



# National Poetry Day in Scotland

Thursday 3 October 2013

## 'Water' Poem

'Rain' by Don Paterson



Teaching  
Resources:  
Secondary  
Schools

## The Poet and His Work

**Don Paterson (1963–)**

Born and raised in Dundee, Don Paterson left school to pursue a career in music, living in London and Brighton. His first book *Nil Nil* was published to acclaim in 1993, and in the same year he returned to Scotland as Writer in Residence at the University of Dundee. He was included on the list of 20 poets chosen for the Poetry Society's 'New Generation Poets' promotion in 1994, and in 1997 he became poetry editor at Picador Macmillan, a position he still holds. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a Fellow of the English Association, he received an OBE in 2008 and the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2010. The collection *Rain* won the Forward Poetry Prize for Best Poetry Collection of the Year in 2010. He currently teaches in the School of English, University of St Andrews, and continues also to work as a musician, editor and writer.

## The Poem

'Rain' is the final poem in Don Paterson's fourth collection, *Rain* (2009).

[Reading The Poem – Notes And Questions >](#)



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### Reading The Poem – Notes And Questions



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How would you describe the kind of films which the poem presents?

All but one of the references to the film, or films, are about women. Why do you think this might be?

In l.6, why do you think the film's 'script and score' are described as 'empty'?

The poem presents water both as negative and positive.

- In which parts of the poem is water seen as something negative, and in what way?
- In which parts of the poem is water seen as something positive, and in what way?

How does the last line affect your reading of the poem as a whole?

What rhyme scheme does the poem use?

How do the rhymes affect the mood, and the meaning, of the poem?

### Discussion

Can you think of any films (or television programmes) which begin with rain falling?

If so, what sort of mood does this introduction create?

What other film openings can you remember? Why do you think they have stayed with you?

Can you think of any films (or television programmes) in which you have noticed mistakes, like those in lines 17–20 of the poem? Did noticing them spoil your enjoyment of the film, or did you, like the speaker of the poem, overlook them? Why?

Discuss your own experiences of rain – and then also of flooding – at home, while travelling, on holiday, or seen on the news.

### Research >

2.

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## 'Water' Research



### Teaching Resources: Secondary Schools

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The poem describes 'one big thundering downpour'. Read through the Scottish Water education resource on Climate Change at [www.scottishwater.co.uk](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk) especially the sections about flooding – Activities 4 and 5, and Resource Sheets 3 to 8. Think about what actions you might take if your house was flooded by completing Resource Sheet 8.

Find out about recent floods in Scotland (typing 'Scotland floods 2012' into an internet search engine brings up a good range of news reports).

- If flooding occurred where you live, write down your own memories of events, and speak to other people in the community – family, neighbours, friends – about how the flooding affected them.
- If there was no flooding where you live, choose an area which was flooded, and read some news reports about what happened.
- In either case, find out what caused the flooding – heavy rain, burst water mains, a swollen river, and so on – or a combination of such factors.

Based on your research, write your own report of a flood, describing some or all of the following were affected by the flood:

- houses
- shops
- other workplaces
- children
- elderly people
- animals
- vehicles

## Creative Activity

### 1. Film

Write a poem based on a film you've seen. Don't try to retell the story – focus on a single image, or scene, that has stayed with you.

Try to relate it to another aspect of your experience – for example, it might remind you of a person you know, a place you have visited, a book you have read.

You could structure it in three stanzas, as follows:

- a description of the image, or scene, in the film
- the personal associations this leads to
- a new image or idea, suggested by the combination of the film, and your own experience

**Continued >**

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### 2. Flood

Write a poem imagining someone preparing for a flood.  
See Climate Change Resource Sheet 6.

Choose, say, three items from this list, and describe someone – perhaps yourself – carrying out these actions.

In each verse, mention the fact that rain is falling. You could use this line as a refrain – perhaps the same line, or a variation on it, begins, or ends, each verse.

Use your research into flooding in Scotland in 2012 – or your own experience of flooding, if you have it – to add detail to your poem.

Try to increase, or decrease, the tension through the three stanzas.  
It might be that

- the rain is falling more and more heavily and the waters are rising
- the rain is easing off and the waters are beginning to recede
- you are able gradually to stop the rain coming into your house
- despite what you do, the water is beginning to seep into your house

4.

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## Further Reading and Links

### Books

Paterson, Don: *Rain* (London: Faber, 2009)

### Websites

[www.spl.org.uk/poetry/poets/don-paterson](http://www.spl.org.uk/poetry/poets/don-paterson)

Biography, Poems (including 'Rain'), Further Reading, In the Library, Other Useful Info, Links

<http://literature.britishcouncil.org/don-paterson>

Biography, Critical Perspective, Bibliography and Awards

[www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=6172](http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=6172)

Biography, weblinks and recordings of four poems

[www.donpaterson.com](http://www.donpaterson.com)

Official website



[www.facebook.com/scottishpoetrylibrary](http://www.facebook.com/scottishpoetrylibrary)



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NPD poem posters, teaching resources & films:

[www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk)

Explore Scottish Water's education materials:

[www.scottishwater.co.uk](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk)

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