**Charge of the Light Brigade: Alfred Lord Tennyson**

**Context:**

The Crimean war saw British troops fighting in Russia. At this time, while there were basic guns and cannons, people would still also fight or horses, to rush in and attack before they could reload or stop them. However the light brigade were very lightly equipped, more for scouting or attacking from the back or sides rather than charging straight in.

During a battle, a miscommunication sent the light brigade charging head first into the cannons of the other side, it was a huge catastrophe and many died. It showed to the British that even mistakes can happen. The men were respected for following orders, even though they knew they may be wrong. Some however have criticised the way they blindly followed orders. Lord Tennyson was the poet who was asked to write about their glorious sacrifice.

Themes:

The poem is about war, life and death, sacrifice and folly. It naturally links to conflict and is effective at showing peoples views on war of the time. The poem also contains a lot of reference to biblical/religious ideas as well as bravery and fear.

Structure:

Written in dimeter and dactylic. Basically that means there are two (di-) stresses in each line, that means two beats or syllables which you read with a bit more force. The syllables after are then unstressed. So when there are six syllables you would read it ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three. The drop in stress is perhaps to show the sudden charge and then collapse, or the sound of horses galloping.

The poem is divided into 6 stanzas and uses a lot of repetition. Some of this is to show the different stages of the battle but also give it a structure. It has a very military rhyme and can be similar to the sound of marching drums of horse hooves. This is used to reflect the military nature of the conflict in the poem.

What are these past participle verbs referring to?

What is the effect of this metaphor?

Who is ‘he’? What do the imperatives and direction show?

Why does T repeat “Half a league”? What metre does this create? What could this rhythm represent?

**Charge of the Light Brigade**

**I**   
Half a **league**, half a league,   
Half a league onward,   
All in the valley of Death   
Rode the six hundred.   
"Forward, the **Light Brigade**!   
Charge for the guns!" he said.   
Into the valley of Death   
Rode the six hundred.

**II**   
"Forward, the Light Brigade!"   
Was there a man **dismayed**?   
Not though the soldier knew   
Someone had **blundered**.   
Theirs not to make reply,   
Theirs not to reason why,   
Theirs but to do and die.   
Into the valley of Death   
Rode the six hundred.

What device is used here? What does it reveal about the soldiers?

Where does this phrase originate from?

How has the last line changed? Why is this significant?

What does the slight change in the repetition from stanza three show the reader?

Why does T start many of the lines in this stanza with verbs?

Why is this the final line of the poem? What does it signify?

How does the narrative perspective shift here?

How does T engage the reader?

What do you notice about the rhyme scheme throughout the poem?

How does T use language to show that he admires the soldiers in this stanza?

Why is ‘Death’ capitalised?

What linguistic devices are being used?

Why does T use anaphora at the start of this stanza?

What device is T using here? What effect does it have?

**III**   
Cannon to right of them,   
Cannon to left of them,   
Cannon in front of them   
**Volley**ed and thundered;   
Stormed at with shot and shell,

Boldly they rode and well,   
Into the jaws of Death,   
Into the mouth of hell   
Rode the six hundred.

**IV**

Flashed all their **sabres** bare,

Flashed as they turned in air

Sab'ring the gunners there,

Charging an army, while

All the world wondered.

Plunged in the battery-smoke

Right through the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian

Reeled from the sabre stroke

Shattered and **sundered**.

Then they rode back, but not

Not the six hundred.

What does the slight change in the repetition from stanza three show the reader?

**V**

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon behind them

Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

While horse and hero fell.

They that had fought so well

Came thro’ the jaws of Death,

Back from the mouth of hell,

All that was left of them,

Left of six hundred.

**VI**

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!

All the world wondered.

Honour the charge they made!

Honour the Light Brigade,

Noble six hundred!

-Alfred Lord Tennyson

What do you notice about the rhyme scheme throughout the poem?

Why is this the final line of the poem? What does it signify?

How does the narrative perspective shift here?

How does T engage the reader?