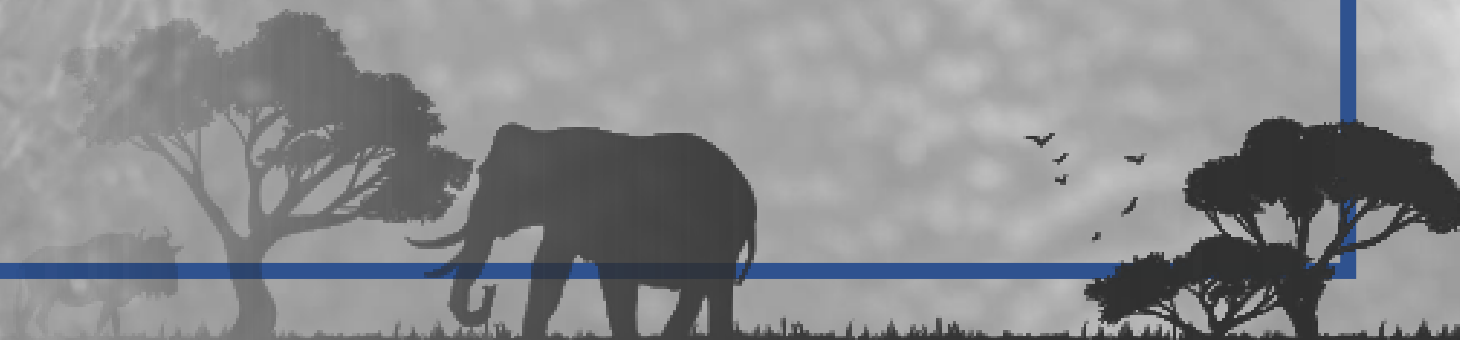


# Nature Poetry

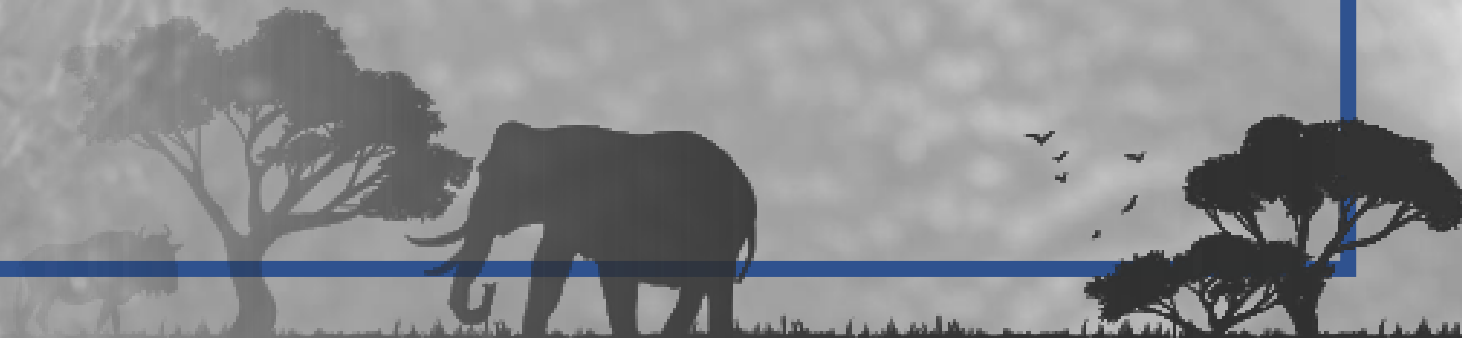
Grade 10 English (Watson)





# Part 1 - Odes

Grade 10 English (Watson)



# Odes

- So based on your reading of Mr Ross's presentation, you will understand that an ode is a tribute to something.
- There is so much in this world for which we can be thankful and for which we can play tribute.
- An iconic tribute has been adapted many times over by Louis Armstrong...have a listen:

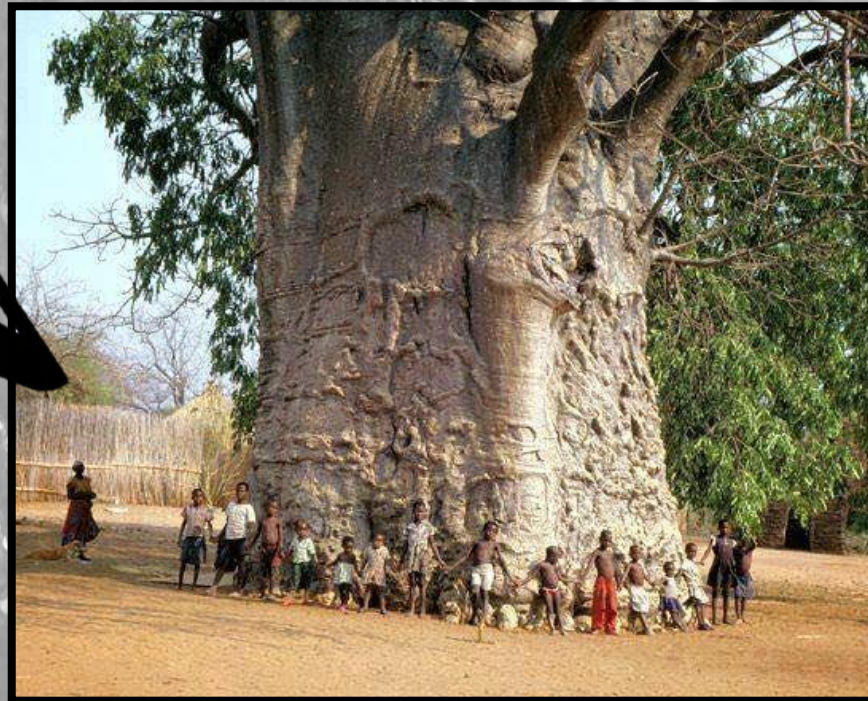


AND I  
think  
TO MYSELF  
WHAT A  
Wonderful  
WORLD

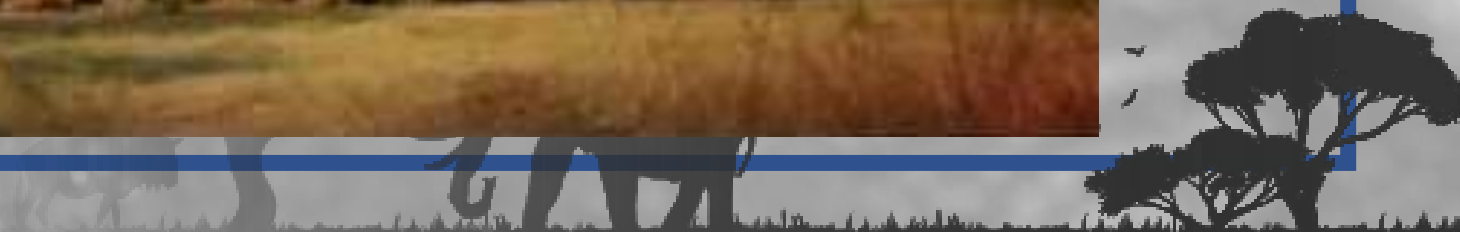


# Odes

- We will start with some poems about trees. We are often flippant about the role that trees play in our lives, and with that in mind, I would like you to read the following about “Lessons Learnt from Trees”:

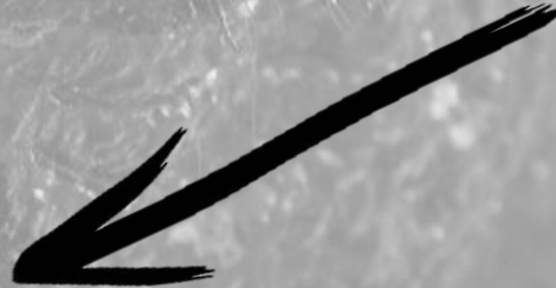


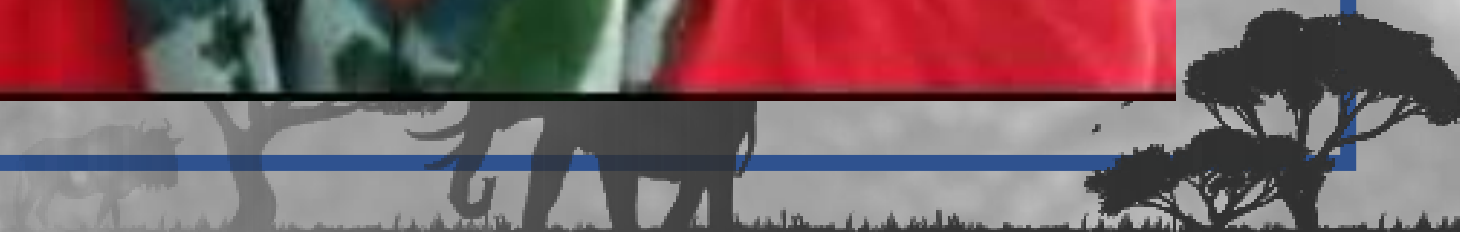
# Odes



# Odes

- You must remember that an Ode does not necessarily have to have “Ode” written in the title. As long as the content is a tribute, it still constitutes that type of poem.
- Let's begin with an ode written by a past St Stithians English Teacher who worked at the Girls' College: Ruth Everson.







The UmPhafa tree, *zizyphus mucronata*, has a double thorn. The thorn on the bottom of the branch hooks backwards, while the thorn on the top of the branch spikes forwards. The tree has many names, including the hook thorn, and the Afrikaans, *blinkblaar-wag-n-bietjie* (shiny leaf wait-a-bit). All the names refer to the vicious nature of the thorns. Animals and humans alike find it difficult to escape the thorns once entangled in them.

King Shaka, the Zulu chief, told his people that the backward thorn holds memory while the upward thorn points to the future. We cannot have one without the other, so we must look forward to the future but never forget the past. I know, in my own life, I am often deeply caught on the backward hook of memory and by the tree's elliptical seed.

The tree is part of the mythology of Africa. It has magical and medicinal properties. Amongst other things, a branch dragged around the village is used to ward off evil spirits.

In Zulu culture, when a member of the family dies, the eldest son must take a branch of the tree to wherever the body rests. The spirit of the deceased is spoken to until the spirit enters the branch, which is then taken home. On the way, the spirit must be spoken to constantly. If part of the journey is undertaken on public transport, full fare must be paid for the spirit of the deceased. The spirit of the loved one is treated with deep respect until it is safely home. How wonderful to be brought home with such love and care.

The *zizyphus spina-christi* is so named as it's believed that Christ's crown of thorns was made from its branches. I think all who make a pilgrimage through life feel the pain of the hooked thorn. There is no easy way to rid ourselves of painful memory. To strip the backward thorn away would only damage the tree.

There are many lessons for me in the simplicity of the two thorns of the UmPhafa tree but the most important, for now, is to be able to balance past, present and future and to walk forward with courage.

### The UmPhafa Tree

From the blinkbright tangled shade  
Of the UmPhafa tree, a whisper.

Wait-a-bit,

Rest,

The women have drawn a branch

Around the village of your heart,

No lightning will strike here.

High-hooked on the backward thorn,

Memory clings, dropping dark, elliptical seeds,

Remember: Moses too, barefooted before fire,

Saw no path turning through desert sands;

Christ, bleeding into a circle of thorns,

Carried a different death on his shoulder.

All pilgrims know the price of the forward thorn.

Now the eldest son kneels to invite you:

Spin your spirit into the thorns,

Soul-to-soul the living-and-the-dead must travel

Back to the birthing ground,

So rising from fire and blood and seed,

In the silence that has its own voice,

You walk upright, easy-balancing the backward/forward thorn.

# Odes

- And now it is time to move onto another ode, written by Dr Ian McCallum.



THE ELEPHANT TREE

No - thing  
could fill the space  
of where you once stood -  
not in a thousand years.  
Your skin,  
wrinkled by ten thousand suns,  
was like an elephant's -  
as thick, as thin,  
as silent  
you were one of them.

Your body was a grey gathering,  
a coming together of ancient memories,  
a tree that never forgot -  
and when you drank,  
you drank deeply,  
but not for yourself,  
for they fed from you.

Every elephant knew you  
as a turning point,  
a mammoth milestone  
on a million migrations -  
a solstice tree.



Your ivory,  
layer upon layer of white gold,  
was within you  
without you, there were no tusks  
or tusking -  
yet they shaped you.

I was there great baobab  
on that day  
when you sloped beyond  
the critical inch  
the entire forest froze  
listening waiting.

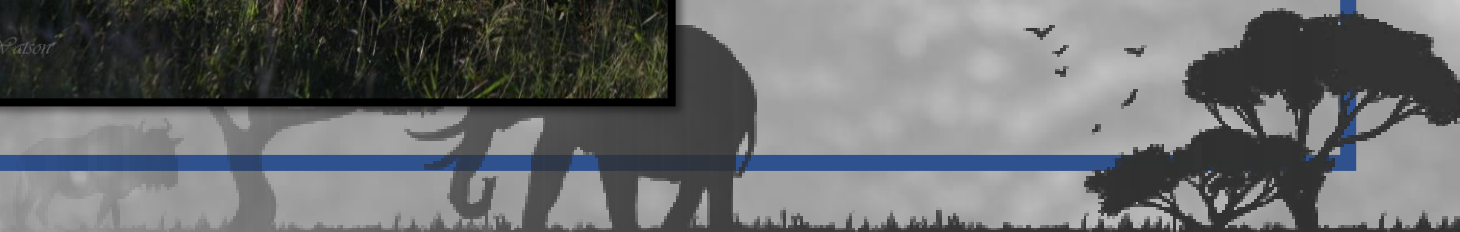
Suddenly  
something in my heart tilted  
and like an hour glass  
spun round,  
you slipped into another time.

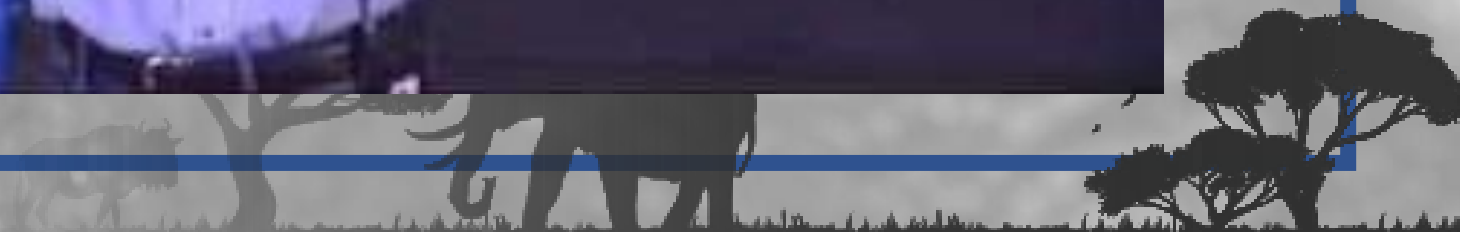
The earth rose up  
to meet you  
and from your grey body  
a thousand elephants  
untangled themselves.

*a thousand elephants untangled themselves*

# Odes

- There is a beautiful context to this poem, that finds its origin in the heart of Botswana:





# Odes

- And our last two odes are from authors about whom I can find very little. Enjoy the poems.



## *Ode to Elephant*

*Your sacred image looms large  
Painted on the rough canvass of Africa  
Traced in the shifting sands of  
imagination  
Etched into the hidden caves of the soul  
The herd moves as one  
Graceful skaters gliding across the  
shimmering mirage of dusty desert pans  
Misty shadows playing hide and seek in  
the shrouded valley forests  
Granite boulders in magical motion over  
the mottled bushveld plains  
You are one of Eden's first-born  
Survivor of frozen time  
Grown old and wise  
Before men learned to crawl  
The air trembles in harmonic rapture  
As you chant your esoteric song  
And the earth shudders in shameful guilt  
As you trumpet your just anger  
You are the maker of roads*

WAYNE VISSER

*The planter of gardens  
And the builder of dams  
Your trail of destruction  
Is the path of creation  
For all that follow in your wake  
Death brings sorrow and mourning  
Life heralds the joy of cheeky youth  
In between, an invisible web of caring is  
strung  
And a sacred maze of kith and kin is trod  
Oh, great icon of this Earth  
Memory of our faded past  
Conscience of our troubled present  
Prophet of our hopeful future  
Lead us in your gentle footsteps which is  
greater than our little selves*

## Meeting

A grey shadow breaks the dappled leaves.  
It moves through the wilted  
copperorange  
Of Mopane Trees  
Gently, Quietly.  
An outline emerges  
An eye, a trunk, a tusk  
Between branches.

One becomes two  
Then three then more.  
Like mists from a dream  
They arrive.  
With fingerprint feet making circles in  
the sand.

Mothers coax belly-high babies between  
them.  
Teenagers tussle  
Until  
A churning rumble from a matriarch  
Signals stop.

And they start on lunch.

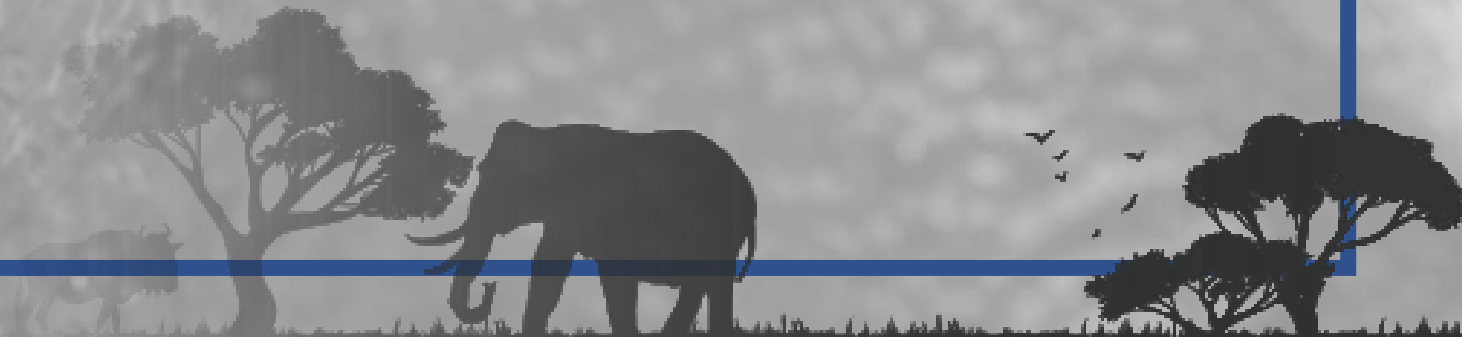
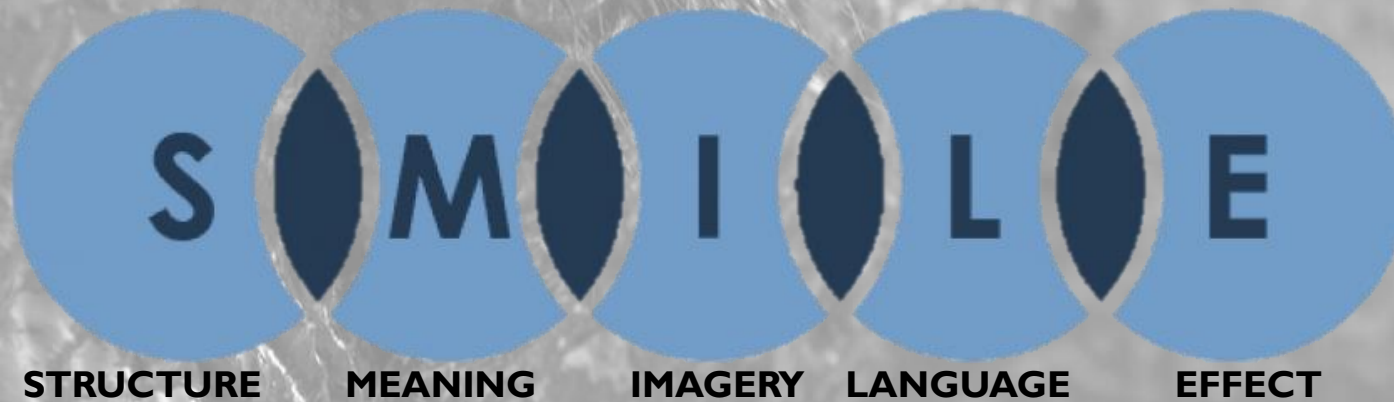
Crisp crackling branches  
And the rasping of leaves.  
As they search for green;  
strip long bark sinews,  
Feeding slowly  
Purposefully.  
They have been here before and know  
the best places.

I sit with my back against an anthill  
As two toothpick-tusked youngsters  
come closer.  
The bends of their trunks catch my scent  
Moving still closer.  
When my hands could touch, they stop.  
Amber eyes looking back.  
Thinking.  
Wondering.  
I hold my breath, but feel calm  
There is a welcoming of elephants  
A comfortable belonging.  
A rootedness I have forgotten  
They watch me to remember  
Leaving a smile behind.



# How to Analyse Poetry

- You will have encountered the SMILE method in Grade 8 and Grade 9. Here is a refresher:



**S – STRUCTURE: How is this poem organized?**

- How many stanzas?
- How is the idea developed?
- What words or phrases give the images or theme emphasis or clarity?
- What is the structure?
- Line length / rhyme scheme? Is there any rhythm / repetition?

**M – MEANING: What is the poem about?**

- Does it have a message?
- What is the poet discussing?
- Is there an overall theme and idea in the poem?
- Does it contain symbolism?



**I – IMAGERY: What pictures do you get in your mind when you read the poem?**

- Does the poem contain similes, metaphors, or personification?
- Why do you think the poet has included these images in the poem?



**L – LANGUAGE: What words has the poet used to create an image?**

- Are there any complicated words?
- Is the language simple to understand?
- Which words and phrases create the images?

**E – EFFECT: What is the effect of the poem?**

- What does the poem make you feel or think about?
- What opinion does it show about the subject?
- What is the poet trying to say about their subject?



# Odes

- Now that you have heard the poems (and I hope appreciated them), have a look at the GoogleDoc link on GoogleClassroom which provides a space for you to begin your annotations...

