

What would you do?

Would you **get involved** or would you **ignore** the following:

- An old woman has tripped up and hurt her ankle. There is no-one else there.
- You see an adult kicking a child, aged about eight.
- A group of children (about p7 age) are calling another child names. The child is obviously upset and is crying.
- A man and a woman, who appear to be a couple, are arguing and the man slaps the woman.

What about if the woman slapped the man?

- You see a couple being attacked by teenagers at a bus stop.
- You find a toddler on their own who is crying and who appears to be lost.
- You see someone lying on the pavement. They are not moving.
- You know that your neighbours have left their young children (1, 3 and 6) home on their own while they go to the pub.

‘Glasgow 5 March 1971’

Edwin Morgan



TOD'S

Glasgow 5 March 1971

With a ragged diamond
of shattered plate-glass
a young man and his girl
are falling backwards into a
shop-window.

The young man's face
is bristling with fragments of glass
and the girl's leg has caught
on the broken window
and spurts arterial blood
over her wet-look white coat.
Their arms are starfished out
braced for impact,
their faces show surprise, shock,
the beginning of pain.

The two youths who have pushed them
are about to complete the operation
reaching into the window
to loot what they can smartly.
Their faces show no expression.

It is a sharp, clear night
in Sauchiehall Street.
In the background two drivers
keep their eyes on the road.

Edwin Morgan



Sauchiehall Street

You are now going to answer some **textual analysis** questions on the poem.

- Answer them in as much detail as possible.
- Look at the number of marks for each question to give you an indication of how many points you should make / how much to write.

- You are now going to **annotate** your copy of the poem.
- You will use this to write your **critical essay**, so you need to write down all the information which you are given.
- You should copy down the **notes** on the back of your copy of the poem.

Notes

This is one of Edwin Morgan's **Instamatic Poems**.

According to Morgan:

- “(these)...are based upon **actual things** which have happened as reported in the newspapers or on television.
- I try to imagine somebody had been there with an **instamatic camera**, and quickly taken a **photograph**.
- The whole thing is presented directly in **economic, visual terms**.
- I try not to add **comment**, but there's a very careful presentation which very often does include a kind of invisible comment.”

Nothing Not Giving Messages (1990), p.52

(**Instamatics** were a series of inexpensive, easy-to-load cameras made by Kodak from 1963. The Instamatic was immensely successful, introducing a generation to low-cost photography and spawning numerous imitators.)

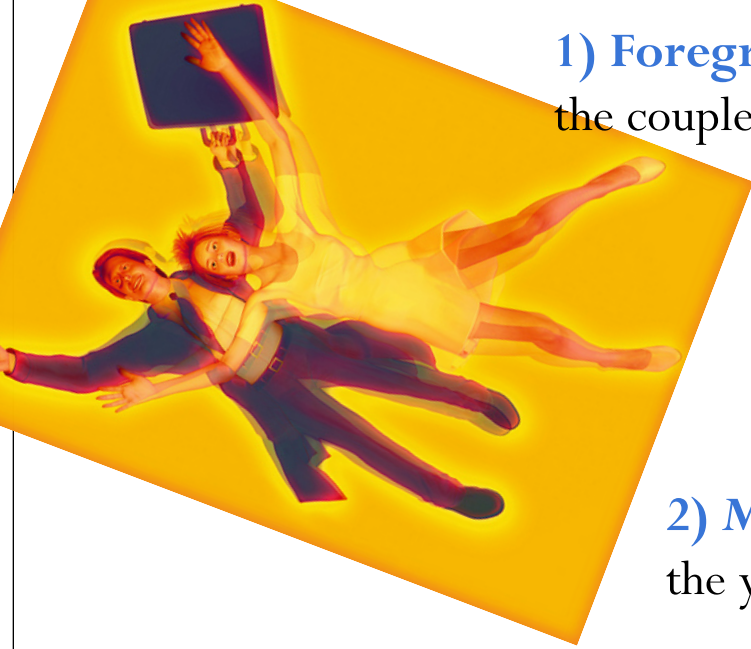
Notes

- The poem is based on a **real incident** which Morgan read about in a newspaper.
- It is an '**Instamatic poem**', a **word photo** which describes one particular moment in words. It describes the actual moment when the people are falling. We do not 'see' them being pushed, or what happens to them after.

The poem's **structure** resembles that of a **photo**:

1) **Foreground**

the couple (lines 1-14)



2) **Middleground**

the youths (lines 15-19)



3) **Background**

the drivers (lines 20-24)



As the reader 'sees' each part of the 'photo', the poem becomes **more shocking**.

Notes

- The poem is written in the **present tense** – this makes it **more immediate**, as if it is happening now, and adds to the **shocking effect** of the poem.
- The poem's **tone** is **neutral**. Morgan gives **no comment** or **judgement**, it is like a journalist reporting events.
- The **contrast** between the horrific incident and the neutral tone gives the poem **more impact** and makes it **more shocking** than if Morgan had highlighted his feelings to the reader.

Notes

- **Theme: *Society's lack of concern for others.***

Morgan is highlighting the flaws in modern society - people don't care about others and this attitude allows things like this to happen.

'Glasgow 5 March 1971'

Shocking start

Contrast with 'ragged' - diamonds are usually cut with precision. Shards of glass are like small sparkling diamonds?

The **title** is like the words on a photo or a newspaper dateline – adds to the realism of the poem, reinforces that it is based on real events

'ragged' – suggests sharpness / a wound

With a **ragged diamond** of **shattered** plate-glass a young man and his girl are **falling backwards** into a shop-window.

What difference would it make if lines 3&4 came before lines 1&2?

Ironic? Were they looking in a jeweller's window?

When we find out later on that they have been pushed, we realise they were facing their attackers – more shocking

Onomatopoeia - suggests the sound of breaking glass...

...as if we (the reader) have turned on hearing the breaking of glass to see what is happening

Metaphor – the pieces of glass are like stubble / a beard. The everyday nature of this image makes it more shocking and macabre – suggests pain and horror; scarred for life?

Connotations:

- 'white' – innocence
- 'white coat' – doctor's coat
- Contrast of red on white – Red Cross / bandages

Tiny pieces

Lines 5-10 describe the couple's injuries

The young man's face is **bristling** with **fragments** of glass and the girl's leg has caught on the broken window and **spurts arterial blood** over her **wet-look white coat.**

Ironic – the coat is designed to look wet, but is now literally wet with her blood

'spurts' (rather than i.e. 'runs') shows that the blood is gushing strongly from her wound – describes the pulsing gush of pressurised blood as it is pumped out by the heart

This shows the seriousness of her injuries - **potentially fatal.**

Makes the incident seem more **graphic**

It is still not clear at this point, half way through the poem, what has actually happened to the couple

Metaphor – the couple's arms are flung out as they try to get their balance / protect themselves– shows the couple's surprise

Their arms are **starfished out**
braced for impact,
their **faces show surprise, shock**,
the beginning of pain.

This will not save them – they are falling backwards into broken glass

Alliteration – adds to the horror of the situation

Sounds like glass breaking?

Lines 1-14 describe the **couple**

This is like the **foreground** of the 'word photo'

Lines 15-19 deal with the youths

It is not until **line 15** that we find out what has happened to the couple

Effect – draws the reader in and makes them read on to find out what has happened

Tone - matter of fact

The two youths who have pushed them are about to complete the operation reaching into the window to loot what they can smartly. Their faces show no expression.

Middle-ground of 'word photo'

'Operation' – the youths have planned the attack

The youths have pushed them through the window so that they can steal from the shop

Highlights how heartless they are

Suggests a military operation; also refers to the surgical operations the couple will need

Adverb 'smartly' at the end of the line

Reinforces the youths' priorities – speed and efficiency

Effective but brutal method

Lines 15-19 deal with the youths

Middle-ground of 'word photo'

The youths show no concern for the couple / no emotion

Contrast the youths' expressions with the couple's: *'surprise, shock...the beginning of pain'*

The two youths who have pushed them are about to complete the operation reaching into the window to loot what they can smartly. Their faces show no expression.

'Operation' – the youths have planned the attack

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Reinforces the youths' priorities – speed and efficiency

Morgan's personal reflection on humanity as a whole

Lines 20-23 describe the drivers

Background of the 'word photo'

Reflects sharpness of broken glass

Good visibility – the drivers can see what is happening

It is a sharp, clear night in Sauchiehall Street.

Setting revealed at the end of poem – adds to realism

In the background two drivers keep their eyes on the road.

The drivers can see what is going on but are **choosing** to look the other way and avoiding getting involved

This highlights the poem's **theme**: *society's lack of concern for others*

The poem makes us ask the question: *Does the attitude of the youths cause the drivers' attitude, or vice versa?*