Annotations: **‘Divorce’**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Line Number** | **Annotations** |
| **1-14** | * High, formal **register** created through language and grammar
* **Repetition** of ‘I’ throughout creates a strident declarative tone – knowingly theatrical and pompous
 |
| **1** | * Confounds expectation, created by title, that poem will be about a married couple
 |
| **6-8** | * **Ironic** role reversal. Parodying the stereotypical complaint from mother to child that her daily housework goes unnoticed and unthanked
 |
| **9-10** | * **Pun** on ‘camel’ and ‘gives me the hump’
 |
| **11-12** | * ‘all you ever say’ – suggests perhaps the speaker is prone to strops like this regularly
* Jovial voice of father contrasts with stoppiness/seriousness of speaker
* ‘Lady Muck’ – suggests speaker is seen as theatrical by father
 |
| **13** | * **Ironic** role reversal - sounds like something a parent would say to a child
 |
| **14** | * Overblown, theatrical, OTT.
* Imitative of what teenagers say when fighting with parents? (“I wish I’d never been born” … “I wish you weren’t my parents”)
* Echoes idea of rejecting parents altogether – ‘divorce’ of the title
 |
| **15** | * Blunt **tone** created by simple declarative statement.
* Marks a shift in **tone** – second stanza becomes more serious/earnest/poetic in tone
 |
| **16-23** | * **Series** of idealised **images** of parents
* **Language** echoes the fantastical descriptions of fairytales, children’s stories or nursery rhymes – underscores the speaker’s juvenile naivety and lack of worldly understanding.
* **Repetition** of ‘there are parents’ is ironic: there aren’t. These parents are unrealistic and idealised.
 |
| **24** | * Hyperbolic, grandiose **tone** returns.
* **Short**, **declarative statements** convey pomposity
 |
| **25-26** | * Improbable description of parents as ‘rough and wild’ and always shouting. Contradicted by the father’s words which give impression of a good-humoured man.
* **Irony -** the speaker is the one coming across as rough and wild. The **accusative address** of the poem suggests it might be being shouted at the parents.
 |
| **27** | * Suggests an unshakeable certainty about right and wrong – reflects naivety/limited world experience.
 |
| **28** | * Grand/dramatic ultimatum. Mention of ‘morning’ and ‘first light’ **implies** that in the morning all will be forgotten. (calls to mind phrases such as “everything will look better in the morning” and “you’ll see things in a different light”)
 |

**Overview notes**

* + Two stanzas, one stanza break: reflecting idea of divorce/splitting.
	+ Each stanza has 14 lines with an end rhyming couplet. An ironic adoption of a loose sonnet form, with its associations with romantic poetry?
	+ Alternating line lengths reflecting the theme of contrast and difference between the speaker and parents.
	+ Poem is only one of the six selected from a collection of poetry for young people, rather than an adult collection.
	+ Poem is closest to a dramatic monologue in the style of Robert Browning: the speaker’s words are addressed to a present but silent audience; their words help to characterise the speaker; there is a clear disparity between what the speaker says about their situation and what the reader infers.
* Explain how the speaker’s sense of irritation is conveyed in lines 1-6.
* What is the speaker’s attitude to her parents (line 6-14)?
* In lines 6-14 the speaker is annoyed and aggravated by her parents. This is first expressed at her mother who she feels is ungrateful. She states that her mother ‘never, ever said a kind word’ showing that she feels her mother is indifferent towards her or does not love her properly. The build up her of ‘never, ever’ suggests that she can’t remember it ever happening.
* She mocks her father’s mocking of her with ‘Are you off in the cream puff, Lady Muck?’ It is clear from her derisory follow up – ‘in this day and age?’ that she thinks her father’s nickname for her is derogatory and it upsets her.
* How does the tone change in the second stanza and how is this achieved?
* The tone goes through several changes in the second stanza. The first one is when the tone shifts from attacking to authoritative. She is no longer picking on her parents but stating simple facts. ‘I want a divorce’ is a clear statement about her desires. It is a direct assault on her parents stating that she wishes to leave them.
* The stanza then takes on a whimsical and poetic tone. She begins to talk about other parents but manages to make them sound mythical and fantastical through the word choice. She says ‘there are parents… whose faces turn up to the light’. The use of ‘light’ makes us think about goodness and sunshine and makes these parents sound happy.
* Choose **two** examples of imagery from lines 16-23 and explain in detail how each adds to your understanding of the poem.
* There are two examples of imagery in lines 16-23 and both of them are metaphors dealing with other types of parents. The first metaphor states there are parents who ‘speak in the soft murmur of rivers’. This compares the way these parents speak to the sound of rivers. These rivers are soft and calm and soothing. The speaker clearly thinks these parents are lovely as they never raise their voices and are lovely all the time.
* The second example still focuses on how the parents sound and now compares their singing to ‘the colourful voices of rainbows’. This sounds like when they singing happy colours come out of their mouths. They seem joyous and magical. You could imagine having a wonderful time with these parents. Both of these metaphors add to my understanding of the poem as I understand that the speaker really wants happy parents and feels she doesn’t get on well with her own.
* This poem is about a first person experience. How does Kay use style and techniques to put this across.
* This is a very strong dramatic monologue from a child to her parents asking for a separation.
* The first thing that makes this clear is the title. She chose to call this poem ‘divorce’. From this word we know that the poem is going to be about two things splitting up, in this instance it is a child pulling away from her parents.
* The second thing stylistically is the structure of the poem. This is interesting for two reasons. The poem is in two stanzas, which could refer to the two parts involved – the parents and the child. On the page they are separated by the gap, demonstrating their split, but coming together to make the poem thereby representing the family unit. The other thing to note here is that each stanza is 14 lines long. Usually sonnets are 14 lines long, and normally a sonnet is a love poem. Here though, it is used for the opposite purpose – the speaker declares her lack of love for her parents in demanding a divorce.
* The final thing to say about this poem is that it is very clearly a dramatic monologue as the speaker constantly uses the word ‘I’. this makes it clear that the poem is a list of demands and actions. ‘I want a divorce’, ‘I will file for divorce’. The strong use of ‘I’ at the start of sentences convinces you that the speaker knows what she wants.