CAPITOLO

3

Faith, Doubt and Evolution: Victorian Poetry and Darwin

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved." — Charles Darwin, On the Origin of Species (1859), last sentence

OBIETTIVI

1. I can explain how Lyell's geology and Darwin's theory of natural selection changed Victorian ideas of time, Nature and faith.
2. I can outline the work of Tennyson, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Arnold and Hardy, and define the dramatic monologue.
3. I can analyse a passage of "Ulysses", "My Last Duchess" and "The Darkling Thrush", and infer what a speaker does not say.
4. I can define, classify and give examples in academic English, for literary terms and scientific concepts alike.
5. I can read a scientific or literary text against another and prepare a colloquio link from a short quotation.

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English 5 · Parte I · The Victorian Age · versione 1.0
Capitolo 3: Faith, Doubt and Evolution: Victorian Poetry and Darwin · pagine 81–116 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

In 1850 a poem of grief appeared in London without its author's name. Its subject was a young man who had died suddenly at twenty-two, but it kept turning to larger questions: if rocks show that whole species have vanished, does Nature care about anything at all? Does a loving God stand behind a world that seems "red in tooth and claw"? The author was Alfred Tennyson, and within months he was Poet Laureate. Nine years later a naturalist who had spent five years at sea published a book that gave those questions a new and, for many readers, frightening shape: *On the Origin of Species*.

This chapter follows the Victorian conversation between science and faith, and the poets who took part in it. You will read Tennyson's old Ulysses calling his sailors to one last voyage, Browning's Duke of Ferrara giving himself away in front of a portrait, and Hardy's thrush singing into the last dusk of the century. In the Language section you will learn the tools of scientific and critical writing — defining, classifying and giving examples — and in Skills you will follow Callum, now a geography student in Edinburgh, to a Scottish cliff where time itself becomes visible.

3.1 History and Society: Science and Faith, 1830–1901

The Victorian age (chapter 1) was an age of faith and an age of science at the same time. Most Victorians went to church, read the Bible at home and believed that the world had been designed by a wise Creator; and yet the same decades produced the discoveries that made that belief harder to hold. Figura 3.1 sets the scientists and the poets of this chapter side by side.

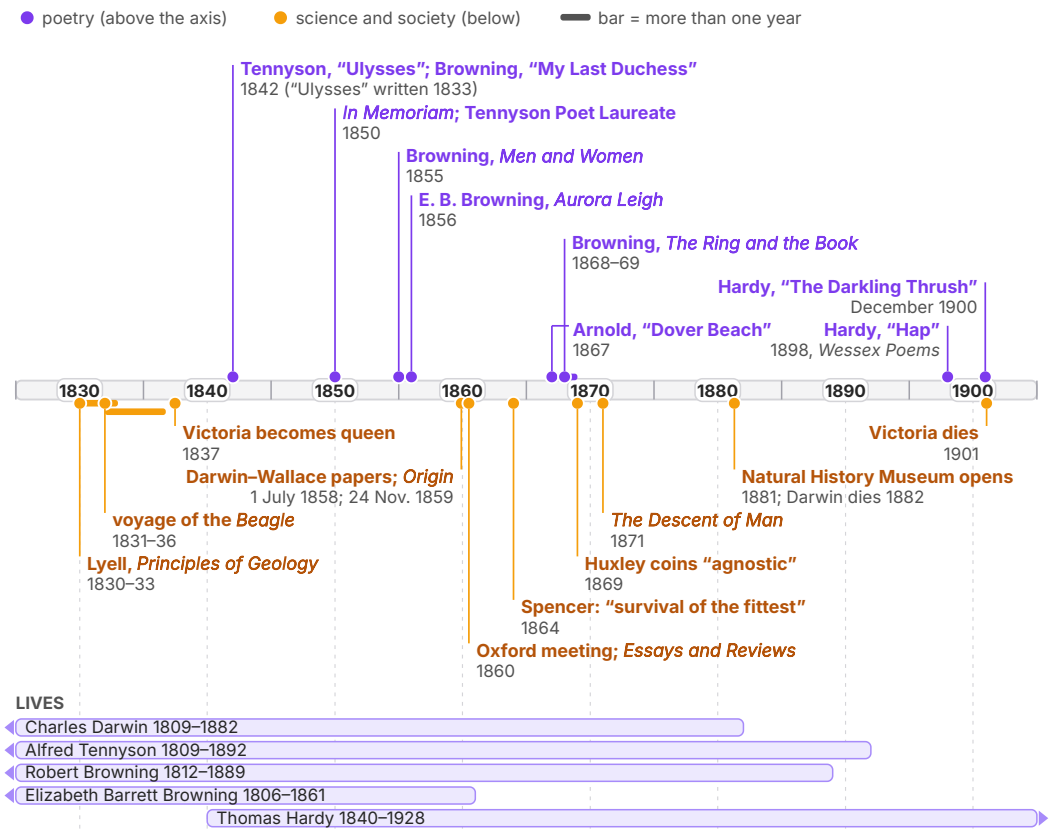


Figura 3.1 Victorian poetry (above the axis, violet) and the science and society of the period (below, amber), 1825–1905, on a proportional axis (ticks every 5 years, labels every 10). Dates are of first publication unless stated. At the bottom, the lives of five protagonists; arrows mark lives that run beyond the edges.

3.1.1 Deep time

At the beginning of the nineteenth century many people in Britain, scientists included, still assumed that the Earth was a few thousand years old: the chronology of Archbishop James Ussher (1650), printed in the margins of many English Bibles, placed the Creation in 4004 BC. Geologists were already doubting it. In 1788 the Scottish thinker James Hutton (1726–1797) argued that rocks are laid down, raised, worn away and laid down again by slow processes still at work today; his paper ended with a famous phrase: the record of the rocks showed "no vestige of a beginning,—no prospect of an end."

Charles Lyell (1797–1875) turned this idea into a system. His *Principles of Geology* (three volumes, 1830–33) promised in its subtitle to explain the former changes of the Earth's surface "by reference to causes now in operation": rain, rivers, waves, earthquakes and volcanoes, acting at the rates we observe.

In a review of Lyell (1832) the philosopher of science William Whewell called this principle **uniformitarianism** (*uniformismo, attualismo*): the view that the same natural causes, acting at the same slow rates, explain the geological past. Its consequence is the immense span of time that such slow processes need, which geologists today call **deep time** (*tempo profondo*) — a modern phrase for a Victorian discovery. Earth's age is now estimated at about 4.54 billion years; the first Victorians had no way to measure it, only to see that it must be enormous.

3.1.2 Darwin and the voyage of the *Beagle*

You met Charles Darwin (1809–1882) in English 1. The son of a wealthy doctor in Shrewsbury, he abandoned medicine in Edinburgh and studied at Cambridge to become a clergyman. Instead, in December 1831 he sailed as an unpaid naturalist on HMS *Beagle*, a small Royal Navy ship commanded by Robert FitzRoy and sent to survey the coasts of South America (Figura 3.2). FitzRoy gave him the first volume of Lyell, and Darwin began to see the coasts with Lyell's eyes: shells high up in volcanic cliffs on the Cape Verde Islands, fossils of huge extinct mammals in Argentina, land raised by an earthquake in Chile. In the Galápagos Islands (September–October 1835) he collected mockingbirds that differed from island to island, and only later, at sea, did he realise how strange this was. The *Beagle* reached Falmouth on 2 October 1836.



Figura 3.2 The second voyage of HMS *Beagle*, 27 December 1831 – 2 October 1836: approximate route and main stops (coastlines simplified; equirectangular projection, so the scale bar is true only at the Equator). The ship sailed westward round the world: the route leaves the map on the left, west of Tahiti, and re-enters on the right before New Zealand.

Back in England, Darwin worked through his specimens with other naturalists. In the autumn of 1838 he read Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), which argued that populations grow faster than the food that supports them, and he saw how this pressure could

act on living things. He then spent twenty years gathering evidence — on pigeons, barnacles, seeds and much else — at Down House in Kent. In June 1858 a younger naturalist working in the Malay Archipelago, Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), sent him an essay that set out almost the same theory. Papers by both men were read at the Linnean Society in London on 1 July 1858, and Darwin hurried to finish a shorter book. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was published on 24 November 1859.

3.1.3 The argument of the *Origin*

Darwin's argument can be reduced to four steps:

1. Individuals of the same species are never exactly alike, and many of their differences are inherited by their offspring.
2. Many more individuals are born than can survive. Darwin called the resulting competition for food, space and mates the **struggle for existence** (*lotta per l'esistenza*), using the term, he wrote, "in a large and metaphorical sense": it includes success in leaving offspring, not only fighting.
3. Individuals whose inherited differences suit them better to their surroundings survive and reproduce more than others, and pass those differences on. This process is **natural selection** (*selezione naturale*). A heritable feature that helps an organism survive and reproduce in its environment is an **adaptation** (*adattamento*).
4. Over very long periods the small differences add up; populations of one species diverge until they become separate species. All living things are therefore related by **common descent** (*discendenza comune*) from earlier forms, like the branches of a tree (Figura 3.5).

The book closes with one of the most quoted sentences in English science, which you can read as the epigraph of this chapter. Darwin did not invent the most famous phrase connected with his theory. **Survival of the fittest** (*sopravvivenza del più adatto*) was coined by the philosopher Herbert Spencer in 1864, and Darwin adopted it as an alternative name for natural selection in the fifth edition of the *Origin* (1869). "Fittest" meant "best adapted to the local conditions", not "strongest". In *The Descent of Man* (1871) Darwin applied the theory to human beings.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Darwin ha detto che l'uomo discende dalla scimmia.» → ✓ Secondo Darwin l'uomo e le scimmie antropomorfe hanno **antenati comuni**: nessuna specie vivente discende da un'altra specie vivente. Sono rami diversi dello stesso albero (Figura 3.5).

✗ «*Survival of the fittest* significa che sopravvive il più forte.» → ✓ *Fittest* significa «il più **adatto**» all'ambiente locale: in una siccità può essere l'uccello con il becco più robusto, in un'altra situazione quello più piccolo. E l'espressione è di Herbert Spencer (1864), non di Darwin, che la adottò nel 1869.

3.1.4 Faith and doubt

Christianity shaped Victorian life: the Church of England was the established church, Nonconformist chapels filled the industrial towns, thousands of new churches were built, and Sunday was a day of rest and worship by law and by custom. Yet educated believers felt pressure from several directions at once. Geology had already made the six days of Genesis hard to read literally. From Germany came the **higher criticism** (*critica biblica storica*): the study of the books of the Bible as historical documents written, copied and edited by human authors. George Eliot (chapter 2) translated one of its key works, D. F. Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, in 1846. In March 1860, a few months after the *Origin*, seven liberal Anglicans published *Essays and Reviews*, which accepted this kind of scholarship and caused a scandal in the Church.

Historians use the label **crisis of faith** (*crisi della fede*) for the loss or deep questioning of religious belief that many educated Victorians experienced, often painfully and in private. It was not universal: many Christians, including some clergymen, accepted evolution as the way God worked, and many others never read Darwin at all. But a new position became respectable. In 1869 Darwin's defender, the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, coined the word *agnostic* to describe himself; **agnosticism** (*agnosticismo*) is the view that we cannot know whether God exists, because the question lies beyond the evidence. In his last years Darwin, too, described himself as an agnostic. When he died, on 19 April 1882, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, near Isaac Newton.

APPROFONDIMENTO

What was said at Oxford? On 30 June 1860, at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in the new Oxford University Museum, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce spoke against Darwin's theory and Huxley replied. Everybody repeats the story that the Bishop asked Huxley whether he descended from a monkey through his grandfather or his grandmother, and that Huxley said he would rather have an ape for an ancestor than a man who used his gifts to obscure the truth. No one took down the words, and the accounts of those present, some written years later, disagree on what was said and on who "won". Read the exchange as a legend built on a real meeting.

3.2 Literature: Victorian Poetry

Poetry was still the most prestigious form of literature in Victorian Britain, and the great poets were public figures. They inherited the Romantic lyric (English 4, chapter 11), in which a single voice expresses its own feelings, but the age's questions — faith, science, progress, the self — pushed them in two new directions: the long meditative sequence, in which a poet thinks aloud over many years, and the poem spoken by a character who is clearly not the poet, a mask that let the writer explore minds unlike his own and the reader judge them.

3.2.1 Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892)

Tennyson was born at Somersby, in Lincolnshire, the son of a clergyman. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he became the closest friend of Arthur Henry Hallam, a brilliant young man who was later engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily. In September 1833 Hallam died suddenly in Vienna, aged twenty-two. Tennyson's grief produced, within weeks, the dramatic monologue "Ulysses" (completed in October 1833; published in his *Poems* of 1842, T1), and over seventeen years the sections of a long elegy, a form defined in English 3, chapter 3.

In Memoriam A.H.H. was published anonymously in 1850. In its final form it contains 133 sections, including a prologue and an epilogue, all written in the same stanza, which has since been named after it: the **In Memoriam stanza** (*strofa di* In Memoriam), four lines of iambic tetrameter rhyming *abba*. The enclosed rhyme turns back on itself, like a mind returning again and again to the same loss. Tennyson had read Lyell and other writers on the history of the Earth, and in section LVI he imagined human beings as possibly no more than a failed experiment of a Nature indifferent to them — Man, who trusted in a God of love,

> Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—
> — Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, section LVI (LV in the first edition), ll. 15–16; text of the first edition (Moxon, 1850), Project Gutenberg eBook #70950

(*ravine*: an old word for violent seizing of prey.) The poem does not end there: through doubt and memory it moves slowly towards hope, and Queen Victoria told Tennyson that it had comforted her after the death of Prince Albert. In November 1850 he succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate; he was made a baron in 1884, and when he died in 1892 he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «"Nature, red in tooth and claw" è la risposta di Tennyson a Darwin.» → ✓ *In Memoriam* uscì nel **1850**, nove anni prima dell'*Origin* (1859). Tennyson reagiva alla geologia di Lyell e alle prime teorie sull'evoluzione; il verso fu poi citato in continuazione nel dibattito su Darwin.

✗ «"Ulysses" di Tennyson» e «*Ulysses* di Joyce» scritti allo stesso modo. → ✓ La poesia breve va tra virgolette: "Ulysses" (Tennyson, 1842); il romanzo in corsivo: *Ulysses* (Joyce, 1922, capitolo 9).

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

Browning, whom you met in English 2 as the poet of "Home-Thoughts, from Abroad", was born in Camberwell, south London, and educated mostly in his father's large library. His early long poems were thought obscure, and success came slowly, through a series of cheap pamphlets

called *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841–46). The third of them, *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), contained "My Last Duchess" (T2). In 1846 he married the poet Elizabeth Barrett, and the couple lived in Florence, at Casa Guidi, until her death in 1861. His collections *Men and Women* (1855) and *Dramatis Personae* (1864) were followed by *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), twelve books in blank verse in which ten different speakers tell the story of a real murder case in Rome in the 1690s. He died in Venice on 12 December 1889 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where Tennyson was laid beside him three years later.

Browning is the master of the **dramatic monologue** (*monologo drammatico*): a poem spoken by a single character, who is not the poet, to a **silent listener** (*interlocutore muto*) — someone present in the scene whose words we never hear but can infer from the speaker's replies — in a particular situation, so that the speaker reveals his or her character, often far more than he or she intends (Figura 3.3). It differs from the soliloquy of the theatre (English 3, chapter 10), in which a character is alone, and from the Romantic lyric, in which the "I" is close to the poet. Browning described the poems of *Dramatic Lyrics* as "so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine". The form asks the reader to do two things at once: to listen sympathetically, and to judge. Tennyson's "Ulysses", written in 1833 and published in the same year as *Dramatic Lyrics*, is often read as a dramatic monologue too, though its listeners are less clear.

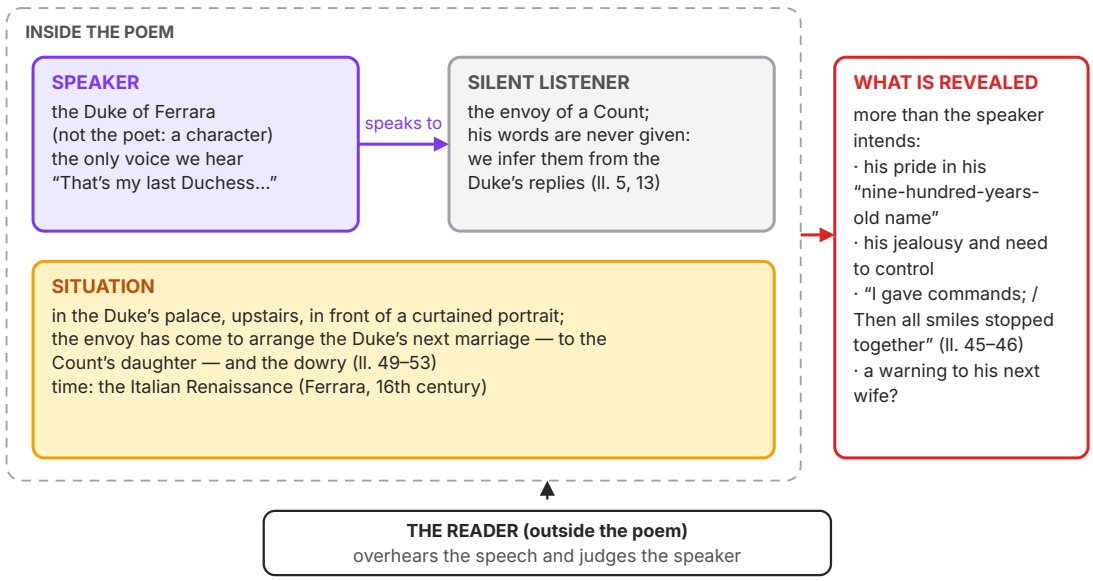


Figura 3.3 The dramatic monologue, applied to Browning's "My Last Duchess" (T2). Only the speaker's voice is heard; the listener, the situation and what the speaker reveals must be inferred. Line references to the whole poem (56 lines).

3.2.3 Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)

Elizabeth Barrett was a famous poet before Robert Browning wrote to her in 1845. *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), a sequence of love sonnets, records their courtship; *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) supports the Italian struggle for unification seen from her windows in Florence; *Aurora Leigh* (1856) is a novel in blank verse about a woman who becomes a poet. She died in Florence on 29 June 1861 and is buried in the city's English Cemetery.

3.2.4 Matthew Arnold and the ebbing sea

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), poet, critic and inspector of schools, gave the crisis of faith its best-known image. In "Dover Beach" (published 1867) a speaker at a window above the Channel listens to the waves drawing back over the pebbles and thinks of religion withdrawing from the modern world: "The sea of faith / Was once, too, at the full" (first edition, 1867). Faith is a tide that has gone out, leaving only "the naked shingles of the world" — and two lovers who must be true to one another because nothing else is certain.

3.2.5 Thomas Hardy (1840–1928), poet of doubt

Thomas Hardy, a Dorset builder's son who trained as an architect, is known above all for his novels set in "Wessex", his name for south-west England. After the hostile reviews of *Jude the Obscure* (1895) he wrote no more novels and devoted himself to poetry, which he had written all his life. His first collection, *Wessex Poems* (1898), included "Hap", a sonnet dated 1866: the speaker would almost prefer a cruel god who enjoyed his pain, because then his suffering would have a meaning; instead, "Crass Casualty" — blind chance — decides. Hardy had read Darwin, and his poems describe a universe without design, in which human hopes are noticed by no one. "The Darkling Thrush" (T3) was first printed in the magazine *The Graphic* on 29 December 1900, under the title "By the Century's Deathbed", and collected in *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901).

One great Victorian poet was almost unknown to the Victorians. Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889), a Jesuit priest, sent his poems only to a few friends; they were published by one of them, the poet Robert Bridges, in 1918, and were read as the work of a modern.

IN SINTESI

Victorian poets at a glance

- **Tennyson** (1809–1892): Poet Laureate 1850–92 · "Ulysses" (written 1833, published 1842) · *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850): grief, doubt, Nature "red in tooth and claw".
- **Robert Browning** (1812–1889): the dramatic monologue · "My Last Duchess" (1842) · *Men and Women* (1855) · *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69).
- **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1806–1861): *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850) · *Aurora Leigh* (1856) · Florence and the Risorgimento.
- **Matthew Arnold** (1822–1888): "Dover Beach" (1867): the retreating "sea of faith".
- **Thomas Hardy** (1840–1928): novelist until 1895, then poet · "Hap" (1866, published 1898) · "The Darkling Thrush" (1900).

3.3 Texts: A Hero, a Duke and a Thrush

Three poems from the beginning, the middle and the end of the Victorian age. The first two are dramatic monologues: an old hero speaks to his sailors, and a Renaissance duke speaks to a visitor. The third is a lyric in which the poet's "I" returns — but an "I" that cannot share the hope it hears. For each one, ask who is speaking, to whom, and what the speaker does not quite say.

3.3.1 T1 · Alfred Tennyson, "Ulysses", ll. 54–70

Context. Ulysses (the Latin name of Homer's Odysseus) is back on his island, Ithaca, after the Trojan War and ten years of wandering. He is old, and he finds the life of a king at home dull. In the first part of the poem he declares that he cannot rest from travel; he then hands over the kingdom to his son Telemachus. In the last section, printed here, he stands at the harbour at evening and speaks to the companions who will sail with him. The poem is in blank verse (English 3, chapter 10).

Tabella 3.1 T1 — Tennyson, "Ulysses" (written 1833, published 1842), ll. 54–70. Text of J. Churton Collins (ed.), *The Early Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (1900), as given in Project Gutenberg eBook #8601; the poem was not revised after 1842.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:	
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep	55
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,	
'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. *wanes*: grows weaker, ends · *the deep*: the sea · *'Tis*: it is · *smite / The sounding furrows*: strike the noisy waves ("furrows") with your oars · *my purpose holds*: my intention stays firm · *the baths / Of all the western stars*: the sea in the west, where the ancient Greeks imagined the stars bathed when they set · *gulfs*: deep waters, whirlpools · *the Happy Isles*: in Greek myth, islands in the far west where heroes lived after death · *Achilles*: the greatest Greek hero at Troy, already dead · *abides*: remains · *temper*: character; also the hardness of steel.

Analysis

The scene. The first three lines are slow. Long vowels and monosyllables (*The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs*) and two strong pauses within a single line (caesuras, English 3, chapter 3) make the voice linger, as if the evening itself were stretching out. Light is failing and the sea *moans*: everything around Ulysses speaks of endings, like his own old age.

The call. In the middle of line 56 the movement changes: *Come, my friends*. Imperatives (*Push off*, *smite*) replace description, and the sentences run on from line to line (enjambment) like the ship leaving the harbour. Ulysses openly admits where the voyage leads: *until I die*. The anaphora *It may be… / It may be…* sets two possible endings side by side — drowning, or reaching the Happy Isles — without choosing between them.

The last lines. The famous conclusion is built on balance: *much is taken, much abides*; *weak by time and fate, but strong in will*. The final line is a list of four verbs in the infinitive, with no object: Ulysses does not say what he will seek or find. Victorian readers took the line as a motto of courage and duty, and it is still carved on memorials; others have noticed that the hero is also leaving his responsibilities and his family behind, as Dante's Ulisse did (3.6). Both readings are possible, and the poem does not decide.

- Find the words and images in ll. 54–56 that suggest the end of something. What do they have in common?
- Where exactly does Ulysses stop describing and start persuading? Which verb forms show it?
- What are the two possible outcomes of the voyage in ll. 62–64? Why does Ulysses mention both?
- Explain in your own words: *Tho' much is taken, much abides*.
- Is Ulysses brave, or is he escaping? Use one quotation for each view.

3.3.2 T2 · Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess", ll. 1–13 and 45–47

Context. The poem's heading is "Ferrara", and the speaker is usually identified with Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, whose young first wife, Lucrezia de' Medici, died in 1561, aged sixteen, three years after their marriage; but the poem never names him. In the first edition (1842) it was called simply "Italy". The Duke is showing a visitor round his palace. The visitor, we learn later, is the envoy of a Count whose daughter the Duke intends to marry. The whole poem is 56 lines long; here are its opening and the turning point near the end.

Tabella 3.2 T2 — Browning, "My Last Duchess", ll. 1–13 and 45–47. Text of Browning's revised editions, as printed in F. T. Baker (ed.), *Browning's Shorter Poems* (1899), Project Gutenberg eBook #16376; the first edition (1842) differs only in punctuation in these lines. […] marks a cut.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,	
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. […]	
[…] This grew; I gave commands;	45
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands	
As if alive. […]	

Glosses. *piece*: work of art · *Frà Pandolf*: an imaginary painter-monk (*Frà* = "brother") · *Will't please you*: would you like to (formal) · *by design*: on purpose · *countenance*: face · *earnest*: serious, sincere · *puts by*: pulls aside · *if they durst*: if they dared.

Analysis

The first word. *That's my last Duchess*: in five words the Duke shows us a possession (*my*), a series (*last* means "latest" as well as "final": there were others, and there will be another) and a title rather than a name. She is *painted on the wall* and *looking as if she were alive* — so she is not alive. The painter worked *busily a day*: the Duke values the speed and the skill, and calls the result *a piece*, an object.

Control. Notice how much the Duke decides. He chooses to name the painter (*by design*), to ask his guest to sit, and above all to keep the portrait behind a curtain that only he may open:

none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I. The listener never speaks, but we can infer his reaction: like every stranger, he is about to ask how such a glance came there, and the Duke answers before he can. The rhymes are heroic couplets (English 3, chapter 6), but the sentences run across the line endings, so the rhyme is almost hidden: the Duke's polished, conversational tone hides an iron structure, as his manners hide his character.

The turning point. Between the two extracts the Duke complains that his wife smiled at everyone and everything, and that he could not "stoop" to correct her. Then, in two short clauses, the story ends: *I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together*. He does not say what the commands were. Late in Browning's life an American professor, Hiram Corson, asked him; according to Corson's account, Browning answered that he had meant she should be put to death — "Or he might have had her shut up in a convent." The power of the line lies in the gap the reader must fill. The Duke immediately returns to the portrait (*There she stands / As if alive*), and then, in the lines that follow, to the business of the dowry.

- Find three words in ll. 1–4 that show the Duke sees his wife as an object.
- Why does the Duke keep the portrait behind a curtain? What does this tell us about his attitude to his wife?
- What question does the silent listener want to ask? How do we know?
- Paraphrase ll. 45–46 in plain English. What are the two possible meanings of *commands*?
- The Duke is speaking to the envoy of his future father-in-law. Why might he tell this story now? Is it a mistake or a warning?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Inferring a speaker's motives from a dramatic monologue (T2, ll. 45–47).

- **Read the literal sense.** *This grew; I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.* Something (his irritation, her smiling) increased; he gave orders; all her smiles stopped at once.
- **Look at what is missing.** No object for *commands*, no subject for the stopping, no reaction, no regret. Three short clauses and semicolons: the syntax is as cold as the act.
- **Compare with the context.** The Duke has just said that he chooses *never to stoop*. A man who will not even speak to his wife about her behaviour gives commands instead — through others.
- **Infer and qualify.** The most likely reading is that he had her killed or removed; the text does not say which, and the Duke does not need to. The very next words (*There she stands / As if alive*) suggest he prefers her as a picture: silent, controlled, smiling only for him.
- **Write the inference.** *What gives the Duke away is his silence: by refusing to name the "commands", he shows that the death of his wife means less to him than the perfection of her portrait.*

3.3.3 T3 · Thomas Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush", stanzas 1 and 4

Context. The poem is dated December 1900: the last month of the nineteenth century. Its four stanzas move from a frozen winter landscape at dusk (1) to the century imagined as a corpse laid out across the land (2), to the sudden song of an old, thin thrush (3), and to the speaker's reflection on that song (4). *Darkling* is an old word meaning "in the dark"; Arnold had used it at the end of "Dover Beach".

Tabella 3.3 T3 — Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush", stanzas 1 and 4 (ll. 1–8, 25–32). Text of *Poems of the Past and the Present* (first published November 1901), as printed in the Harper second edition (1902) and in Macmillan's collected edition (1919, Project Gutenberg eBook #3168), which agree here.

I leant upon a coppice gate	
When Frost was spectre-gray,	
And Winter's dregs made desolate	
The weakening eye of day.	
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky	5
Like strings from broken lyres,	
And all mankind that haunted nigh	
Had sought their household fires.	
So little cause for carollings	25
Of such ecstatic sound	
Was written on terrestrial things	
Afar or nigh around,	
That I could think there trembled through	
His happy good-night air	30
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew	
And I was unaware.	
December 1900.	

Glosses. *coppice*: a small wood of young trees · *spectre-gray*: grey like a ghost · *dregs*: the last, worst part (of a drink, of the winter) · *bine-stems*: the stems of climbing plants · *scored*: drew

lines on · *lyres*: ancient stringed instruments, symbols of poetry · *haunted nigh*: lived nearby · *carollings*: joyful songs · *terrestrial*: on the earth · *afar or nigh*: far or near · *air*: song, tune · *whereof*: of which.

Analysis

A landscape of endings. Every image in the first stanza is old, exhausted or broken: the frost is a ghost, the remains of winter are *dregs*, the setting sun is a *weakening eye*, and the bare stems of climbing plants look like *strings from broken lyres* — the instruments of poetry itself destroyed. The speaker is alone: everyone else has gone home to the fire. In the second stanza (not printed) the land becomes *The Century's corpse*, and the speaker feels as lifeless as the world around him.

The song. In the third stanza an *aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small* suddenly sings *a full-hearted evensong / Of joy illimited*. *Evensong* is the evening service of the Church of England: the bird becomes a kind of priest. The fourth stanza is one long sentence that moves carefully, almost reluctantly, towards a conclusion. There is nothing on earth to justify such joy (*So little cause…*), so the speaker *could think* — a modal of possibility, not certainty — that the bird knows of *Some blessed Hope*.

The last line. The capital H gives *Hope* a religious weight, and the old word *blessed* belongs to the language of faith. But the final line keeps the speaker outside it: *And I was unaware*. Hardy neither denies nor accepts the hope; he records it honestly, as something another creature may have and he has not. The form helps: short alternating lines of four and three stresses rhyming *ababcdcd*, like a hymn — the music of faith, used by a poet who could not share it.

- List the images of age, death or failure in stanza 1. Which one refers to poetry?
- Why is it important that "all mankind" has gone indoors?
- Which words in stanza 4 belong to the language of religion?
- Why does the speaker say *I could think* and not *I knew*? What does the modal suggest?
- Is the ending hopeful or pessimistic? Give evidence for both readings before you decide.

3.4 Language: Defining, Classifying and Exemplifying

Whenever you write about literature or about science — in an essay, a short answer, a CLIL lesson or the *colloquio* — you need to say precisely what something is, which group it belongs to, what its parts are and what an example of it would be. These are the basic moves of academic writing, and English has a small set of fixed frames for them. You already know relative clauses (English 3, chapter 5) and the passive (English 3, chapter 4); here they work together.

3.4.1 Defining

A **formal definition** (*definizione formale*) has three parts: the **term**, the **class** (the general group it belongs to) and the **distinguishing features** that separate it from the other members of that

class (Figura 3.4). It is usually built with *be* + a noun + a relative clause; an example often follows.

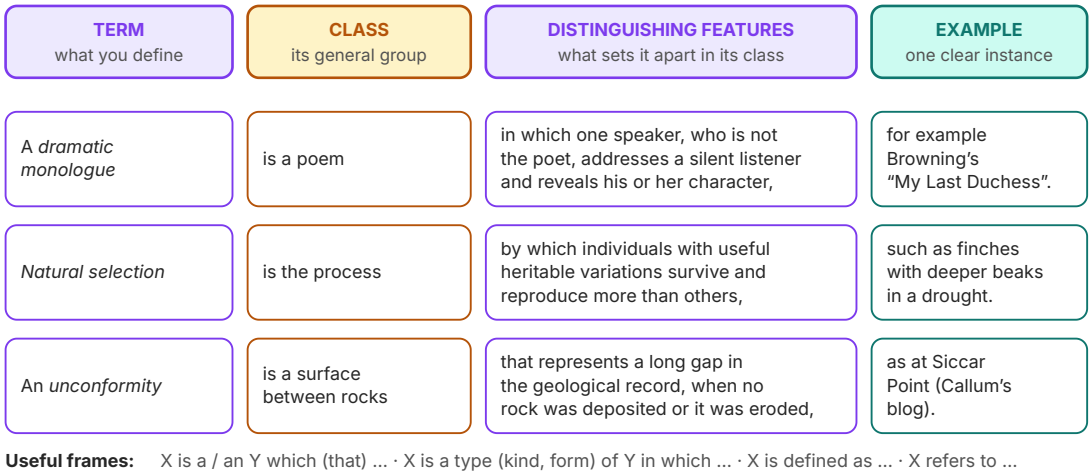


Figura 3.4 The definition frame. The class is a noun; the distinguishing features usually follow in a relative clause (*which*, *that*, *in which*, *by which*); the example is added with *for example*, *such as* or *as*.

Tabella 3.4 Defining, classifying and exemplifying: the main frames

Function	Frames	Example from this chapter
defining	*X is a / an Y which (that, in which, by which)…*	*A dramatic monologue is a poem in which a single character speaks to a silent listener.*
	X is defined as… · X can be defined as… · X refers to… · The term X means…	*Uniformitarianism can be defined as the principle that the same causes have always acted at the same rates.*
	X is a type / kind / form of Y	*The In Memoriam stanza is a form of quatrain.*
describing parts	*X consists of… · X is made up of… · X is composed of… · X comprises…*	*In Memoriam consists of 133 sections. Each stanza is made up of four lines.*
classifying	*X can be divided into… · X falls into… · There are three types (kinds) of X*	*Victorian responses to Darwin fall into three broad groups.*
	X belongs to… · X is classified as… · X is a member of…	*The song thrush belongs to the same genus as the blackbird.*
characterising	*X is characterised by… · A key feature of X is…*	*Hardy's late poetry is characterised by doubt.*
exemplifying	*such as… · for example, … · for instance, … · e.g. · including… · as in…*	*Victorian poets such as Tennyson and Arnold wrote about doubt.*

restating	*that is (to say), … · i.e. · in other words, …*	*Darwin was buried in the Abbey, i.e. with the highest national honour.*

Three points of use make the difference between a good definition and a weak one:

- **The class is a noun, never *when* or *where*.** ✓ *Enjambment is a technique in which a sentence runs on…* — ✗ *Enjambment is when a sentence runs on…* (acceptable in speech, not in writing).
- **The features must exclude the neighbours.** "A poem spoken by a character" also describes a soliloquy in a verse play; adding "to a silent listener" and "not the poet" makes the definition of the dramatic monologue exact.
- **Use the present simple**, because a definition is always true: *A thrush is a songbird*; *Natural selection acts on heritable variation*.

3.4.2 Describing parts and classifying

Consist of, *be made up of* and *be composed of* all go from the whole to the parts: *The poem consists of four stanzas. Consist of* is a stative verb, so it is never used in the continuous form. *Comprise* traditionally means the same, without a preposition: *The sequence comprises 133 sections.* The passive *is comprised of* is now very common and is accepted by many dictionaries, but many teachers, editors and examiners still consider it an error: in formal writing, avoid it and use *consists of* or *is made up of*. To classify, start from the whole group: *Victorian poems about faith can be divided into three groups: those that keep faith, those that question it and those that have lost it.*

3.4.3 Giving examples

Such as introduces examples inside the sentence, with no comma before a short list: *poets such as Tennyson and Hardy*. *For example* and *for instance* are sentence adverbs and usually stand between commas or at the start of a sentence. The Latin abbreviations are different in meaning: *e.g.* (*exempli gratia*, "for example") gives one example among many, *i.e.* (*id est*, "that is") restates or specifies the only possibility. Both belong to notes, tables and brackets rather than to formal prose, where *for example* and *that is* are preferred.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Definire, classificare, esemplificare. La definizione formale segue lo schema **termine + *is a/an* + classe + relativa**: *A sonnet is a poem which…* In italiano diciamo «Il monologo drammatico è una poesia in cui…»: la struttura è la stessa, ma in inglese l'articolo indeterminativo davanti alla classe è obbligatorio (*is **a** poem*) e la definizione si scrive sempre al *present simple*.

Le parti. *consist of* = «essere costituito da, consistere di» (✗ *consist in* in questo senso: *consist in* significa «risiedere in, stare in»: *Its power consists in what it leaves unsaid*). *Comprise* = «comprendere» e non vuole preposizione; evitate *is comprised of* negli scritti formali.

Gli esempi. *such as* = «come» (dentro la frase); *for example* = «per esempio»; *e.g.* = «ad es.»; *i.e.* = «cioè». Mai *like for example* o *such as for example*: l'esempio si introduce una volta sola.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *A dramatic monologue is when a character speaks.* → ✓ *A dramatic monologue **is a poem in which** a character speaks…* (la classe è un nome, non *when*).

✗ *The poem is consisting of four stanzas.* → ✓ *The poem **consists of** four stanzas.* (verbo di stato: niente forma progressiva) · ✗ *is composed by four stanzas* → ✓ *is composed **of*** (*by* indica l'autore: *composed by Tennyson*).

✗ *Poets such as for example Hardy…* → ✓ *Poets such as Hardy…* · ✗ *Darwin's first edition, e.g. the 1859 one* → ✓ *i.e. the 1859 one* (c'è una sola prima edizione: si specifica, non si esemplifica).

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

One frame for a literary term and a scientific concept. Define *dramatic monologue* and *natural selection* for a CLIL glossary.

- **Choose the class.** A dramatic monologue is a kind of *poem*; natural selection is a *process*. If you cannot name the class, you do not yet know what the thing is.
- **Add the distinguishing features.** Poem: one speaker who is not the poet; a silent listener; a situation; self-revelation. Process: heritable variation, more offspring than can survive, differential survival and reproduction.
- **Test against a neighbour.** Does the definition also fit a soliloquy? No: a soliloquy belongs to a play and has no listener. Does it fit artificial selection by breeders? No: there the choice is made by people, not by the environment.
- **Add an example and check the tense.** *A dramatic monologue is a poem in which a single speaker, who is not the poet, addresses a silent listener and reveals his character, for example Browning's "My Last Duchess".* · *Natural selection is the process by which individuals with useful heritable variations survive and reproduce more than others, such as finches with deeper beaks during a drought.*

3.5 Skills: Reading between the Lines

3.5.1 Vocabulary: science, faith and doubt

The words in Tabella 3.5 are the shared vocabulary of the Victorian debate — and of every biology lesson about evolution today.

Tabella 3.5 Science, faith and doubt: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
species (n., pl. *species*)	a group of similar organisms that can breed together	*The Galápagos mockingbirds belonged to different species.*
evolve (v.)	to develop gradually over generations	*Whales evolved from land mammals.*
adapt (v.)	to change so as to suit new conditions	*Species adapt to their environment over many generations.*
survive (v.)	to continue to live, especially after danger	*Only a few finches survived the drought.*
extinct (adj.)	no longer existing	*Darwin found fossils of extinct giant mammals.*
ancestor (n.)	an organism or person from whom another is descended	*Humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor.*
descent (n.)	origin from earlier forms or generations	*Darwin's theory of descent with modification.*
belief (n.)	a feeling that something is true or exists	*Tennyson struggled to keep his belief in God.*
doubt (n., v.)	uncertainty; to feel uncertain about	*"Hap" expresses doubt about any divine plan.*
creed (n.)	a set of religious beliefs; any system of beliefs	*Nature "shriek'd against his creed".*

Word formation: Greek and Latin plurals

Scientific and academic English keeps many plurals from Greek and Latin (Tabella 3.6). Many of them are frequent in exam texts, and the singular–plural pairs are often confused.

Tabella 3.6 Greek and Latin plurals in academic English

Singular	Plural	Pattern	Note
phenomenon	*phenomena*	Greek -on → -a	✗ *a phenomena*
criterion	*criteria*	Greek -on → -a	✗ *one criteria*
hypothesis, *analysis*, *thesis*	*hypotheses*, *analyses*, *theses*	Greek -is → -es	pronounced /-iːz/ in the plural
nucleus, *stimulus*, *fungus*	*nuclei*, *stimuli*, *fungi*	Latin -us → -i	*genus* is irregular: pl. *genera*
larva, *formula*	*larvae*, *formulae* (also *formulas*)	Latin -a → -ae	in everyday English *formulas* is common
datum (rare), *medium*, *bacterium*	*data*, *media*, *bacteria*	Latin -um → -a	*data*: see below
index, *appendix*	*indices* / *indexes*, *appendices*	Latin -ix/-ex → -ices	*indices* in maths, *indexes* of books
species, *series*	*species*, *series*	no change	*one species, two species*

Is it "data is" or "data are"? Both are correct. In scientific writing *data* is often treated as a plural (*these data are*), following Latin; in general and technical English it is very often an uncountable noun, like *information* (*this data is*). Choose one and use it consistently. *Media* in the sense of newspapers and broadcasting behaves in the same way.

3.5.2 Reading: Standing on the Edge of Time

Before you read. Callum Reid, from Bristol, is in his first year of a geography degree in Edinburgh, where his mother lives. He writes for "The Link, Year Five", the blog he shares with Sam, Aoife and Giulia. In geology an **unconformity** (*discordanza*) is a surface between two groups of rocks that represents a long gap in the geological record, when no rock was laid down or older rock was worn away. Read the post quickly and answer: Where did Callum go, and why is the place famous? Then read again for the tasks in *Towards INVALSI*.

Reading Callum Reid, "Standing on the Edge of Time" (The Link, Year Five)

Six weeks into a geography degree, I have learnt two things. First, Edinburgh is built on old volcanoes, and you feel every one of them in your legs. Second, geologists will happily travel for an hour to look at a cliff. On Saturday our physical geography module took a minibus east along the coast to Siccar Point, in Berwickshire, which our lecturer calls "the most important rock in Scotland" without a trace of a smile.

There is no proper path. You leave the minibus by a field, walk to the edge and go down a steep grassy slope — on your backside, if you have any sense. At the bottom there is a rocky platform, the North Sea, and the thing everyone has come to see. The lower rocks are grey and hard, and their layers stand up almost vertically, like books on a shelf. Lying across their tops, at a gentle angle, are layers of red sandstone. Between the two

there is a line where the grey stops and the red begins. A line like that is called an unconformity, and this one is about sixty-five million years long.

That was the number that stopped me. The grey rock, greywacke, formed from sand and mud on the floor of an ocean around 435 million years ago. Then the ocean closed, two continents collided, and the layers were pushed up, tilted on end and worn down. Only then, about 370 million years ago, did rivers in a hot landscape just south of the Equator lay down the red sand on top. Our lecturer showed us that the bottom of the red layer is a mixture of sand and broken pieces of the grey rock below, and that it has been dated partly by the fossils of armoured fish found in the same red rocks along this coast. The gap between the two rocks is not a crack. It is time.

In June 1788 three men came here by boat: James Hutton, a doctor and farmer who believed that the Earth had been shaped by the same slow processes we can see today; his friend John Playfair, a mathematician; and Sir James Hall, whose family owned the land a few miles along the coast. Hutton had been looking for exactly this kind of junction, and here it was, cleaned by the waves. Years later Playfair wrote that "The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time". I copied that sentence into my notebook and underlined it twice, because it was exactly how I felt, only with wetter shoes.

What I keep thinking about is how slow it all is. Mud on the sea floor becomes rock, rock becomes mountains, mountains become sand, and nobody watches. Hutton had no way of measuring the age of the rocks; he could only see that it must be enormous, and his 1788 paper ends with the words "no vestige of a beginning,—no prospect of an end." About forty years later Charles Lyell built a whole system on Hutton's idea, and Darwin read Lyell on the *Beagle*. Without this deep time, Giulia tells me, there would be no room for natural selection to work. I said I'd take her word for the biology if she takes mine for the cliff.

Some practical advice, if you ever go: wear boots, check the weather and the tide, don't go down after heavy rain, and leave your hammer at home. It is a protected site, and it has been waiting a very long time.

Next week: soils. I'm told they are less dramatic.

After reading. a) Find two definitions in the post. Which frame from 3.4 does each one use? b) Callum writes that the gap "is not a crack. It is time." What does he mean? c) Why does Playfair's sentence matter so much to him?

3.5.3 Speaking: inferring a speaker's motives

A dramatic monologue never tells you directly what the speaker wants; you must infer it from what he says, how he says it and what he leaves out. Inference is also the most frequent skill in the oral exam: the examiner may give you a short quotation and ask "What does this tell us about the speaker?" Support every inference with a quotation, and qualify it if the text allows more than one reading.

Tabella 3.7 Useful language — inferring motives

Function	Phrases
making an inference	*Reading between the lines, … · I get the impression that… · It seems to me that he is trying to…*
pointing to evidence	*What gives him away is… · It's telling that… · The fact that he… suggests… · Look at the word…*
contrasting surface and meaning	*On the surface he…, but in fact… · He claims to…, and yet… · He never actually says…, but…*
qualifying	*It's possible that… · This could also mean… · I wouldn't go as far as to say…, but…*
concluding	*All in all, he comes across as… · So what he really wants is…*

- **Who is the Duke?** (pairs, 4 minutes). Student A is the envoy who has just left the palace and reports to the Count: should the Count let his daughter marry the Duke? Student B is the Count and asks for evidence. Use at least four phrases from the table and three quotations from T2.
- **Why does Ulysses leave?** (groups of three, 5 minutes). Each student defends one motive with evidence from T1 and its context: *courage and the love of knowledge*; *escape from duty and old age*; *grief and the wish to die*. Then agree on the most convincing reading and report it to the class in one minute.

3.5.4 Writing: a dramatic monologue with a writer's note

Writing a dramatic monologue is the best way to understand how the form works: you have to give a character a voice and let the reader discover what the character does not see. The model below was written by Sam for a creative-writing seminar at university; it is followed by his writer's note.

Tabella 3.8 Model text — Sam Taylor, "The Cabinet" (a dramatic monologue in free lines; 22 lines, 197 words) and writer's note (83 words)

Mind the step. No, leave the lamp — the light
is bad for them, they fade. Sit there. These drawers
hold forty years: six thousand beetles, pinned
and labelled in my hand. That green one, there,
I took in Brazil in 'thirty-four, the week
the fever took my brother. Yes, a pity.
He would have liked this drawer. You see the gold?
No other cabinet in England has that gold.
Your Museum wrote to me, of course, three times —
they want them "for the nation". For the nation!
As if the nation climbed the trees at dawn
or sat up nights with camphor and with pins.
My wife? She went to Bath. She did not care
for beetles, or for me among the beetles,
and the children followed her. They write at Christmas.
Look at this one, though: the wing case, like a lens.
You'd swear it was alive. They do not change,
that's what I love: they stay where you have put them.
So. Your directors want the lot. Then tell them:
when I am dead. Not one day sooner. Close
the drawer, young man. Gently. Gently. There.
You know the way. I'll stay a little longer.

Writer's note. My speaker is an old Victorian collector; the silent listener is a young man sent by a museum to buy his collection. I wanted the reader to notice what the collector does not: that he treats his family as he treats his beetles, things that should "stay where you have put them". The listener's questions are hidden in the replies ("My wife?"), as in Browning. The moment he gives himself away is the brother's death, mentioned in the same breath as a beetle.

How the model works. Speaker and listener: established in the first lines through imperatives (*Mind the step… Sit there*) and later through answers to unheard questions (*My wife?*). **Situation:** a study at night, a cabinet, an offer to buy — revealed gradually, not explained. **Self-revelation:** the speaker's priorities show in what he lingers on (the gold, the wing case) and what he hurries past (*Yes, a pity*; *They write at Christmas*). **Form:** loose lines of about ten syllables, run-on sentences and broken rhythm imitate natural speech. **Writer's note:** it names the speaker, the listener, the intended effect and the key moment, in the present tense.

Checklist. ✓ one speaker who is clearly not you · ✓ a silent listener whose presence and reactions can be inferred · ✓ a precise situation (place, time, reason for speaking) · ✓ at least one moment where the speaker reveals more than he or she intends · ✓ natural spoken English: questions, imperatives, interruptions · ✓ 20–30 lines, free or blank verse · ✓ a writer's note of 80–100 words that explains your choices.

Task. Write a dramatic monologue (20–30 lines, free or blank verse) and a writer's note (80–100 words). Choose one: a) a scientist in 1859 speaks to a bishop who has come to dinner; b) Te-

lemachus speaks to his mother the morning after Ulysses has sailed; c) the envoy of T2 speaks to the Count's daughter; d) a speaker of your own invention. Give your speaker a secret.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Reading a poem against a scientific text. In the exam you may be asked to connect a poem with a scientific idea. Do not ask whether the poem is "right": ask what each text does. Use the same grid for both:

- **Claim.** What does the text say about the world? (*Nature is indifferent to individuals · species change by natural selection*)
- **Evidence.** On what does it base the claim — observation, data, experience, feeling, tradition?
- **Tone and attitude.** Is the voice neutral, anxious, hopeful, ironic? Find the words that show it.
- **What it leaves out.** What question does the text not answer? Darwin does not talk about God's purpose; Tennyson does not talk about mechanisms.

Try it with Tennyson's lines from *In Memoriam* and Darwin's last sentence (the epigraph of this chapter): two texts about the same Nature, one full of fear, one full of "grandeur". The grid works in Italian too — with Leopardi's "La ginestra" beside a page of your Earth science book on Vesuvius — and in Latin, with Lucretius beside a modern account of atoms.

3.6 Connections: Ulysses, the Broom Flower and Darwin's Finches

3.6.1 Two Ulysses: Tennyson and Dante

Tennyson's Ulysses is not Homer's. In the *Odyssey* the hero wants above all to go home; it was Dante who imagined him never going home at all: in old age, after leaving Circe, he sails west through the Strait of Gibraltar into the unknown ocean. In *Inferno* XXVI Ulisse, speaking from inside a flame, tells how he persuaded his old companions with a short speech:

> *Considerate la vostra semenza:*
> *fatti non foste a viver come bruti,*
> *ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza.*
> — Dante, *Inferno* XXVI, 118–120 (Petrocchi text, as given on Wikisource)

"Consider your origin: you were not made to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge" (translation by the editors). Tennyson knew the canto well, and his Ulysses ends with the same appeal to a small group of old men. But the two poets judge the voyage differently. Dante's Ulisse is in Hell, among the fraudulent counsellors; his journey is a *folle volo* (l. 125), a mad flight beyond the limits set for human beings, and it ends in a shipwreck within sight of the

mountain of Purgatory. Tennyson's poem stops at the harbour, before anything goes wrong, and gives its hero the last word. For many Victorians the voyage "beyond the utmost bound of human thought" (l. 32) was the spirit of exploration and science itself. Giovanni Pascoli later wrote his own version, "L'ultimo viaggio" (in the *Poemi conviviali*, 1904), in which the old hero goes back over his first journey and finds that the wonders have disappeared.

3.6.2 Nature without providence: Leopardi's "La ginestra"

Fourteen years before *In Memoriam*, Giacomo Leopardi wrote, near Torre del Greco on the slopes of Vesuvius, his last great poem, "La ginestra, o il fiore del deserto" (1836, published 1845). It opens on the lava fields of the volcano:

> *Qui su l'arida schiena*
> *del formidabil monte*
> *sterminator Vesevo,* [...]
> *[...] che de' mortali*
> *madre è di parto e di voler matrigna.*
> — Leopardi, "La ginestra", ll. 1–3 and 124–125 (ed. A. Donati, 1917, as given on Wikisource)

"Here on the dry back of the formidable mountain, Vesuvius the destroyer..." and, later, Nature "who is a mother to mortals by giving birth, and a stepmother by her will" (translation by the editors). Like Tennyson's Nature "red in tooth and claw", Leopardi's Nature does not care for individuals. The answers are different. *In Memoriam* moves, through doubt, towards a trust that "somehow good" will come; Leopardi refuses all consolation from providence, and asks human beings to unite in solidarity against the common enemy, like the fragile broom plant that grows on the lava and bends without pleading. Hardy's speaker, at the end of the century, stands between the two: he hears the song of hope, but he cannot share it.

3.6.3 Browning's Italy

Italy was Browning's second country. He set *Pippa Passes* (1841) in Asolo, near Treviso, where he returned in the last year of his life (his final collection is *Asolando*, 1889), and many of his speakers are Italians: the painters Fra Lippo Lippi and Andrea del Sarto in *Men and Women*, and the Duke of Ferrara, whose city — the city of Ariosto and Tasso — the Este family ruled until 1598.

3.6.4 Screen, music and art: a cathedral of nature

The Natural History Museum in South Kensington, designed by Alfred Waterhouse, opened on 18 April 1881. The idea came from the anatomist Richard Owen, who wanted the national collections displayed for everyone in a building as grand as a church: with its two towers, round Romanesque arches and vast central hall, it is often called a "cathedral of nature". Its terracotta

tiles, chosen to resist the soot of Victorian London, are moulded with plants and animals. At Owen's request, living species decorate the west wing and extinct species the east wing — a separation that has been read as a statement against Darwin's idea that present and past forms are linked by descent. Owen was one of Darwin's fiercest critics; today a statue of Darwin sits on the main staircase of the central hall, where the skeleton of a blue whale now hangs.

3.6.5 DNL / CLIL: natural selection in action

Darwin thought that natural selection was far too slow to observe. In the twentieth century biologists found that it can sometimes be measured within a few years. The best-known case comes from the Galápagos, from the birds now called Darwin's finches: a group of more than a dozen closely related species whose beaks differ in size and shape according to what they eat. Darwin himself had paid little attention to them on the islands; the ornithologist John Gould identified them in London in 1837. Since 1973 the biologists Peter and Rosemary Grant have studied the finches of the small island of Daphne Major every year. In 1977 a severe drought left only 24 millimetres of rain in the wet season; the small, soft seeds ran out, and only large, hard seeds remained. Many medium ground finches died; those with deeper beaks, able to crack the hard seeds, survived better and bred, and in the next generation the average beak was measurably larger. After the very wet El Niño of 1982–83 small seeds became abundant, and in the dry years that followed smaller beaks were favoured instead. Natural selection, in other words, is not a fixed direction of progress: it follows the environment.

The only illustration in the *Origin*, in chapter IV, is a diagram of this branching: the species of one genus along the bottom, their descendants rising and diverging over intervals of "a thousand generations", most lineages dying out. Figura 3.5 redraws the idea in a simpler form.

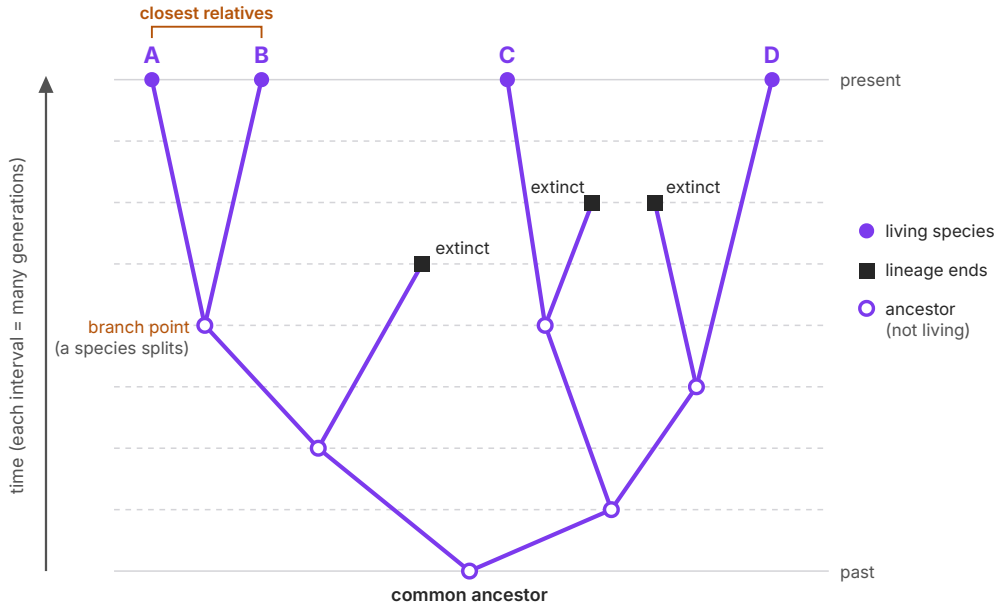


Figura 3.5 Descent with modification (schematic, after the idea of the diagram in Darwin's *Origin*, ch. IV; not a copy). One ancestral species splits repeatedly over time; some lineages end in extinction; four species survive today. A and B are each other's closest relatives because they share the most recent common ancestor.

COLLEGAMENTI

Physics and Earth science: how old is the Earth? In the *Origin* (1859) Darwin estimated that the erosion of the Weald, a region of south-east England, "must have required 306,662,400 years; or say three hundred million years" — a calculation he later dropped. In 1862 the physicist William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) replied with thermodynamics: assuming that the Earth had cooled from a molten state, and measuring how temperature increases with depth in mines, he calculated an age between 20 and 400 million years, and later argued for the lower end of that range. It seemed too short for natural selection. Kelvin's physics was sound but his assumptions were incomplete: he could not know about radioactivity, discovered in 1896, which releases heat inside the Earth, nor about convection in the mantle. Radiometric dating, based on the regular decay of radioactive isotopes, now gives an age of about 4.54 billion years. Darwin's time was long enough after all.

DA RICORDARE

For the exam. *Starting point:* the lines "Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw / With ravine, shriek'd against his creed" (Tennyson, *In Memoriam* LVI, 1850). *Three links:* **another English author** — Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush" (1900): the same question at the end of the century, and an answer of honest doubt; **an Italian author** — Leopardi, "La ginestra" (1836): Nature as "matrigna" and the call to human solidarity; **another subject** — biology: Darwin's natural selection (1859) and the finches of Daphne Major; or philosophy: positivism and the idea of progress. Remember the date trap: Tennyson wrote before Darwin.

SINTESI

- Hutton (1788) and Lyell's **Principles of Geology** (1830–33) introduced **uniformitarianism** and **deep time**: the Earth is shaped by slow processes still at work and is immensely old.
- Darwin sailed on the **Beagle** (1831–36), formed his theory in 1838 after reading Malthus, and published **On the Origin of Species** on 24 November 1859, after Wallace sent him the same idea (Linnean Society, 1 July 1858).
- The theory: variation, the **struggle for existence**, **natural selection** and **common descent**; "survival of the fittest" is Spencer's phrase (1864), adopted by Darwin in 1869; *fittest* = best adapted.
- Geology, the **higher criticism** and *Essays and Reviews* (1860) contributed to the Victorian **crisis of faith**; Huxley coined *agnostic* (1869); Darwin was buried in Westminster Abbey (1882).
- **Tennyson**: "Ulysses" (1833/1842) and *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850), written in the *In Memoriam* stanza, with Nature "red in tooth and claw" — nine years before Darwin; Poet Laureate from 1850.
- **Browning** perfected the **dramatic monologue**: a character who is not the poet speaks to a silent listener in a precise situation and reveals more than he intends.
- **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** wrote *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and *Aurora Leigh*; **Arnold**'s "Dover Beach" (1867) imagines the ebbing "sea of faith".
- **Hardy**, novelist until 1895, is a poet of doubt: "Hap" (chance, not a god) and "The Darkling Thrush" (December 1900).
- T1 balances endings and resolve; T2 shows the Duke's pride and power through what he does not say ("I gave commands"); T3 records a hope the speaker cannot share.
- A formal definition = term + class + distinguishing features (+ example); use *consists of / is made up of* for parts, *such as / for example* for examples, *e.g.* ≠ *i.e.*; avoid *is comprised of* in formal writing.
- Tennyson's Ulysses comes from Dante's Ulisse (*Inferno* XXVI), but Dante condemns the voyage; Leopardi's "La ginestra" answers an indifferent Nature with solidarity.
- Natural selection can be observed: in the Galápagos drought of 1977 finches with deeper beaks survived better; the Natural History Museum (1881) is London's "cathedral of nature".

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Which statement about Lyell's *Principles of Geology* is correct?
   - **A.** It argued that the Earth was created in 4004 BC.
   - **B.** It was published after the *Origin of Species*.
   - **C.** It explained the Earth's past by causes still in operation today.
   - **D.** It introduced the phrase "survival of the fittest".

2. ● When was *In Memoriam A.H.H.* published?
   - **A.** in 1850, anonymously, nine years before the *Origin*
   - **B.** in 1833, immediately after Hallam's death
   - **C.** in 1859, as a reply to Darwin
   - **D.** in 1842, together with "Ulysses"

3. ● In a dramatic monologue…
   - **A.** the poet speaks directly to the reader about his own feelings.
   - **B.** a character speaks alone on the stage of a theatre.
   - **C.** two characters speak in alternate stanzas.
   - **D.** a character who is not the poet speaks to a silent listener and reveals himself.

4. ● Match each author with a work and a date. Authors: Lyell · Darwin · Tennyson · Browning · Arnold · Hardy. Works: "Dover Beach" · *Principles of Geology* · *Dramatic Lyrics* · *The Descent of Man* · *Wessex Poems* · *In Memoriam A.H.H.* Dates: 1830–33 · 1842 · 1850 · 1867 · 1871 · 1898.

5. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a Darwin coined the phrase "survival of the fittest". b Wallace sent Darwin an essay with the same theory in 1858. c The words spoken at the Oxford meeting of 1860 were recorded by a stenographer. d Huxley coined the word *agnostic* in 1869. e Hardy began to write poetry only after he had stopped writing novels. f Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in Florence in 1861.

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences, with an example from the chapter: a uniformitarianism · b natural selection · c crisis of faith · d *In Memoriam* stanza · e silent listener.

7. ●●● Short answer (10–12 lines, 100–130 words): How did geology and natural history change the way educated Victorians thought about time, Nature and God? Give a definition, an example and a link to a poem.

Text Analysis

8. ●● In T1, the line “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield” is effective because…

   A. it tells us exactly what Ulysses hopes to find.

   B. it lists four infinitives without objects, so the will matters more than the goal.

   C. it is the only rhymed line of the poem.

   D. it is spoken by Telemachus.

9. ●● T1: Find an example of each device and explain its effect: a caesura · b enjambment · c anaphora · d antithesis.

10. ●● T2: Paraphrase ll. 9–13 (“since none puts by… ask thus”) in modern English. What do these lines tell us about the Duke and about his listener?

11. ●●● T3: Compare stanza 1 and stanza 4. How do the speaker’s mood and the language change? Write 80–100 words, with at least three quotations.

12. ●●● Compare T1 with the lines from Dante’s *Inferno* XXVI in 3.6 (80–100 words): what is the same in the two speeches, and how do the two poets judge the voyage differently?

13. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation; 80–100 words) on this point: “In T2 the Duke reveals more than he intends.”

Language

14. ● Complete with ONE word. a A dramatic monologue is a poem _____ which a single character speaks. b *In Memoriam* consists _____ 133 sections. c Natural selection is the process _____ which better-adapted individuals leave more offspring. d The thrush belongs _____ the same genus as the blackbird. e Victorian poems about faith can be divided _____ three groups. f Hardy’s late poetry is characterised _____ doubt.

15. ● Choose the correct option. a Poets *such as / for example* Tennyson wrote about grief. b Darwin wrote one book in 1859, *i.e. / e.g.* the *Origin*. c Many Victorian authors, *e.g. / i.e.* Arnold and Hardy, wrote about doubt. d Each stanza *is made up of / is comprising* four lines. e The poem was composed *of / by* Tennyson in 1833. f The sequence *comprises / is comprised by* 133 sections.

16. ●● Error correction (✗). Each sentence has one mistake. Find it and correct it. a *An unconformity is when two rocks meet after a long gap.* b *The museum is consisting of two wings.* c *Darwin found many phenomenon that he could not explain.* d *One criteria for a good definition is precision.* e *Poets like for example Arnold lost their faith.* f *The poem is composed by four stanzas.*

17. ●● Rewrite these informal explanations as formal definitions (term + class + features), adding an example. a *Deep time is, like, the huge amount of time geology needs.* b *Agnosticism — that’s when you say you can’t know if God exists.* c *An adaptation is something an animal has that helps it survive.* d *A sonnet is when you have fourteen lines.*

18. ●● Classifying. Write one sentence for each prompt, using a different frame each time (*can be divided into*, *falls into*, *there are … types of*, *consists of*). a Victorian responses to the *Origin*. b the parts of a dramatic monologue. c the rocks at Siccar Point. d the stanzas of "The Darkling Thrush".

19. ●● Rewrite each sentence with the word in capitals, keeping the meaning (2–5 words). a *The Beagle's crew included about seventy men.* (MADE) *The Beagle's crew* _____ *about seventy men.* b *The term "agnostic" means someone who believes we cannot know whether God exists.* (REFERS) *The term "agnostic"* _____ *who believes…* c *We call this process natural selection.* (KNOWN) *This process* _____ *natural selection.* d *Tennyson's sequence has 133 sections.* (CONSISTS) *Tennyson's sequence* _____ *sections.*

20. ●●● Translate into English. a *Il monologo drammatico è una poesia in cui un personaggio parla a un interlocutore che non risponde.* b *La selezione naturale si può definire come il processo per cui gli individui più adatti lasciano più discendenti.* c *Molti poeti vittoriani, come Tennyson e Arnold, scrissero del dubbio religioso.*

Vocabulary

21. ● Complete with words from Tabella 3.5. a Dinosaurs became _____ about 66 million years ago. b Humans and chimpanzees share a common _____. c Finches with deeper beaks were more likely to _____ the drought. d For Arnold, the "sea of faith" was retreating: _____ was spreading. e The Galápagos mockingbirds belonged to different _____. f Tennyson feared that Nature "shriek'd against his _____".

22. ●● Write the plural (or the singular) of each noun and use three of them in sentences about this chapter: a phenomenon · b criteria · c hypothesis · d nucleus · e genus · f larvae · g analyses · h species.

23. ●● Word families. Complete the table, then use one word from each row in a sentence. a evolve → (noun) _____ → (adjective) _____ · b adapt → (noun) _____ → (adjective) _____ · c survive → (noun, the fact) _____ → (noun, the person) _____ · d believe → (noun) _____ → (opposite adjective) _____ · e doubt → (adjective) _____ → (adverb) _____.

Writing and Speaking

24. ●●● Write the dramatic monologue described in 3.5 (20–30 lines, free or blank verse) and its writer's note (80–100 words). Then exchange it with a classmate: can he or she identify the speaker, the listener, the situation and the moment the speaker gives himself or herself away?

25. ●●● Speaking (2 minutes each, in pairs). Student A: "Ulysses is a hero." Student B: "Ulysses is running away." Each student uses evidence from T1 and at least three phrases from Tabella 3.7; then together decide which reading the last line supports better.

Towards INVALSI

26. ● (B1) Reading — multiple choice. Read Callum's post again and choose A, B, C or D. 1 Callum's lecturer describes Siccar Point as A a dangerous place for students. B the most important rock in Scotland. C a good place to find volcanoes. D the oldest rock in Scotland. 2 To reach the bottom, Callum recommends A using a path. B taking a boat. C sliding down the grassy slope. D going with a guide. 3 The grey rock was formed A in a hot desert. B on the floor of an ocean. C by a volcano. D by glaciers. 4 The red layer was dated partly thanks to A a boat trip. B Hutton's paper. C fossil fish. D the colour of the sand. 5 Callum underlined Playfair's sentence because A it was difficult to understand. B his lecturer asked him to. C it described his own feelings. D it was written in 1788.

27. ●● (B2) Reading — short answers. Answer in no more than FOUR words. a What vehicle did the class travel in? b What do the vertical layers look like, according to Callum? c How old is the red sandstone, approximately? d Who owned the land near Siccar Point? e What should visitors leave at home?

28. ●● (B2) Reading — true, false or not given. a Callum has been at university for six weeks. b The students travelled to Siccar Point by train. c The gap between the two rocks is a physical crack in the cliff. d Hutton, Playfair and Hall arrived at Siccar Point by sea. e Hutton measured the exact age of the rocks. f Callum's lecturer is a specialist in fossil fish.

29. ●● (B2) Reading — multiple matching. Match each heading A–G to one paragraph 1–6 of Callum's post (paragraphs 1–6; ignore the last line). There is one heading you do not need. A How to visit safely · B Three men in a boat · C The way down · D From Hutton to Darwin: slow time · E Saturday's trip · F A story told by two rocks · G The fossils we collected

Towards the Exam

30. ●●● Colloquio. Starting point: the last two lines of "The Darkling Thrush" — "Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew / And I was unaware." (Hardy, December 1900). Talk for 3 minutes: say where the lines come from and what they mean, then link them to two other subjects (for example Italian literature and science or philosophy).

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E: the introduction to the Victorian age and the selections from Tennyson, the Brownings, Arnold, Darwin and Hardy.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapters on early and late Victorian literature.
- [WIL] R. Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950*: the chapters on the Victorian debate about culture, religion and science.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "dramatic monologue", "elegy" and "Victorian period".
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on relative clauses and on academic noun phrases.
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *consist*, *comprise*, *e.g.* / *i.e.*, *such as* and on Latin and Greek plurals.

Glossario del capitolo

Adaptation
adattamento — a heritable feature that helps an organism survive and reproduce in its environment.

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

Common descent
discendenza comune — the descent of different species from shared ancestors, like the branches of a tree.

Crisis of faith
crisi della fede — a historians' label for the loss or deep questioning of religious belief experienced by many educated Victorians.

Deep time
tempo profondo — the immense span of geological time that slow natural processes require; a modern phrase.

Dramatic monologue
monologo drammatico — a poem in which a single character, not the poet, speaks to a silent listener in a particular situation and reveals his or her character.

Formal definition
definizione formale — a definition made of a term, the class it belongs to and its distinguishing features.

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

In Memoriam stanza
strofa di In Memoriam — a quatrain of iambic tetrameter rhyming *abba*, named after Tennyson's elegy (1850).

Natural selection
selezione naturale — the process by which individuals with useful heritable variations survive and reproduce more than others.

Silent listener
interlocutore muto — in a dramatic monologue, the person addressed by the speaker, whose words are never given but can be inferred.

Struggle for existence
lotta per l'esistenza — Darwin's term for the competition for survival and reproduction caused by the birth of more individuals than can survive.

Survival of the fittest
sopravvivenza del più adatto — Herbert Spencer's phrase (1864) for natural selection, adopted by Darwin in 1869; *fittest* = best adapted.

Unconformity
discordanza — in geology, a surface between two groups of rocks that represents a long gap in the record, such as Hutton's at Siccar Point.

Uniformitarianism
uniformismo, attualismo — the principle that the same natural causes, acting at the same rates as today, explain the geological past.

Soluzioni

1. C (Ussher's chronology placed the Creation in 4004 BC; the *Principles* appeared in 1830–33, the *Origin* in 1859; "survival of the fittest" is Spencer's, 1864).

2. A (anonymously, in 1850; Hallam died in 1833; "Ulysses" appeared in 1842).

3. D (A describes the Romantic lyric; B the soliloquy of the theatre).

4. Lyell — *Principles of Geology* — 1830–33 · Darwin — *The Descent of Man* — 1871 · Tennyson — *In Memoriam A.H.H.* — 1850 · Browning — *Dramatic Lyrics* — 1842 · Arnold — "Dover Beach" — 1867 · Hardy — *Wessex Poems* — 1898.

5. a F: it was coined by Herbert Spencer (1864); Darwin adopted it in the fifth edition of the *Origin* (1869). b T. c F: nobody recorded the words; the accounts, written by people who were present, differ. d T. e F: he wrote poetry all his life ("Hap" is dated 1866), but published his first collection, *Wessex Poems*, only in 1898, after his last novel (1895). f T.

6. Model answers: a the principle that the same natural causes, acting at the same slow rates as today, explain the geological past (Lyell, 1830–33; the name is Whewell's) · b the process by which individuals with useful heritable variations survive and reproduce more than others, so that the variations spread (finches with deeper beaks after the 1977 drought) · c a historians' label for the loss or deep questioning of religious belief experienced by many educated Victorians (Arnold's "sea of faith") · d a quatrain of iambic tetrameter rhyming *abba*, named after Tennyson's elegy · e the person present in a dramatic monologue whose words we never hear but infer from the speaker (the envoy in "My Last Duchess").

7. Traccia (≈120 words): Hutton (1788) and Lyell (1830–33) showed that the Earth is shaped by slow processes still at work, so it must be immensely old — "deep time". This made a literal reading of Genesis hard to keep. Darwin's *Origin* (1859) then explained how species change by natural selection, without a separate act of creation for each, and it implied a Nature in which most individuals die in the struggle for existence. Many educated Victorians experienced a "crisis of faith"; some, like Huxley, became agnostics; others reconciled evolution and religion. Poetry recorded the anxiety: Tennyson's Nature, "red in tooth and claw" (*In Memoriam*, 1850, before Darwin), or Arnold's ebbing "sea of faith" (1867).

8. B.

9. Model answers: a caesura — *The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep* (l. 55): the pauses slow the line down, like the slow end of the day · b enjambment — *smite / The sounding furrows* (ll. 58–59) or *the baths / Of all the western stars*: the sentence runs on like the ship leaving harbour · c anaphora — *It may be… / It may be…* (ll. 62–63): two possible fates are weighed side by side · d antithesis — *much is taken, much abides* (l. 65) or *Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will* (l. 69): loss balanced against resolve.

10. Model paraphrase: "Because nobody but me pulls back the curtain I have opened for you, every stranger turns to me and seems to want to ask — if he dares — how her face came to have such an expression. So you are not the first to look at me and ask that." The lines show that the Duke controls who may see his wife, even now that she is a painting, and that he reads his visitors' thoughts and answers them before they speak; the envoy is curious but too cautious to ask.

11. Traccia: stanza 1 is all exhaustion and ending — *spectre-gray*, *Winter's dregs*, *The weakening eye of day*, *strings from broken lyres* — and the speaker is alone, as *all mankind* has gone home. Stanza 4 is calmer and reflective: it begins with a negative (*So little*

cause for carollings), but the vocabulary moves towards joy and religion (*ecstatic*, *happy*, *blessed Hope*). The mood changes from despair to a tentative wonder (*I could think*), yet the final line, *And I was unaware*, keeps the speaker outside the hope he perceives.

12. Traccia: both speeches are addressed by an old leader to a small group of old companions, both appeal to their nature and dignity (*fatti non foste a viver come bruti / that which we are, we are; / One equal temper of heroic hearts*), and both point west, beyond the known world. The judgement differs: Dante places Ulisse in Hell and calls the journey a *folle volo* that ends in shipwreck; Tennyson stops the poem before the voyage, gives Ulysses the last word and lets his resolve sound heroic — though a reader may still see in it the abandonment of home and duty.

13. Model: *Point:* in T2 the Duke reveals more than he intends. *Evidence:* he presents the portrait as a work of art, *a wonder*, but he keeps it behind *The curtain I have drawn for you*, and he explains the end of his marriage in two cold clauses: *I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together*. *Explanation:* he means to impress the envoy with his taste and his power, but the curtain shows his need to control his wife even after death, and his refusal to name the *commands* lets the reader infer a murder. The polished manner becomes evidence against the speaker.

14. a in · b of · c by · d to · e into · f by.

15. a such as · b i.e. · c e.g. · d is made up of · e by · f comprises.

16. a *is when two rocks meet → is a surface between two groups of rocks which represents…* · b *is consisting of → consists of* · c *phenomenon → phenomena* · d *One criteria → One criterion* · e *like for example → such as* (or *like*) · f *composed by → composed of*.

17. Model answers: a *Deep time is the immensely long span of time that slow geological processes require, for example the 65 million years represented by the unconformity at Siccar Point.* b *Agnosticism is the view that we cannot know whether God exists, because the question lies beyond the evidence, for example the position Huxley described in 1869.* c *An adaptation is a heritable feature that helps an organism survive and reproduce in its environment, such as the deep beak of a seed-eating finch.* d *A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines with a fixed rhyme scheme, for example Hardy's "Hap".*

18. Model answers: a *There are three main types of Victorian response to the Origin: acceptance, rejection and attempts at reconciliation.* b *A dramatic monologue consists of a speaker, a silent listener, a situation and a moment of self-revelation.* c *The rocks at Siccar Point fall into two groups: vertical grey greywacke below and sloping red sandstone above.* d *The four stanzas of "The Darkling Thrush" can be divided into two halves: stanzas 1–2 describe the dead landscape, stanzas 3–4 the thrush's song and the speaker's reflection.* Accept any correct sentence that uses each frame once.

19. a *was made up of* · b *refers to someone* (or *refers to a person*) · c *is known as* · d *consists of 133*.

20. Model translations: a *A dramatic monologue is a poem in which a character speaks to a listener who does not reply.* b *Natural selection can be defined as the process by which the best-adapted individuals leave more offspring.* c *Many Victorian poets, such as Tennyson and Arnold, wrote about religious doubt.*

21. a extinct · b ancestor · c survive · d doubt · e species · f creed.

22. a phenomena · b criterion · c hypotheses · d nuclei · e genera · f larva · g analysis · h species (unchanged). Sentences: e.g. *Darwin observed many phenomena he could not explain at first.* Accept any correct sentence.

23. a evolution, evolutionary · b adaptation, adaptive (or adaptable) · c survival, survivor · d belief, unbelieving (also *disbelieving*; accept *unbelievable*, from *believable*) · e doubtful, doubtfully (also *undoubtedly*). Accept any correct sentence.

24. Marking guide: content (a clear speaker who is not the writer, a silent listener, a situation, a moment of self-revelation) · form (20–30 lines, spoken rhythm, verse layout) · writer's note (80–100 words, present tense, names the intended effect and the key moment) · language accuracy. The classmate's

identification is the test: if he or she cannot find the listener or the revealing moment, revise.

25. Model exchange: A: "Ulysses is a hero. What gives him away is the last line: four verbs of action, *To strive, to seek, to find*, and a refusal, *not to yield*. He even admits the risk — *It may be that the gulfs will wash us down* — and goes anyway." B: "I see what you mean, but reading between the lines he is leaving his wife and his kingdom to his son. He never actually says he will come back: *until I die*. It's telling that he calls his people *a savage race* earlier in the poem." Together: the last line supports the heroic reading of his will, while the context keeps the doubt alive.

26. 1 B · 2 C · 3 B · 4 C · 5 C.

27. a a minibus · b (like) books on a shelf · c about 370 million years · d Sir James Hall's family · e their hammer.

28. a T · b F (by minibus) · c F (it is "not a crack. It is time") · d T · e F (he had no way of measuring it) · f NG.

29. 1 E · 2 C · 3 F · 4 B · 5 D · 6 A (G is not needed: the fossils were shown by the lecturer, not collected).

30. Traccia: *Source*: the last lines of Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush", dated December 1900, the end of the century. *Meaning*: an old thrush sings joyfully in a dead winter landscape; the speaker can find no reason for joy on earth and imagines the bird knows a hope — capital H, a religious word — that he does not share. Honest doubt, neither faith nor denial. *Links*: Italian literature — Leopardi's "La ginestra" (1836), Nature as *matrigna*, and Pascoli's small creatures and birds as signs of meaning; science — Darwin and natural selection: a universe without design (Hardy's "Crass Casualty" in "Hap"); philosophy — positivism and the crisis of certainties at the end of the nineteenth century. Close by returning to the date: a poem about the end of a century and the beginning of another.