



Ever had a bad haircut?

What do you associate with punks?



intimidating political — punk — guitars, loud  
What do you associate with punks?  
~~rules~~ piercings  
tattoos attention — noticed

wild  
bright  
colors  
rebellious  
hairstyles



## About

Fleur Adcock has said that this poem was written in response to a real incident experienced by her god-daughter, Heidi, who had moved with her father (after the death of her mother) to live in Australia.

- For Heidi with Blue Hair presents us with a central image of a child sent home from school for dyeing her hair blue.
- As the story develops, we find not just an amusing story, but also a challenge to social boundaries.
- Adcock manages to gently bring together issues of friendship, solidarity, home life, and social institutions when discussing this relatively minor event.

## History

Fleur Adcock (b.1934) is a New Zealander by birth but spent part of her childhood in England, returning to live in London in 1963.

She worked as a librarian until 1979 before becoming a freelance writer. She is the author of ten books of poetry and a collected edition of her work, *Poems 1960-2000*, was published by Bloodaxe in 2000. Recipient of a Cholmondeley Award in 1976 and a New Zealand National Book Award in 1984, she was awarded an OBE in 1996.

The influence of Fleur Adcock's migratory childhood can be traced in her work's exploration of identity.

Her poems often bring to light women's lives that might otherwise be marginalised or forgotten, as in the poignant vignettes of suffering in 'The Soho Hospital for Women'.

Her characteristic tone is restrained, rational, conversational. Adcock herself has talked about this poetic strategy: "The tone I feel at home in is one in which I can address people without embarrassing them; I should like them to relax and listen as if to an intimate conversation".

When you dyed your hair blue  
(or, at least ultramarine  
for the clipped sides, with a crest  
of jet-black spikes on top)  
you were sent home from school

because, as the headmistress put it,  
although dyed hair was not  
specifically forbidden, yours  
was, apart from anything else,  
not done in the school colours.

2<sup>nd</sup> person  
persona

→ to Heidi!

from poet - reader  
overhears the conversation  
enjoyment

- intimate + conversational  
- links the 2 stanzas  
reason

Awkward situation  
+ she tries to justify the punishment

When you dyed your hair blue

(or, at least ultramarine)

for the clipped sides, with a crest

of jet-black spikes on top)

you were sent home from school

because, as the headmistress put it,

although dyed hair was not specifically forbidden, yours

was, apart from anything else,

not done in the school colours.

extreme!

wants attention

brackets - shocking

detail of

haircut. Very

rebellious

+ unusual - link to punks + stereotype

multi-clause sentence

She is trying to find excuses

She sounds ridiculous  
stumbling over her reason



Tears in the kitchen, telephone-calls  
to school from your freedom-loving father:  
'She's not a punk in her behaviour;  
it's just a style.' (You wiped your eyes,  
also not in a school colour.)

'She discussed it with me first -  
we checked the rules.' 'And anyway, Dad,  
it cost twenty-five dollars.  
Tel them it won't wash out -  
not even if I wanted to try.



support - shows that father is liberal + open minded.  
Heidi + attacks school.

**Imagery of crying**

→ tone is  
sad + emotional

**dialogue**

understands H  
+ defends her  
knows it's just  
fashion + a phase

← modern father  
alliteration of

↑ adjectives

Tears in the kitchen, telephone-calls  
to school from your freedom-loving father  
'She's not a punk in her behaviour;  
it's just a style.' (You wiped your eyes,  
also not in a school colour.)

Heidi  
School made her  
cry & poet is  
mocking the  
school

**repetition**

mocking the excuse  
of Headteacher

'She discussed it with me first -  
we checked the rules' 'And anyway, Dad,  
it cos twenty-five dollars.  
Tel them it won't wash out -  
not even if I wanted to try.

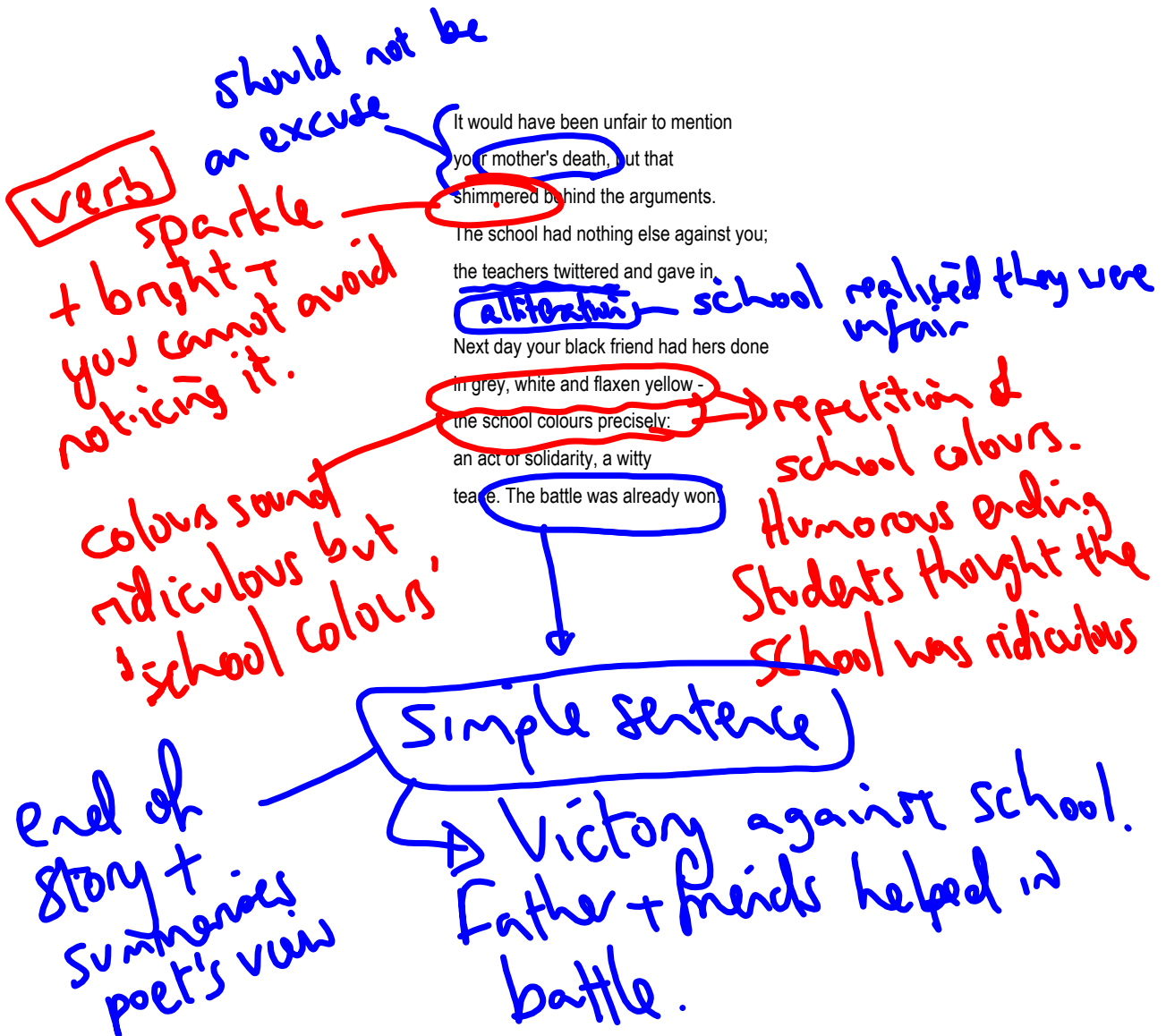
H is determined  
& rebellious.

youthful argument  
because it is a lot of  
money for her

H is delicate.  
Even though she's dyed her  
hair, it's possibly a call for attention - mother  
died

It would have been unfair to mention  
your mother's death, but that  
shimmered behind the arguments.  
The school had nothing else against you;  
the teachers twittered and gave in.

Next day your black friend had hers done  
in grey, white and flaxen yellow -  
the school colours precisely:  
an act of solidarity, a witty  
tease. The battle was already won.



## **Organisation/Structure**

- No rhyme scheme shows the conversational style of the poet/rebellious nature of the poem/sense of individuality and not obeying conformity
- enjambment and punctuation allows natural conversation and informality
- dashes to create pauses for effect
- stanza 1 - the setting
- stanza 6 - the next day's outcome

## Imagery

- Use of colour and the hair of the two girls
- the kitchen and Heidi crying
- the shimmering metaphor  
referencing the death of the mother

## **Emotions and Themes:**

death

loss

grief

identity

relationships

rebellion/independence

loyalty

authority/conformity

## **Personal response and message?**

- Be yourself
- Sometimes it is important to break the rules
- Sometimes institutions are old fashioned or ridiculous
- express yourself
- look out for signs of people suffering because of a loss of friend or family
- Fight for what you think is right and support others



## **Plenary**

How else would you show solidarity to Heidi?

What side does the poet want you to be on?

essay questions:

Comment closely on ways in which the writer presents relationships in the following poem.

How does the poet present the themes of rebellion and identity?

How does the poet present the theme of friendship and solidarity?

What would be your 5 PEEs?

Comment closely on ways in which the writer pre

How does the poet present the themes of rebellion

How does the poet  
present the theme of  
friendship and solidarity?

- ① Father supports H  
"Freedom-loving father" Alliteration
- ② H's friend dyes her hair too  
"grey, white ..." (bright colours - vivid)
- ③ Absence of support from the school  
"you was, apart anything..." (multi-choice  
excuse)
- ④ Solidarity of father + friend meant  
H battled the school successfully  
"Battle was ..." simple sentence  
war imagery
- ⑤ Free Verse allows poet to be  
converse with H + the reader  
+ it is rebellious in style as it  
does not follow the rules

essay question: Comment closely on ways in which the writer presents relationships in the following poem.

- between father and Heidi
- between poet and Heidi
- between school and Heidi\father
- between Heidi and her school friend
- between Heidi and mother?
- Conclusion

Point (link it to the question)

One way the writer presents...is...

Evidence (is it the best example?)

an example of this is, "\_\_\_\_\_"

Explanation (mention techniques and develop)

The use of \_\_\_\_\_ conveys...

Furthermore,...

In addition,...

Perhaps...

Use your PEE sheet.



Conclusion:

What did you learn about \_\_\_\_\_ in this poem?

Which part of the poem had the greatest impact on you and why?

What does the poet feel about \_\_\_\_\_?

How do you personally react to \_\_\_\_\_ in this poem and why?

Homework: Tomorrow

Analyse Praise Song For Your Mother

