poemi conviviali* as proofread on Wikisource, with a translation by the editors

Italian	English (translation by the editors)
Ditemi almeno chi sono io! chi ero!	At least tell me who I am! Who I was!

The Sirens do not answer: they are two rocks, and the ship breaks between them. Where Tennyson's hero seeks knowledge of the world and Dante's is punished for it, Pascoli's hero asks a modern question — the meaning of his own life — and receives silence. The Victorian crisis of faith and the Italian *decadentismo* meet in the same figure.

2.6.2 Classico: Ulysses before Dante, and Sophocles' sea

Dante could not read Homer in Greek, and the story of the final voyage is usually considered his own invention. Homer does give Odysseus a future beyond the poem, but a very different one. In *Odyssey* XI (recalled from your earlier years), the dead prophet Tiresias tells him that, after killing the suitors, he must walk inland with an oar until he meets people who do not know the sea, offer a sacrifice to Poseidon, and go home. Then:

Tabella 2.14 Homer, *Odyssey* XI.134–136 (Greek text of A. T. Murray's Loeb edition, from the Perseus Digital Library), with a translation by the editors

Greek	English (translation by the editors)
θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἁλὸς αὐτῷ ἀβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος ἐλεύσεται, ὅς κέ σε πέφνῃ γήραι ὕπο λιπαρῷ ἀρημένον· (*thanatos de toi ex halos autōi / ablēchros mala toios eleusetai, hos ke se pephnēi / gērai hypo liparōi arēmenon*)	"And death will come to you yourself, away from the sea, a death so very gentle, which will take you when you are worn out by a comfortable old age."

The words ἐξ ἁλός can mean "away from the sea" or "out of the sea", and ancient readers already disagreed: a lost epic, the *Telegony*, made Odysseus die by a weapon tipped with the spine of a sea creature. Homer's hero ends in peace on land; Dante's dies at sea for going too far; Tennyson's is still at the harbour.

Arnold, too, looks back to Greece. In the second stanza of "Dover Beach" he writes: "Sophocles long ago / Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought / Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery" (ll. 15–18). The passage scholars usually connect with these lines is the opening of the second stasimon of *Antigone* (582–592). A **stasimon** (*stasimo*) is a choral ode sung by the chorus between the episodes of a Greek tragedy; in this one, the chorus compares the ruin of a house cursed by the gods to a sea swell driven by Thracian winds:

Tabella 2.15 Sophocles, *Antigone*, from the second stasimon (582–592; Greek text of F. Storr's Loeb edition, 1912, from the Perseus Digital Library), with a translation by the editors

Greek	English (translation by the editors)
εὐδαίμονες οἷσι κακῶν ἄγευστος αἰών. [...] κυλίνδει βυσσόθεν κελαινὰν θῖνα καὶ δυσάνεμοι, στόνῳ βρέμουσι δ' ἀντιπλῆγες ἀκταί. (*eudaimones hoisi kakōn ageustos aiōn ... kylindei byssothen kelainan thina kai / dysanemoi, stonōi bremousi d' antiplēges aktai*)	"Happy are those whose life has never tasted evil. [...] [The swell] rolls the black sand up from the depths, and the wind-beaten headlands, struck by the waves, roar with a groan."

Sophocles hears in the waves the inherited misfortune of a family; Arnold hears the misfortune of a whole civilisation that has lost its faith. The image is the same — the dark sand dragged by the sea — and so is the sound. A Victorian reader who had studied Sophocles at school could hear the echo at once, as you can.

COLLEGAMENTI

Natural selection (biology, Scienze). You met Darwin's life in English 1; here is his mechanism as biology states it today. Four conditions are enough. (1) **Variation**: individuals of a population differ — in size, colour, beak shape. (2) **Inheritance**: some differences are passed on to offspring (today we know that they are coded in DNA, which Darwin did not know). (3) **Selection**: more offspring are produced than can survive, and individuals with useful traits survive and reproduce more. (4) **Time**: over many generations useful traits become more common, and populations that live apart can become separate species. Figura 2.4 shows the result as a branching tree, the image Darwin himself used in the only diagram of the *Origin*.

Darwin's finches, as usually taught (simplified). On the Galápagos Islands in 1835 Darwin collected small birds that the ornithologist John Gould later identified as many different species of finch, with beaks suited to different foods — large, strong beaks for hard seeds, thin ones for insects. The name "Darwin's finches" is a twentieth-century one, and the birds played a smaller part in Darwin's own thinking than the textbook story suggests. In the 1970s the biologists Peter and Rosemary Grant measured selection happening: after a severe drought in 1977 on the island of Daphne Major, when only large, hard seeds were left, the next generation of medium ground finches had measurably larger beaks. **Colloquio link:** Arnold's "sea of faith" and Darwin's "grandeur in this view of life" — two answers to the same discovery.

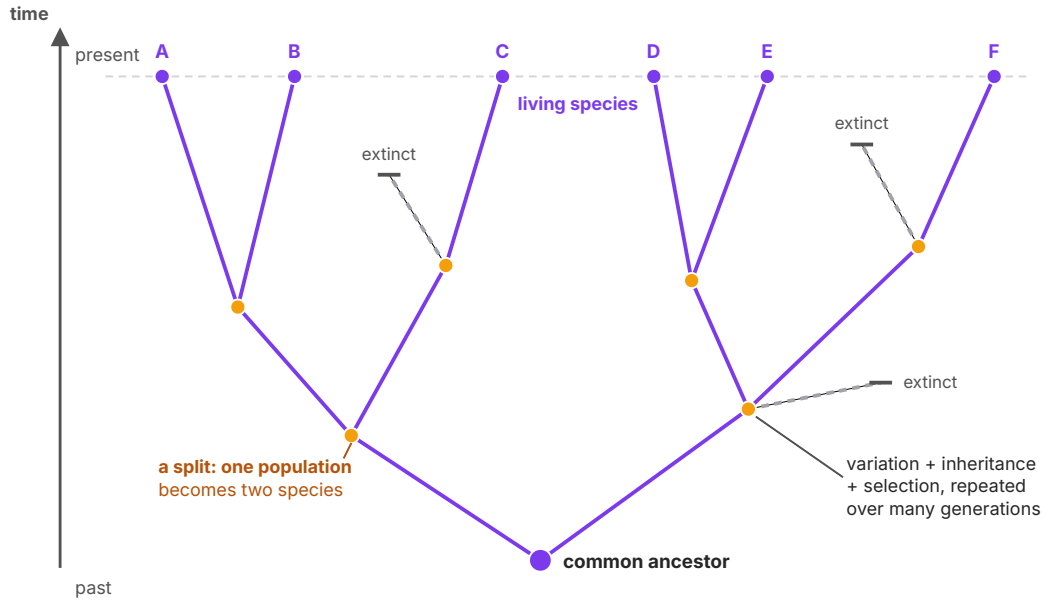


Figura 2.4 A tree of descent with modification (simplified). Each split is a population that becomes two species; dashed branches end in extinction; the living species at the top are related through common ancestors. Evolution has no "goal": the tree branches in every direction.

SINTESI

- Geology came first: Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830–33) taught uniformitarianism and the idea now called deep time.
- Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (24 November 1859) explained descent with modification by natural selection: variation, inheritance, selection, time.
- "Survival of the fittest" is Herbert Spencer's phrase (1864); the Wilberforce–Huxley exchange at Oxford (1860) is not reliably recorded.
- The Oxford Movement (from 1833), higher criticism and *Essays and Reviews* (1860) divided the Church; historians speak of a Victorian crisis of faith, and Huxley coined "agnostic" (1869).
- Tennyson wrote "Ulysses" (1833, published 1842) after Hallam's death; *In Memoriam* (1850), in its *abba* stanza, contains "red in tooth and claw" — nine years before Darwin.
- Browning perfected the dramatic monologue: a speaker who is not the poet, a silent listener, a situation that reveals more than the speaker intends.
- "My Last Duchess" (1842) hides a confession under rhyming couplets: "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together."
- Arnold's "Dover Beach" (published 1867) turns the ebbing tide into the "sea of faith" and offers love as a refuge on a "darkling plain".
- Concessive structures at B2+: *much as* + clause, adjective / adverb + *as / though*, *try as he might*, *however* + adjective, *admittedly, granted, even so, all the same*.
- In an argument, concession is a move: concede fairly, turn, claim, quote.
- Homer's Odysseus is promised a gentle death away from (or out of) the sea; Dante's Ulisse sinks after a "folle volo"; Tennyson's sails into an open ending; Pascoli's asks the Sirens who he is.
- Arnold's Sophocles is usually connected with the second stasimon of *Antigone*: the same sea, a different misfortune.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Which book first made the idea of an extremely old earth familiar to Victorian readers?
   - **A.** Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*
   - **B.** Lyell, *Principles of Geology*
   - **C.** Strauss, *Life of Jesus*
   - **D.** *Essays and Reviews*

2. ● Who coined the phrase “survival of the fittest”?
   - **A.** Charles Darwin, in 1859
   - **B.** Thomas Henry Huxley, in 1860
   - **C.** Alfred Tennyson, in 1850
   - **D.** Herbert Spencer, in 1864

3. ● Tennyson’s line “Nature, red in tooth and claw” was published…
   - **A.** in 1850, before the *Origin*
   - **B.** in 1859, in reply to the *Origin*
   - **C.** in 1842, in “Ulysses”
   - **D.** in 1867, with “Dover Beach”

4. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a) The Oxford Movement wanted the Church of England to become more Protestant. b) The words of the Wilberforce–Huxley exchange of 1860 are reliably recorded. c) George Eliot translated Strauss’s *Life of Jesus*. d) In the *Origin* Darwin wrote that humans descend from monkeys. e) Huxley invented the word *agnostic*.

5. ● Match each author with a work and a date. Authors: Tennyson, Browning, E. B. Browning, Arnold, Darwin, Lyell. Works: *Culture and Anarchy*; *Principles of Geology*; *In Memoriam A.H.H.*; *Sonnets from the Portuguese*; *Dramatic Lyrics*; *On the Origin of Species*. Dates: 1830–33, 1842, 1850, 1850, 1859, 1869.

6. ●● Complete the timeline with the missing events: 1833 — _____ dies in Vienna; 1845 — Newman _____; 1 July 1858 — _____; June 1860 — _____; 1867 — _____ is published in *New Poems*.

7. ●● Explain each term in 50–80 words, with one example from the chapter: a) dramatic monologue; b) In Memoriam stanza; c) crisis of faith.

Text Analysis

8. ● In T1, l. 67, “that which we are, we are” means…
   - **A.** we are what we were in our youth
   - **B.** we have become different people
   - **C.** we accept what we have become, and it is still something
   - **D.** we do not know who we are

9. ● T1: find a) two words that refer to the sea; b) the four infinitives of the last line; c) one caesura and one enjambment. What effect does each of them have when you read the passage aloud?

10. ●● T2: list everything we learn about the envoy (who he is, what he does, what he might be thinking). Why does Browning never let him speak?

11. ●● T2: paraphrase ll. 45–46 in two different ways, one for each possible reading of “I gave commands”. Then say which details in the rest of the extract support the darker reading.

12. ●● T3: explain the extended metaphor of the “sea of faith” (ll. 21–28) in 60–80 words, quoting two words that describe its past and two that describe its present.

13. ●●● Compare T1 and T3 in a PEE paragraph (100–120 words): how does each poem respond to loss? Use one quotation from each text.

14. ●●● **Colloquio link.** Choose one of the three poems and link it to another subject (Italian, Greek, philosophy, science or art) in 60–80 words.

Language

15. ● _____ as it may seem, Arnold was a school inspector for thirty-five years.
    - **A.** Although strange
    - **B.** So strange
    - **C.** Strange
    - **D.** However strange

16. ● _____ , he could not finish the poem.
    - **A.** Try as he might
    - **B.** Much as he tried hard
    - **C.** Although trying
    - **D.** Even so he tried

17. ● Complete with *much as, try as, strange as, granted, even so, however*. a) _____ Tennyson admired Lyell, he found no comfort in geology. b) _____ it may sound, the *Origin* hardly mentions humans. c) _____ she might, the Duchess could not please the Duke. d) _____ , the Duke never confesses. _____ , the reader has no doubt. e) _____ carefully you read the debate reports, you will not find the famous reply.

18. ●● Rewrite each sentence with the structure in brackets. a) Although Tennyson admired science very much, he feared a world without purpose. (*much as*) b) Although the voyage was dangerous, Ulysses wanted to sail. (adjective + *as*) c) Arnold tried very hard, but he could not believe again. (*try as*) d) It is true that the poem is short, but it contains a whole life. (*admittedly … even so*) e) Although it was cautious, Darwin’s book caused a storm. (*cautious though*)

19. ●● Find and correct the mistake in each sentence (✗). a) ✗ As difficult it may be, read the poem aloud. b) ✗ Much as his love for Italy, Browning returned to London. c) ✗ Although the Duke smiles, but he is cruel. d) ✗ Try as she might, she won the prize easily. e) ✗ However he worked hard, Darwin delayed publication. f) ✗ Despite Darwin was ill, he kept working.

20. ●● Join the two sentences with an adjective / adverb + *as / though* clause. a) Tennyson was famous. He remained shy in public. b) Darwin worked slowly. He changed the way we see nature. c) The sea is calm. The speaker hears sadness in it. d) The Duchess was young. She was not naive.

21. ●● Edit this paragraph from a student essay: replace the four *although* clauses with four different concessive structures from section 2.4. *Although Arnold loved the Greek classics, he was a modern poet. Although his poem is short, it describes a whole age. Although he could not believe, he respected faith. Although the ending is dark, love offers some light.*

22. ●●● **Contrast or concession?** Complete with *whereas* or *although* and explain your choice. a) Tennyson ends with hope, _____ Arnold ends with darkness. b) _____ Browning admired Italy, he never idealised its dukes. c) Dante condemns his Ulisse, _____ Tennyson admires his. d) _____ Huxley defended Darwin, he disagreed with him on some points.

23. ●● Translate into English, using a B2+ concessive structure in each sentence. a) Per quanto ami Dante, preferisco l'Ulisse di Tennyson. b) Per quanto possa sembrare strano, la poesia è stata pubblicata nove anni prima dell'*Origine delle specie*. c) Per quanto si sforzasse, il Duca non riusciva a controllare i sorrisi della moglie.

Vocabulary

24. ● Complete with the words from the vocabulary table: a) Darwin did not publish until he had enough _____ . b) One _____ can split into two. c) Some Victorians tried to _____ religion with science. d) Humans and gorillas share a common _____ . e) Many readers were _____ about the new theory.

25. ●● Use the roots in the table to explain these words, then check them in a dictionary: *chronometer, geocentric, theocracy, biodiversity, calligraphy, patricide*. Which two are hybrids, or not built as you expected?

26. ●● Complete the collocations and write a sentence about the chapter with each: _____ one's faith; _____ the evidence; a struggle for _____ ; _____ forward a theory; have _____ about.

Writing and Speaking

27. ●●● Write a dramatic monologue (20–30 lines) with a writer's note (60–80 words), following the task and checklist in section 2.5.

28. ●● **Speaking.** Mark and read aloud "Dover Beach", ll. 29–37 (T3). Then explain in about one minute where you paused, which words you stressed and why.

Towards the Exam

29. ●● **Reading (multiple choice, inspired by INVALSI formats).** Read the text and choose the best answer. *When the British Association met in Oxford in June 1860, so many people came to hear the discussion on Darwin that it had to be held in a larger room. Newspapers gave the event only a few lines. Decades later, when the memoirs of Darwin's friends were published, the meeting became a famous battle between science and religion. Historians today see it differently: the bishop's attack was based on a long, serious, if hostile, review of the Origin that he published that summer; some clergymen accepted Darwin's ideas; and many scientists still had doubts. The story survived because it was simple.* 1) The meeting became famous a) immediately; b) thanks to newspaper reports; c) through later memoirs; d) because the museum was new. 2) According to historians, the story a) is completely invented; b) simplifies a complex situation; c) proves that science defeated religion; d) shows that all clergymen opposed Darwin. 3) The bishop's review is described as a) friendly; b) unserious; c) short; d) hostile but serious.

30. ●● **Open cloze.** Write one word in each gap. *Much (1)* _____ *the Victorians admired progress, many of them were afraid of (2)* _____ *it meant for religion. Tennyson, (3)* _____ *friend had died young, asked whether nature cared (4)* _____ *human beings. Strange (5)* _____ *it seems, his famous line appeared nine years (6)* _____ *Darwin's book.*

31. ●●● **Key-word transformation.** Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals and 2–5 words. a) Although he admired the Duke's taste, the envoy was frightened. MUCH → _____ the Duke's taste, the envoy was frightened. b) It seems strange, but Arnold rarely wrote poetry after 1867. AS → _____ seem, Arnold rarely wrote poetry after 1867. c) However hard Ulysses tried, he could not stay at home. MIGHT → _____ , Ulysses could not stay at home. d) I admit that the poem is difficult, but it is worth reading. ADMITTEDLY → _____ difficult. Even so, it is worth reading.

32. ●●● **Colloquio prompt.** Material: the line "To follow knowledge, like a sinking star" (Tennyson, "Ulysses", l. 31). Speak for three minutes: explain the line, connect it with Dante's "virtute e canoscenza" and with one other subject (Greek, philosophy, science or history), and end with a personal opinion on the limits of knowledge.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E (The Victorian Age): the introduction and the selections from Tennyson, Browning, Arnold and Darwin.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on Victorian poetry.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "dramatic monologue" and "stanza".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *although / though*, *as* and *much as*.

Glossario del capitolo

Agnosticism
agnosticismo — the view that we cannot know whether God exists; the word was coined by T. H. Huxley in 1869.

Catastrophism
catastrofismo — the belief that sudden worldwide disasters, not slow processes, shaped the earth.

Common ancestor
antenato comune — an extinct species from which two or more later species descend.

Concessive clause
proposizione concessiva — a clause that admits a fact contrary to the main statement (*Strange as it may seem, …*).

Crisis of faith
crisi della fede — historians' label for the loss of religious certainty felt by many Victorian intellectuals.

Deep time
tempo profondo — the immense age of the earth revealed by geology; a twentieth-century phrase.

Descent with modification
discendenza con modificazioni — Darwin's term for the slow change of species from common ancestors.

Dramatic monologue
monologo drammatico — a poem spoken by an invented character to a silent listener at a revealing moment.

End-stopped line
verso con pausa finale — a line of verse whose sense and syntax pause at its end.

Envoy
inviato, ambasciatore — a person sent by a ruler to negotiate; the silent listener of "My Last Duchess".

Higher criticism
critica biblica storica — the study of the Bible as historical documents written by human authors.

In Memoriam stanza
strofa di In Memoriam — four lines of iambic tetrameter rhyming *abba*.

Nonconformist
non conformista — a Protestant who did not belong to the Church of England (Methodist, Baptist…).

Oxford Movement
Movimento di Oxford — a movement in the Church of England, from 1833, to restore its Catholic traditions.

Silent listener
interlocutore muto — in a dramatic monologue, the person addressed, who never speaks.

Stasimon
stasimo — in Greek tragedy, a choral ode sung between two episodes.

Uniformitarianism
uniformitarismo — Lyell's principle that slow present-day processes explain the earth's history.

Soluzioni

1. B (Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, 1830–33; the *Origin* came in 1859).

2. D (Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, 1864; Darwin adopted the phrase in the 5th edition of the *Origin*, 1869).

3. A (*In Memoriam*, section LVI, 1850).

4. a) False: it wanted to restore the Catholic traditions of the Church of England. b) False: it is reported only in later, differing accounts. c) True (1846). d) False: the *Origin* hardly mentions humans, and Darwin never said that humans descend from monkeys — they share common ancestors with the other apes. e) True (1869).

5. Tennyson — *In Memoriam A.H.H.* — 1850; Browning — *Dramatic Lyrics* — 1842; E. B. Browning — *Sonnets from the Portuguese* — 1850; Arnold — *Culture and Anarchy* — 1869; Darwin — *On the Origin of Species* — 1859; Lyell — *Principles of Geology* — 1830–33.

6. Arthur Henry Hallam; becomes a Catholic; Darwin's and Wallace's papers are read at the Linnean Society; the Oxford meeting of the British Association (Huxley and Wilberforce); "Dover Beach".

7. *Traccia.* a) A poem spoken by an invented character (not the poet) to a silent listener at a revealing moment; the speaker shows more than he means — Browning's Duke in "My Last Duchess". b) Four lines of iambic tetrameter rhyming *abba*; used in every section of *In Memoriam* (e.g. *indeed / law / claw / creed*). c) Historians' label for the loss of religious certainty felt by many Victorian intellectuals after geology, higher criticism and Darwin; not true of everyone — e.g. Arnold's "sea of faith".

8. C.

9. a) e.g. *furrows, gulfs* (also *the baths / Of all the western stars*). b) *to strive, to seek, to find, (not) to yield*. c) caesura: l. 65 after "abides" (or l. 67 after "heaven"); enjambment: ll. 58–59 / 59–60 / 60–61. The caesura slows the voice and isolates the concession; the enjambment pushes the reading forward like the ship.

10. *Traccia.* The envoy of a Count, sent to negotiate the Duke's next marriage; he is invited to sit, looks at the portrait with a question in his face, is asked to rise. Browning keeps him silent so that the Duke can speak without interruption and reveal himself; we judge the Duke from outside, as the envoy perhaps does.

11. *Traccia.* Reading 1: "I ordered her to be killed, and she never smiled again." Reading 2: "I ordered her to stop smiling at others (or to be shut away), and she smiled no more." The darker reading is supported by "my *last* Duchess", "as if she were alive", the curtain only he controls and the calm "There she stands".

12. *Traccia.* Faith is compared to a sea that once surrounded the whole earth ("at the full", "bright girdle") and now withdraws, leaving the world bare ("withdrawing roar", "naked shingles"). The metaphor makes the loss slow, natural and impossible to stop, like a tide.

13. *Traccia.* Point: both poems respond to loss, but T1 with will and T3 with love. Evidence: "Tho' much is taken, much abides" / "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!" Explanation: Ulysses turns loss into action and an open voyage; Arnold sees no public remedy and retreats into private faithfulness; T1 is more hopeful.

14. *Traccia* (one example). "Dover Beach" → philosophy: the loss of a shared religious foundation that Nietzsche, later in the century, called the "death of God"; Arnold mourns what Nietzsche will announce. Or "Ulysses" → Greek: Tiresias's prophecy in *Odyssey* XI and its peaceful death "away from the sea".

15. C.

16. A.

17. a) Much as; b) Strange as; c) Try as; d) Granted / Even so; e) However.

18. a) Much as Tennyson admired science, he feared a world without purpose. b) Dangerous as the voyage was, Ulysses wanted to sail. c) Try as he might, Arnold could not believe again. d) Admittedly, the poem is short. Even so, it contains a whole life. e) Cautious though it was, Darwin's book caused a storm.

19. a) Difficult as it may be, … b) Much as he loved Italy, … c) Although the Duke smiles, he is cruel. d) Try as she might, she could not win the prize (*try as she might* needs a failure). e) However hard he worked, … f) Despite being ill / Although Darwin was ill, …

20. a) Famous as / though Tennyson was, he remained shy in public. b) Slowly as Darwin worked (or *Slow though his work was*), he changed the way we see nature. c) Calm as the sea is, the speaker hears sadness in it. d) Young as she was, the Duchess was not naive.

21. *Model.* Much as Arnold loved the Greek classics, he was a modern poet. Short as his poem is, it describes a whole age. Try as he might, he could not believe; even so, he respected faith. The ending is dark; all the same, love offers some light.

22. a) whereas (two facts compared); b) Although (concession: admiration did not lead to idealisation); c) whereas (comparison); d) Although (concession).

23. a) Much as I love Dante, I prefer Tennyson's Ulysses. b) Strange as it may seem, the poem was published nine years before the *Origin of Species*. c) Try as he might, the Duke could not control his wife's smiles.

24. a) evidence; b) species; c) reconcile; d) ancestor; e) sceptical.

25. chronometer: an instrument that measures time; geocentric: with the earth at the centre; theocracy: government by priests in the name of a god; biodiversity: variety of living things (bio- + Latin *diversitas*: a hybrid); calligraphy: beautiful writing (Greek κάλλος); patricide: killing of one's father (Latin *pater* + *-cide*). Biodiversity is a Greek–Latin hybrid; patricide is all Latin, unlike the Greek roots around it.

26. lose / keep one's faith; weigh the evidence; a struggle for survival; put forward a theory; have doubts about. Sentences: open.

27. *Assessment*: a speaker who is not the writer; a silent listener whose reactions can be deduced; one situation; something revealed indirectly; 20–30 lines; a 60–80-word note. See the model in section 2.5.

28. *Model answer.* "I paused at the exclamation mark after 'another', the only strong stop in the first two lines; I kept my voice up at the ends of ll. 30–31 because the sentence runs on; I stressed *neither* and each *nor* to make the list of losses heavy; and I slowed down and lowered my voice for the last line, so that 'clash by night' sounded distant and dark."

29. 1) c; 2) b; 3) d.

30. 1) as; 2) what; 3) whose; 4) about / for; 5) as / though; 6) before.

31. a) Much as he admired; b) Strange as it may; c) Try as he might; d) Admittedly, the poem is.

32. *Traccia.* Explain: knowledge as a goal that always moves away, like a star setting in the west; the paradox of a "sinking" guide. Dante: the same desire ("seguir virtute e canoscenza") but condemned as "folle volo". Other subject: Greek (Tiresias's prophecy), philosophy (the Enlightenment and its critics), science (Darwin's twenty years of research) or history (Victorian exploration). Opinion: e.g. knowledge has limits set by ethics, not by curiosity.