

Why is time so important to us?

In this unit you will:

Experience

- Old England
- China
- Afghanistan
- ancient Egypt
- Australia

Read

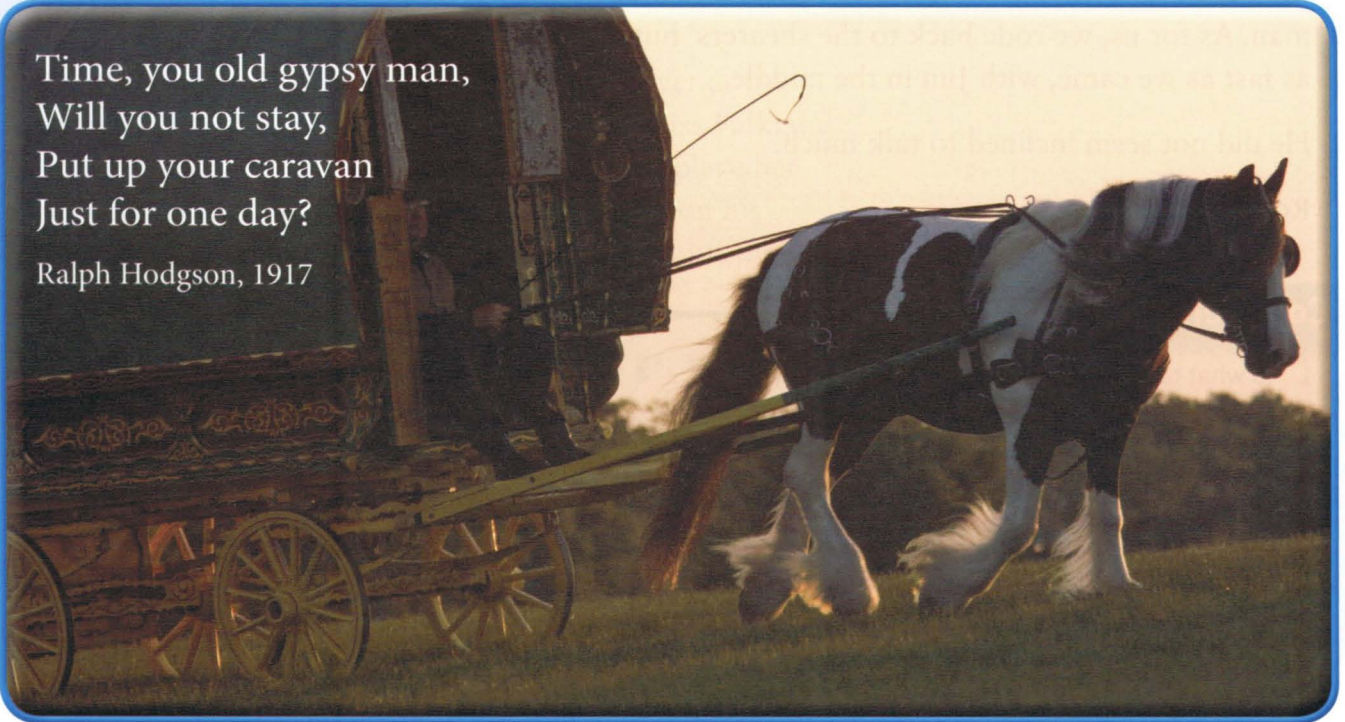
- a Shakespeare speech
- biography
- online encyclopedia
- autobiography
- poetry

Create

- an age of man
- a proposal
- research
- a sundial
- journal entries

Time, you old gypsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

Ralph Hodgson, 1917



The poet in the opening quotation sees time as a nomad, a metaphorical gypsy, ceaselessly on the move. Will time stop for one day? No, never!

But what is one day, compared to a lifetime? A small child may say 'My little brother is two years younger than me, but he'll catch up soon!' No, the little brother will always be two years younger, because time never stops. But over a lifetime, that two years difference in their ages will become less significant.

Talking points

- 1 What role does time play in your daily life?
- 2 Make a list of as many symbols of time as you can think of.

What role does time play in our daily life?

Do you experience time as continuous, or as a fleeting moment? How do we explain the relationship between the past, the present and the future? These are just some of the many concepts of time.

Have you heard of the Latin expression *tempus fugit* – ‘time flies’ in English? A related motto is *carpe diem*, to ‘seize the day’, that is to make the most of life whilst you have it.

In previous centuries, death was closer to people in everyday life. Many children died before they were five years old, and illnesses and diseases now cured with antibiotics were fatal. *Memento mori*, or reminders of death, such as skulls and skeletons were common in paintings, and Father Time with his scythe and hourglass was a popular image. Time as a measure of the stages of human life – as the passing of time from youth to old age – was a favourite subject for writers and artists.

Word origins

The English language includes many Latin ‘tags’ or expressions.

tempus fugit means ‘time flies’

memento mori means

‘remembering that you will die’.

carpe diem means ‘seize the day’, that is make the most of life while you have it.



A traditional image of a *memento mori* and a woodcut of Father Time from the seventeenth century.



The Ages of Man, seventeenth-century English School.

A speech

From *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare

Shakespeare wrote *As You Like It* in 1599. In this speech Jacques compares the world to a stage and life to a play. Read through this famous speech and see how Shakespeare describes each of the seven stages of life.

∞ All's the World's a Stage ∞

Jaques: All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
5 His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms
And then the whining school-boy with his satchel,
And shining morning face creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
10 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard;
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
15 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
20 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
25 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

GLOSSARY

Shakespeare is making fun of the lover who, in a fever of love, tries to win his lady by writing ridiculously passionate sonnets addressed to the beauty of her eyebrows, or her delicate hand.

pard is the archaic form of leopard from the ancient Greek word *pardos* for 'male panther'.

The **justice** means a judge.

sans in the final line is French for 'without'.

woeful in Shakespeare's time means 'full of woe or suffering'.

A **capon** is a chicken.

A **wise saw** is a wise saying.

A **pantaloon** is the popular character of an old man.

A **shank** is the lower leg.

Wordpool

Discuss the meaning of the following words from the extract.

to mewl (line 6)

to puke (line 6)

furnace (line 10)

ballad (line 10)

oath (line 12)

cannon (line 15)

treble (line 24)

oblivion (line 27)

Make your own word pool of any other unfamiliar words.

Comprehension

- 1 List the seven ages of man identified by Shakespeare in your own words.
- 2 What distinguishes the first two ages of man?
- 3 What do you think Shakespeare thinks of the lover's behaviour?
- 4 What do the words 'seeking the bubble reputation / Even in the cannon's mouth' (lines 14 and 15) tell you about the soldier?
- 5 What do the words 'in fair round belly with good capon lin'd' (line 16) tell you about Shakespeare's view of the judge?
- 6 Why are the old man's stockings 'a world too wide'? (line 22)
- 7 Why does Shakespeare describe the final age of man as being in his 'second childishness'? (line 27)
- 8 Why does Shakespeare call the seven ages 'acts' (line 5)?

Writing about an age of man

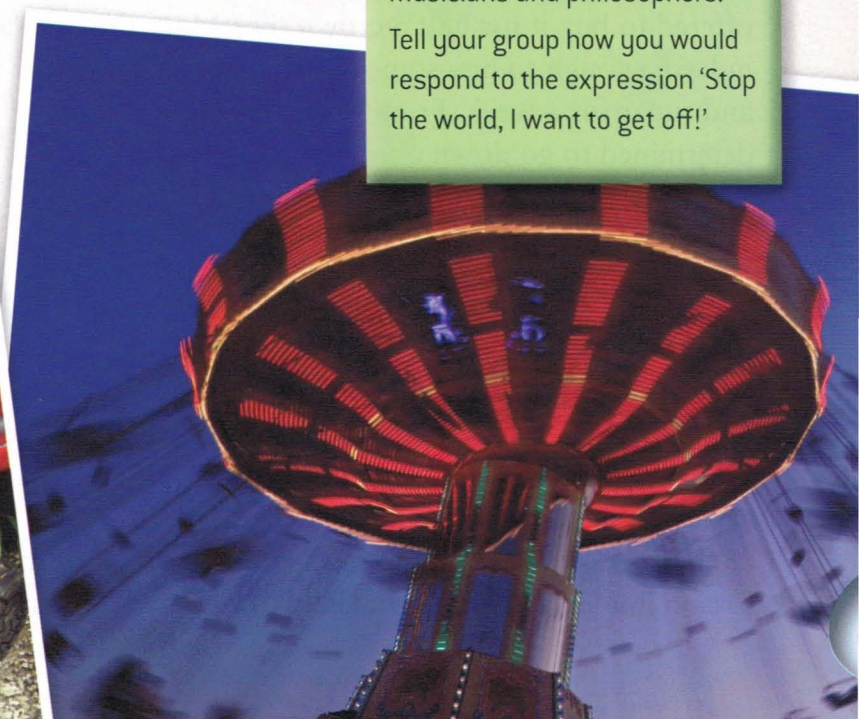
In Shakespeare's seven ages of man, he does not identify the teenager or adolescent. Why do you think this stage of life is missing from his narrative? Write your own account of the stage of adolescence to supplement Shakespeare's speech.

- Use general terms to describe the stereotypical view of a teenager or adolescent.
- Make your account light-hearted and humorous like Shakespeare does.

Talking points

In another of his plays, *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare uses the phrase 'the whirligig of time' to express this relentless and giddy passing of time. It is a theme explored through the centuries by writers, artists, musicians and philosophers.

Tell your group how you would respond to the expression 'Stop the world, I want to get off!'



How old is man?

With today's advances in the science of evolution, it is difficult to understand that our knowledge today is very recent in historical terms. The theory of evolution which established that man evolved from apes was a truly shocking idea when it was first put forward in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Biography

From *The Dinosaur Hunters* by Deborah Cadbury

Mary Anning (1799–1847) lived with her family in Lyme Regis on the south coast of England in the early nineteenth century. Mary and her brother collected shells and bones which could be unearthed from the cliffs and sold them as curios to make a little money for the family. They learned over the years that they were unearthing dinosaur fossils which held the secrets of evolution.

People still find fossils on this stretch of coast now called 'The Jurassic Coast', and on the nearby Isle of Wight. These coasts are one of the richest sources of dinosaur bones in the world.

∞ The Dinosaur Hunter ∞

While Joseph, Mary's elder brother, was apprenticed to an upholsterer, Mary continued to search the beach for fossils. One day she found a beautiful ammonite, or snake-stone. As she carried her trophy from the beach a lady in the street
5 offered to buy it for half a crown. For Mary this was wealth indeed, enough to buy some bread, meat and possibly tea and sugar for a week. From that moment she 'fully determined to go down upon the beach again'.

During 1811 – the exact date is not known – Joseph made a
10 remarkable discovery while he was walking along the beach. Buried in the shore a strange shape caught his eye. As he unearthed the sand and shale, the giant head of a fossilised creature slowly appeared, four feet long, the jaws filled with sharp interlocking teeth, the eye sockets huge like saucers.
15 On one side of the head the bony eye was entire, staring out at him from some unknown past. The other eye was damaged, deeply embedded in the broken bones of the skull. Joseph immediately hired the help of two men to assist him

GLOSSARY

A **half a crown** was two shillings and sixpence – twelve and a half pence.

An **upholsterer** is a person who makes and repairs fabric-covered furniture.

palaeontology is the branch of science that deals with extinct and fossilized humans, animals, and plants.

Wordpool

apprenticed (line 1)

ammonite (line 3)

trophy (line 4)

shale (line 12)

to unearth (line 12)

eye socket (line 14)

embedded (line 17)

relic (line 24)

elapse (line 61)



An ammonite.

and uncovered what was thought to be the head of a
20 very large crocodile.

Joseph showed Mary where he had found the enormous skull but since that section of the beach was covered by a mudslide for many months afterwards it was difficult to look for more relics of the creature. Nearly a year elapsed
25 before Mary, who was still scarcely more than twelve or thirteen, came across a fragment of fossil buried nearly two feet deep on the shore, a short distance from where Joseph had found the head.

Working with her hammer around the rock, she found large
30 vertebrae, up to three inches wide. As she uncovered more, it was possible to glimpse ribs buried in the limestone, several still connected to the vertebrae. She gathered some men to help her extract the fossils from the shore. Gradually, they revealed an entire backbone, made up of sixty vertebrae. On
35 one side, the shape of the skeleton could be clearly seen; it was not unlike a huge fish with a long tail. On the other side, the ribs were forced down upon the vertebrae and squeezed into a mass so that the shape was harder to discern. As the fantastic creature emerged from its ancient tomb they
40 could see this had been a giant animal, up to seventeen feet long.

News spread fast through the town that Mary Anning had made a tremendous discovery: an entire connected skeleton. The local lord of the manor, Henry Hoste Henley, bought it from her
45 for £23, enough to feed the family for well over six months.

The strange creature was first publicly displayed in Bullock's Museum in Piccadilly in the heart
50 of London. It quite baffled the scholars who came to visit, as there was no scientific context in England within which they could readily make sense of the giant fossil bones. Geology was in its infancy and palaeontology did not exist. The peculiar
55 'crocodile', with its jaw set in a disconcerting smile and its enormous bony eyes, was something inexplicable from the



Mary Anning's 'crocodile' described in the text. Now in the Natural History Museum in London.



Duria antiquior (Ancient Dorset) painted in 1830 by Henry de la Beche: a painting based on Mary Anning's discoveries.

primeval world. In the words of a report in Charles Dickens's journal, *All the Year Round*, there was to be a 'ten year siege before the monster finally surrendered' and revealed its long-buried secrets to the gentlemen of science. Nearly a decade was to elapse before the experts could even agree on a name for the ancient creature.

DEBORAH CADBURY

Comprehension

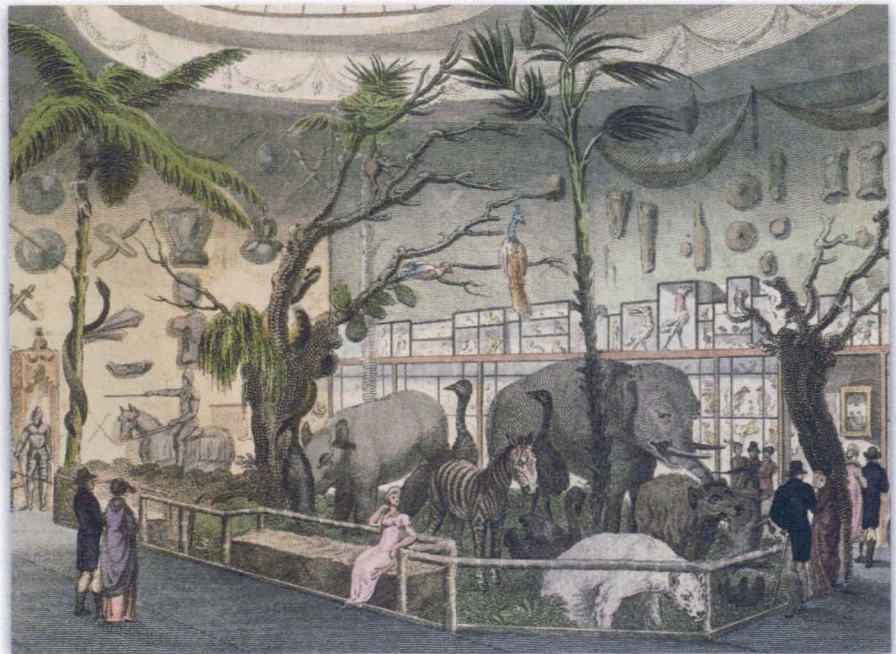
- 1 Why could Mary not find more of the creature straightaway?
- 2 Why was it thought that the great head which Joseph discovered was a crocodile?
- 3 What was so amazing about Mary's find?
- 4 Do you think Henry Hoste Henley's actions were generous or not? Give your reasons.
- 5 Why were the scholars of the day unable to identify the creature?

Writing a proposal

You are a nineteenth-century fossil hunter. Draft a proposal for an exhibition at Bullock's Museum in Piccadilly, London. Address it to Mr Bullock

- Draft your proposal, explaining its fascination for the scientific community and the general public. Use headings and visual support material.
- Include a covering letter to introduce yourself and the proposal enclosed.

The Egyptian Hall in Bullock's Museum in London, 1812.



Looking closely

- 1 What are 'vertebrae'? What is the singular form of this noun? Why is the plural not 'verterbras'?
- 2 Which line tells us that part of the fossil form was a less distinguishable arrangement of vertebrae and ribs?
- 3 The fossilized creature stared out 'from some unknown past'. Select two more phrases from the text which suggest that the creature had been buried for a very long time.
- 4 Explain the metaphor in the words from Charles Dickens's journal. Why is it appropriate?

How do we measure time?

Imagine a time before there were clocks and watches. How could time be measured?

One way of measuring time is the science of dendrochronology, discovered by the American astronomer Andrew Ellicott Douglass (1867–1962), who saw a connection between tree rings and the sunspot cycle. Dendrochronology can date the time at which tree rings were formed, in many types of wood, to the exact calendar year.

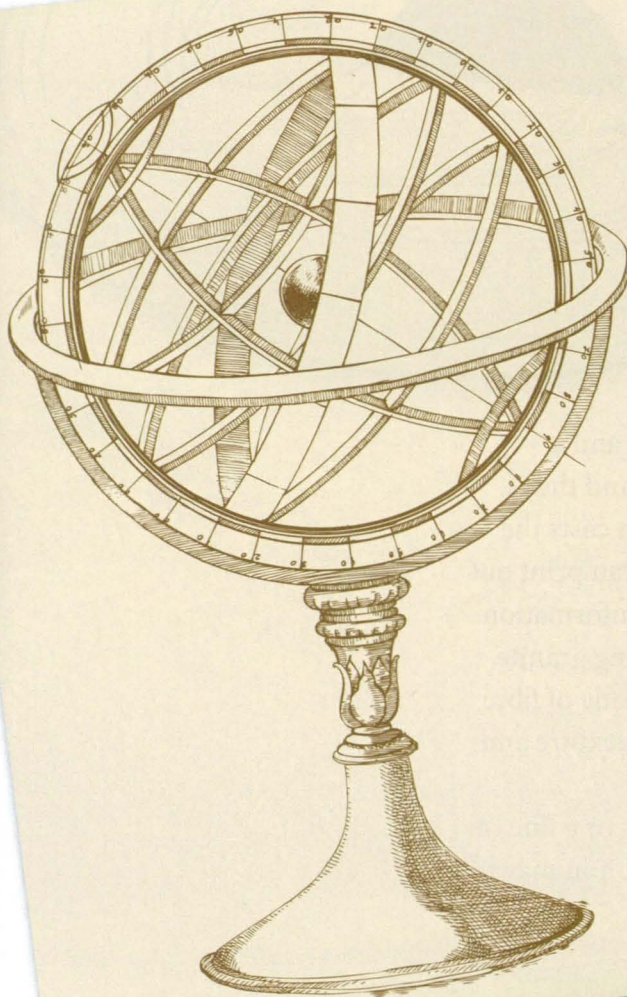
Astronomy, one of the oldest fields in science, also contributed to the measurement of the positions of celestial objects. Historically, accurate knowledge of the positions of the sun, moon, planets and stars has been essential in celestial navigation and in the making of calendars.

Word origins

Many tree and shrub names end in *-dendron*, such as rhododendron. *dendron* means 'tree' in ancient Greek.

chronology is the science of computing dates and arranging events in the order of time and occurrence. *kronos* means 'time' in ancient Greek.

An **armillary sphere** is a circle or globe showing the movement of the stars around the Earth. An armillary sphere is also called an astrolabe. *Armilla* is 'bracelet' or 'arm-ring' in Latin.



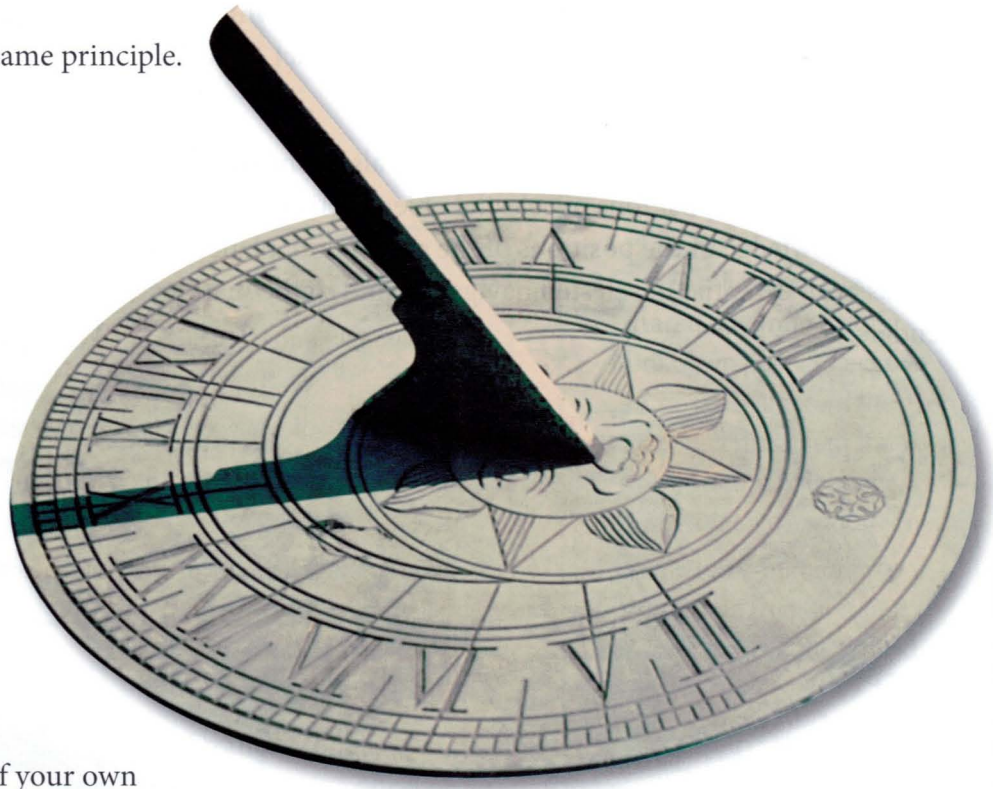
A drawing of an armillary sphere.

What do you know about the science of chronology? Dendrochronology is the science of arranging events in the order of time by the study of the annual growth rings in trees.

What is a sundial?

Great civilizations in the Middle East and North Africa began to make basic clocks 5,000 or 6,000 years ago but as early as 3,500 BCE ancient Egyptians divided their days into something approaching hours with the positioning of obelisks. The moving shadows cast by these 'shadow clocks' enabled people to divide the day into morning and afternoon.

Sundials today work on the same principle.



Making a sundial.

Now try making a sun dial of your own

- You will need scissors, sticky tape, some heavy card and a compass. Use templates to make your sundial base and the gnomon, which is the 45° right-angle triangle which casts the shadow. There are many websites from which you can print out templates and download detailed instructions and information.
- Sundials may be made from many materials including granite, slate and marble. Contemporary sundials may be made of fibre glass or coloured glass. Paint your sundial to give it texture and colour.

Traditionally, sundials are inscribed with a wise saying, or a line of poetry. Think of a suitable inscription for your sundial. You may like to consider a quotation like one of these:

Long Live the sun! (Cézanne)

Each day is a journey. (Basho)

Hide not your talents - what's a sundial in the shade? (Benjamin Franklin)

Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend. (Diogenes)

Poem

Once essential for telling the hour of the day, sundials are still popular today as a garden ornament, where they are a symbol of the way nature and the changing seasons create a peaceful garden. See how this theme is part of the following love poem by the Scottish poet Douglas Dunn.

∞ Love Poem ∞

I live in you, you live in me;
We are two gardens haunted by each other.
Sometimes I cannot find you there,
There is only the swing creaking, that you have just left,
Or your favourite book beside the sundial.

DOUGLAS DUNN

Journal

Write about the passing of time in a favourite location.



So where is present, past and future time?

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.*

From 'Burnt Norton' by T.S. Eliot

This is a question which philosophers and theologians have long discussed – and puzzles everyone who thinks about it.

Poem

Read the following poem and consider what the poet Philip Larkin thinks about time.

∞ Days ∞

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
5 They are to be happy in:
Where can we live but days?

Ah solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
10 Running over the fields.

PHILIP LARKIN

Talking points

- 1 A critic has said about this poem: 'What an amazing poem! In less than fifty simple, mostly monosyllabic words, Larkin raises enormous philosophical issues.' Do you agree?
- 2 What would be the effect on you if the poet used words like 'metaphysical', 'terrestrial' or 'thesis' to express his thoughts?
- 3 In the quotation from T.S. Eliot above, you can see that he thinks that present, future and past time are all interlinked. Do you think Larkin is saying the same thing, or something different?



Autobiography

From *The Storyteller's Daughter* by Saira Shah

Saira Shah was born in the United Kingdom, but was brought up with stories from her Afghan father about Kabul in Afghanistan, the idyllic place where he grew up. She always wanted to travel to Kabul and see the wonderful place for herself, a trip she finally made as an adult in 2001.

Return to a Lost Homeland

I am three years old. I am sitting on my father's knee. He is telling me of a magical place: the fairy-tale landscape you enter in dreams. Fountains fling diamond droplets into mosaic pools. Coloured birds sing in the fruit-laden orchards.

5 The pomegranates burst and their insides are rubies. Fruit is so abundant that even the goats are fed on melons. The water has magical properties: you can fill to bursting with fragrant pilau, then step to the brook and drink – and you will be ready to eat another meal. On three sides of the

10 plateau, majestic mountains tower, capped with snow. The fourth side overlooks a sunny valley where, gleaming far below, sprawls a city of villas and minarets. And here is the best part of the story: it is true.

The garden is in Paghman, where my family had its seat for

15 nine hundred years. The jewel-like city it overlooks is the Afghan capital, Kabul. The people of Paghman call the capital *Kabul jan*: beloved Kabul. We call it that too, for this is where we belong. 'Whatever outside appearances may be, no matter who tells you otherwise, this garden, this country,

20 these are your origins. This is where you are truly from. Keep it in your heart, Saira *jan*. Never forget,' says my father.

But I need to know what is fact and what is fairytale more than I need the reassurance of the myth. Only truth can answer the questions that for years I haven't even dared to

25 ask my own heart. Does the Afghanistan of our myths really exist? Are we still Afghans? And if I am not an Afghan, what am I?

There is one last place to visit. As I climb the steep mountainside to the Paghman plateau, I am gripped with



GLOSSARY

Sa'adi is one of the greatest Persian poets of the medieval period, widely translated and treasured for his wisdom and philosophy.

Gulistan means 'place of roses'.

Wordpool

to be strewn with debris
(line 37)

plateau (line 29)

minaret (line 50)

30 fear. If the magical gardens my father told me of never
existed, then part of me will be a lie as well. I am standing
upon a desolate plateau. No birds sing. The fruit trees have
been cut down for firewood. The irrigation channels are
bombed and the once-fertile soil is dry. All my life, I have
35 carried a picture of this place in my heart. All my life, this is
where I have most longed to be.

The ground is seeded with mines and strewn with the debris
of its former splendour: the blue mosaic tiles, the broken
watercourses and the dried-out fountains. This myth, at least,
40 was true: in my mind's eye, I can reconstruct what once must
have been a magical garden. Sa'adi once gazed on the full
bloom of a garden such as this. His poet's vision saw that its
beauty would fade. 'The rose of the garden has no
continuance,' he said. 'Do not become attached to what will
45 not endure.' He decided to create a garden that time could
not destroy. He built his rose garden – his great work, the
Gulistan – out of stories. It has survived for eight hundred
years. 'Roses,' he said, 'live but for a few days. My Rose
Garden will never die.'

50 Towering above me, unchanging, eternal, are the mountains.
Down in the valley, a city of towers and minarets sparkles in
the late-afternoon sun. Kabul *jan* – beloved Kabul – lies like
a jewel at my feet. I know by now that its beauty is an
illusion: close up, the city is in ruins, as shattered and broken
55 as this garden. I have missed the golden age. I have come too
late.

My journey here has taken me over twenty years. While I
was making my way towards it, the place that inspired the
myth has been destroyed. But only because of the myth – the
60 map of tales my family drew for me all those years ago – can
I recognize the beauty in this ruin.

Comprehension

- 1 What makes the landscape which Saira's father tells her about seem like a 'magical, fairy-tale place'?
- 2 What does the writer mean when she says she needs to know 'what is fact and what is fairytale' more than she needs the 'reassurance of myth'?
- 3 What does the writer see as she stands on the plateau? How does it compare with her father's description?
- 4 Why did the poet Sa'adi create his work Gulistan? Why does the writer think of Sa'adi at that moment?
- 5 In what way is the beauty of Kabul an 'illusion'?

SAIRA SHAH

Does time sweep everything away?

Great statues through the ages have been built as symbols of power and prestige. But they do not last forever. You may have seen pictures of statues of Lenin which used to stand in every Soviet town toppled and broken after the break-up of the USSR in the 1990s. You may be able to think of other examples.

Poem

Broken statues symbolize the way that in time everything passes away and once powerful empires and people may be reduced to a broken pile of stones.

The English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, expressed this idea in his poem from 1817 below, in which he imagines a traveller gazing at the broken statue of a once-great ruler. Ozymandias is probably Ramses II of Ancient Egypt.

∞ Ozymandias ∞

I met a traveller from an antique land
 Who said, Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
 5 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 And on the pedestal these words appear:
 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
 10 Look on my works ye mighty and despair!
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Talking points

What do relics of the ancient world, such as old statues, tell us about the passing of time?

Wordpool

trunkless (line 2)
 visage (line 4)
 pedestal (line 8)



How else can we think about time?

As the world has developed and become a global village, the measurement of time has become standardized. Some cultures, however, hold on to alternative concepts of time.

For Aboriginal Australians, there are different ways of thinking about time. One is the timetable of everyday life, and the other is an infinite spiritual cycle – known as the Dreamtime. Both cohabit in real time.

The Dreamtime is recognized through rituals, ceremonies and seasons in kinship with the environment and ancestral stories about the land.

Poem

The following poem is written by Dodgeroo, a member of the Noonuccal Aboriginal tribe, who has written many poems and stories. She also writes under the name of Kath Walker. In the poem she expresses her sadness at the way that Aboriginal people have been ill-treated by the white settlers (the 'white tribe') who failed to understand or value the ways of the Aboriginal people who had lived in Australia for thousands of years.

☞ We are going ☞

They came in to the little town
A semi-naked band subdued and silent,
All that remained of their tribe.
They came here to the place of their old bora ground
5 Where now the many white men hurry about like ants.
Notice of estate agent reads: 'Rubbish May Be Tipped Here'.
Now it half covers the traces of the old bora ring.
They sit and are confused, they cannot say their thoughts:
'We are as strangers here now, but the White tribe are the strangers
10 We belong here, we are of the old ways.
We are the corroboree and the bora ground,
We are the old sacred ceremonies, the laws of the elders.
We are the wonder tales of Dream Time, the tribal legends told.
We are the past, the hunts and the laughing games, the wandering camp fires.
15 We are the lightning-bolt over Gaphembah Hill

Word origins

Dodgeroo is the Minjerriba name for paperbark.

The *Noonuccal* people come from Moreton Bay in south-east Queensland, Australia.

GLOSSARY

bora ground is a sacred initiation ground, made up of two circles linked by a path.

The **corroboree** is a ceremonial Aboriginal meeting with music, song and dance where, for example, events from the Dreamtime may be acted out.

Gaphembah Hill is a local landmark.

paling means 'making pale': the dawn is lightening the dark lagoon.

Quick and terrible.

And the Thunderer after him, that loud fellow.

We are the quiet daybreak paling the dark lagoon.

We are the shadow-ghosts creeping back as the camp fires burn low.

20 We are nature and the past, all the old ways

Gone now and scattered.

The scrubs are gone, the hunting and the laughter.

The eagle is gone, the emu and the kangaroo are gone from this place

The bora ring is gone.

25 The Corroboree is gone.

And we are going'.

OODGEROO (KATH WALKER)

Comprehension

- 1 What is described in the first eight lines? Who are the 'semi-naked band'?
- 2 What does the simile in line 5 tell you about the activities of the 'white men'? In what ways have the 'white men' been insensitive?
- 3 How do you think the 'half-naked band' may interpret the estate agent's sign?
- 4 Why can the band not 'say their thoughts'? (line 8)
- 5 How do the 'semi-naked band' feel about what has happened to their land in lines 9–14?
- 6 Why are lines 9–26 in quotation marks?
- 7 What is the effect of the repetition of the pronoun 'we' in lines 9–26?
- 8 What is the mood of the last 7 lines of the poem?



Extension reading

From *The Dresskeeper* by Mary Naylor

This is a story about thirteen-year-old Picky Robson, who tries on a dress in her grandmother's attic and time-travels back to eighteenth-century London. There she discovers that she is called Amelia and that her life is shockingly different. She finds herself in a dressmaker's shop on the eve of her wedding to an earl who is one of the richest men in England.

☞ The Lilac Dress ☞

It is lilac, simple with minute white daisies embroidered on the front. I step into it. Strangely, it fits again. Perfectly. This is it. I am ready. Do I actually want to do this? Of course I do. Mostly because I am half convinced nothing will happen
5 anyway, plus I am thirteen so the consequences of my actions are of little concern.

Right, this really is it. I take hold of the clasps at my neck. Slowly, slowly, holding my breath, I secure the fabric together.

10 Like before, it's as if I've been in a deep sleep, so I don't hear the voice straight away.

'Amelia, where are you? The carriage is waiting.' Someone who sounds like the Queen is calling, and I don't react until I come to my senses and remember Amelia is me. Or at least
15 was me.

This time it is still daylight, and now I can see clearly that the attic is quite different to Gran's. Everything around me – furniture, wooden crates, stacks of material – looks like it belongs in *Antiques Roadshow*, but at the same time brand
20 new.

I jump to attention but fear holds my feet rigid. Won't the owner of the voice see that I'm not Amelia? And when she realises I'm not her, what will she do? Scared, my hand inches towards the back of the dress. Perhaps I should go
25 back?

GLOSSARY

Antiques Roadshow and **Dr Who** are popular British TV programmes. **The Tardis** (in the form of a typical English telephone box) is Dr Who's time-travelling machine.

A **mouchoir** is an old-fashioned word for handkerchief, originally from the French.

posh is used to describe someone who affects aristocratic or upper class ways of behaving and speaking. It is usually used as a derogatory comment.

The Derby is a horse race held annually at Epsom Downs in Surrey. Fashionable women traditionally wear extravagant hats to the race.

Wordpool

lethal (line 60)

banister (line 63)

to inhale (line 88)

imposter (line 122)

sludge (line 133)

Then a head pops up through the hatch. 'Miss Amelia, your mother is calling.' A young female, this one not at all posh. 'Do you need help?' She points to the dress. I shake my head and after a moment the girl disappears. Well, at least she seems to think I am Amelia too. Feeling slightly braver, I move to the hatch. Time to go.

Climbing carefully down into the hallway below, I notice I am wearing black leather shoes with tiny silver buckles and I can feel that the jeans and T-shirt I left on under the dress are missing too – stockings with something tight around my leg holding them up are in place. The stockings are slightly itchy. Plus, something really hard and uncomfortable is strapped around my waist, making it hard to breathe. (Which I suppose isn't really a problem as I am so scared I am holding my breath.)

The dress swooshes about my legs and drags on the floor behind me as I walk down to the first floor. It is as wide as the corridor. Although it's daytime, the rooms are darker than Gran's; windows seem to be missing or boarded up. And it's freezing, even though I am wearing enough material to make a duvet.

From the first floor landing I see some women standing near the front door. A pompous-looking lady in an outlandishly colourful outfit is being helped into an equally eye-popping red coat by a girl about my age. The girl is wearing an apron and I see she is the one who checked on me earlier.

An older woman stands beside them, holding white boxes tied with string. I can't see her face. The pompous lady turns and spies me cowering on the stairs. Her hair is styled like a wedding cake gone wrong, with all sorts of colourful accessories poking out of it, and it doesn't move when she does. Blue eyes consider my own. Despite the fluffy clothes and hair, I suspect she could sort out 14 music-blaring lads on the Number 52 bus with that look. And maybe the application of one of those lethal-looking hair pins.



'There you are! Really, Amelia. We will miss our next appointment if you delay further.'

'Appointment?' I say, holding tight to the banister. I reach the bottom and they all turn and stare.

65 'I just told you. The beading. For the dress.' A thin hand reaches out and draws me closer. 'Amelia, are you quite well? Shall we call in the doctor?'

'All the preparations is what's taxing her,' says the older woman, who I see is also wearing an apron. And sporting an
70 unfortunate looking mole the size of a doughnut on her nose.

'Ever so exciting' tis,' says the young girl. 'The wedding of the year, they say ...'

'Whose wedding is it?' I ask.

The three of them stare at me as if I had just announced I
75 was a squirrel.

The posh lady's lips curl into a tight smile. 'Darling, have you gone quite mad. Your wedding, of course.'

'Dead good catch, is the Earl,' the older woman with the boxes says.

80 The young girl giggles, then blushes red as she receives stern looks from both the others that could curdle milk.

God, where am I? More importantly, how old am I?
Certainly older than thirteen.

The woman, apparently my mother, orders the girl to open
85 the door. As she does, the foul air off the street hits me, and I think I am going to throw up. God, now my knees are buckling.

I try not to inhale through my nose. Difficult, because dust and soot are building up in my mouth. What is that stuff in
90 the air? Is half of London burning?

'Here Miss, your mouchoir.' The girl reaches into my pocket and thrusts a small, perfumed handkerchief at me. My what?

It smells of lavender and I take in the flowery odour, not daring to remove my nose from the fabric.

95 She stands back to let me pass.

She barks: 'You, quickly, help me,' and thrusts me towards the carriage that is actually being drawn by four horses. And the horses are decorated with ribbons and medals and things.

100 A boy in a bright, gold-threaded uniform obliges instantly, and in seconds I am sitting on comfy velvet cushions in a dark space, still feeling ill but less likely to pass out now. Climbing in next to me, the mother takes out a white-handled fan with a delicate painting of birds on it, and begins waving it at me furiously.

105 Recovering enough to open my eyes, I see that the carriage is moving at a brisk pace. I try to work out where we are going but the minute I try looking through the window the world begins to spin again.

110 'Where are we going?' I can't get over my voice. As posh as a Derby hat, as Gran used to say ...

I wish Luce could hear it. And see me in a carriage driven by servants, wearing gloves and a silk dress! Hilarious, when you consider I insist on wearing trousers to school, even though Mr Silvakis, the Head, threatens me with suspension for deliberate flouting of the school dress code.

120 The woman who is Amelia's mother clicks her tongue impatiently and thumps on the front of the carriage. 'Home! Immediately!' Then she turns to me. 'Once we are at St James's Square, Mama shall send Jones for the doctor at once. Try not to worry, darling Amelia.'

Not eager to make conversation in case I expose myself as an imposter, I turn to the window, managing to take a quick look outside without heaving. The glass of the carriage itself is sparkly clean, but beyond that London looks filthy and sci-fi-ish – as if I am in an episode of *Dr Who* and the carriage is The Tardis.

Large chunks of what I recognise about London are missing. I think we might be coming up to Piccadilly Circus, because there are a couple of buildings that seems familiar. The rest
130 seems nothing like I remember – in fact, the shop windows don't have any glass in them and all the street signs are missing.

As the horses work their way through the sludge, I see what I think is Oxford Street, but I can't be sure because all my
135 favourite shops are missing. No H&M, or Zara. Tragic.

We make a sudden right turn and a minute or so later the carriage stops abruptly. The boy with the outfit swings open the door and places a small board from the carriage to the front steps of the house. Honestly, his gear belongs in a bad
140 pantomime.

I alight – where did that word come from? – and see we are in front of one of the few houses built around a beautiful square. If I recall correctly, the statues and grassy circle of Hyde Park Corner should be visible, along with the
145 Lanesborough and the pricey buildings that lead up from Buck House.

Ignoring the wailing pleas of Mama, I speed-walk to the end of the road, hanky over my mouth, and stare out onto Piccadilly. Everything is different, mostly because loads of
150 stuff is missing. Where I expect to see hotels, monuments, statues and shops there is only grass and trees.

A deer comes running up – it's about five metres away. A deer, standing on what should be one of London's most congested roads?

155 Where am I? Or when am I?

MARY NAYLUS



Looking closely

- 1 What features of the dress does Picky-Amelia find awkward and uncomfortable?
- 2 What do you think hair 'styled like a wedding cake gone wrong' would look like? (lines 54–55)
- 3 What do you think the three of them all stare at Picky-Amelia? (line 75) What excuses for her does the older woman make?
- 4 Why does Picky-Amelia think the boy who drives the coach looks like and behaves the character out of a pantomime?
- 5 Why is it difficult for Picky-Amelia to recognize where she is in London?

Comprehension

- 1 What differences are there between the lives of teenagers in the eighteenth century and teenagers now? Use the text to inform your answer.
- 2 What role does the dress play in the story?
- 3 Why is Picky-Amelia given a mouchoir? How do you think the air quality in central London today compares with then?
- 4 How is Picky-Amelia feeling in the final line? How would you feel?

Writing about dress

Find an old piece of clothing, and write about the imagined life of its wearer. It could go back centuries or even just decades. It could be a work uniform or ceremonial robes, or even a suit of armour worn in battle. Perhaps you have found an old dress that your mother or grandmother once wore.

- How would it feel to be the wearer? What kind of life would you lead?
- Think about how the garment is worn, and where you would be likely to find yourself. What would you be doing and where would you live?

