

# Poetry 2012: The Written World



## Resources for Teachers

### Wolf Poems:

- Croatia, 'The Ice-Wolf' by Dragutin Tadijanovic
- Serbia, 'Wolf Shadow' by Vasko Popa

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# About this Resource

Activities in this resource are aimed at pupils in lower secondary school (S1–S3).

## **Developing global citizens within Curriculum for Excellence**

These resources, featuring poems from around the world, can help realise certain key principles within this document, including

- *enabling learners to appreciate the values and opinions of others with particular reference to environments and cultures*
- *motivating learners to engage in local, national and global issues*
- *promoting the concept of shared humanity*
- *actively engaging [learners] in exploring a variety of traditions and cultures from around the world*

## **Literacy and English experiences and outcomes**

Reading poems from countries around the world links to CfE Literacy & English Experiences and outcomes by offering opportunities to:

- *develop my understanding of what is special, vibrant and valuable about my own and other cultures and their languages*
- *explore the richness and diversity of language, how it can affect me, and the wide range of ways in which I and others can be creative*
- *extend and enrich my vocabulary through listening, talking, watching and reading*
- *explore and discuss word patterns and text structures*

Individual activities outlined below can link to particular experiences and outcomes at Levels 3–4:

### **Reading the poem**

ENG 3-12a / 4-12a    ENG 3-17a / 4-17a    ENG 3-19a / 4-19a

### **Discussion**

LIT 3-02a / 4-02a    LIT 3-09a / 4-09a

### **Research Activity**

LIT 3-06a / 4-06a    LIT 3-14a / 4-14a    LIT 3-15a / 4-15a

### **Creative Activity**

ENG 3-26a / 4-26a    ENG 3-27a / 4-27a    ENG 3-30a / 4-30a    ENG 3-31a / 4-31a

# The Ice-Wolf

Who doesn't know I come from Rastušje  
And went to school in Podvinje?...

A winter's morning. Frost.  
I'm walking alone from the village.  
Passing beside the frozen Glogóvica  
Suddenly I hear  
Crackling, crunching, crashing... Someone's crossing in my  
direction?

I immediately think of the last night's talk  
Of wolves coming out of Bosnia.  
In fear  
My feet  
Begin to run,  
Without a backward glance  
Nearly to Podvinje  
Where, in tears, I meet the milkmen.  
The milkmen asked me: What's up?  
Nothing, nothing, I said;  
And off I go.

That evening my mother happened to mention  
That the ice on the Glogóvica was cracking with the cold.

I heard it too! I said;  
And laughed.

Dragutin Tadijanovic (1905–2007)

from *Selected Poems*, translated by Edward Goy and Dennis Ward (Zagreb:  
Hrvatski PEN, 1993)

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Note: the poem is dated "Zagreb, 21.7.1935"

# Wolf Shadow

They say my great-grandmother  
The witch Sultana Urošević  
Had a she-wolf's shadow

By moonlight she never  
Went out of doors

So no one should tread on her shadow  
Take her secret powers  
And kill her on the spot

They say  
It's from great-grandmother I have  
These eyes and this tongue

I don't know about the wolf shadow

By moonlight always  
And often by sunlight  
I walk backwards

Just in case

Vasko Popa (1922–1991)

from *Vasko Popa: Collected Poems*, edited by Francis R. Jones, introduced by Ted Hughes, translated by Anne Pennington and Francis R. Jones (London: Anvil Press, 1997); this poem was translated by Anne Pennington  
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Note: 'Wolf Shadow' is taken from the collection *Raw Flesh* (1975), in which the first and last poems, second and second last, and so on, are linked thematically. 'Wolf Shadow' (six from last) is paired with 'The Lost Red Boot', also featuring "my great-grandmother Sultana Urošević" (this poem can be read on the 'zokstersomething' webpage listed below). Popa published two more collections in 1975, one of which was *Wolf Salt*; a note on this in the *Collected Poems* reads: "the wolf, a totem of the ancient Slav tribes, symbolizes the South Slav people."

## *The Poets & Their Work (& Their Translators)*

Born in Grebenac in Serbia, of Romanian descent, **Vasko Popa** (1922–1991) studied at the University of Belgrade and the University of Bucharest. During World War II, he fought as a Communist partisan and was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp in Bečkerek. He published his first major verse collection in 1953. He broke with the Social Realism which characterised much post-World War II Eastern European literature, drawing on surrealism and Serbian folk traditions. Popa was the editor of the publishing house Nolit from 1954 until 1979. He founded the Literary Municipality Vršac and co-founded the Vojvodina Academy of Sciences and Arts. He was elected a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. His honours also include the Brankova nagrada, the Zmajeva nagrada, the Austrian state award for European literature, the Branko Miljković poetry award, the Yugoslav state AVNOJ award, and the Skender Kulenović. In 1995, the town of Vršac established a poetry award in his name.

'Wolf Shadow' was translated by **Anne Pennington** (1934–1981), who was Professor of Comparative Slavonic Philology at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

**Dragutin Tadijanovic** (1905–2007) was born in the village of Rastušje, in Slavonia, eastern Croatia. He published his first poem in 1922. He enrolled in the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Zagreb, but graduated in Literature and Philosophy in 1937. He worked as the lector of the official paper Narodne Novine, taught at the Academy of Arts in Zagreb and later worked in publishing. He joined the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts Literary Institute, where he was the director between 1953 and 1973. He also served as the president of the Society of Croatian Writers from 1964 to 1965, and became a member of the Academy.

**Edward Goy** (1926–2000) was a lecturer in Slavonic Studies at Cambridge University. **Dennis Ward** (1924–2008) was Professor of Russian at the University of Edinburgh.

# Reading the Poems

## The Ice-Wolf

- Who is the speaker of the poem?
- Why is he out walking alone?
- Is this a journey he makes regularly?
- Why is he frightened of wolves on this particular morning?
- Why does he say “nothing” when he meets the milkmen?
- How do you think he feels when he laughs at the end of the poem? Why?
- Why do you think the poem begins with a question, rather than a statement? (Think about how the meaning of the first verse would change if you took away the first three words and the question mark.)
- Why do you think the poet uses the actual names of the villages and the river or lake in the poem? How would the poem’s meaning be changed if these names were replaced by, say, ‘village’, ‘town’ and ‘river’?

## Wolf Shadow

- How does the speaker resemble his great-grandmother?
- To what extent does the speaker believe what “they say” about his great-grandmother?
- What sort of “secret powers” do you think Sultana Urošević might have had? (There are clues in “The Lost Red Book” – see ‘Notes’ on the poem, above.)
- Why does the speaker “walk backwards” in certain situations?
- Why do you think the poet uses his great-grandmother’s name in the poem? How would the poem’s meaning be changed if her name was absent?

## Discussion

Without doing any research, talk about what you know about **wolves**.

- Think of adjectives that you would use to describe them.
- What sort of food do wolves eat?
- What sort of places do wolves live in?
- What sounds do they make?
- What sort of reputation does the wolf have?
- What stories do you know about wolves?

Wolves became **extinct** in Scotland in the 18th century. Do you think they should be reintroduced? Why?

## Research Activity

Where in Europe can **wolves** be found today?

Find out about wolves in different cultures, for example

- Ancient Rome (Romulus and Remus)
- Norse mythology (Fenrir and Sköll)
- European fairy tales (such as Little Red Riding Hood)
- Contemporary fantasy literature (such as Harry Potter or Twilight)

**Serbia** and **Croatia** were both part of Yugoslavia. Find out when and how they became independent countries.

Use **Google Earth** to view the route from Rastušje to Podvinje.

- What are the main features of the landscape?
- Click on the icons on the hill between the two places – what do you learn about the locality from these?
- Look south and find the River Sava, which marks the border with Bosnia.

# Creative Activity

Write a poem which isn't about a wolf as such, but which incorporates at least **two "wolf" sayings**, like those below. Can you think of any others?

- between dog and wolf (neither daylight nor dark)
- dark as a wolf's mouth (pitch dark)
- to see a wolf (losing one's voice)
- to put one's head into the wolf's mouth (exposing oneself to needless danger)
- to hold a wolf by the ears (equally dangerous to keep hold or to let go)
- to cry wolf (to give a false or unnecessary warning)
- to keep the wolf from the door (to have enough to eat)
- a lone wolf (someone who likes to be alone)
- to throw to the wolves (to sacrifice something)
- a wolf in sheep's clothing (a dangerous person who seems friendly)

Use the sayings to suggest the **subject** of your poem, for example

- "between dog and wolf" and "a lone wolf" could feature a solitary figure at twilight – what happens when darkness falls?
- "to hold a wolf by the ears" plus "to see a wolf" could feature someone struck dumb by danger – how do they recover their voice?
- "to cry wolf" and "to throw to the wolves" might feature someone whose warnings prove false and who is then – well, thrown to the wolves – what was the warning? Who tells the story, the person who gave the warning, or someone who heard it?

Try to use one or two **real names** in the poem – of people and places you know (personally, rather than through tv or other media) – they can give your poem a distinctive tone.

Like 'The Ice-Wolf', make sure your poem has a **beginning**, a **middle** and an **end**.

- Beginning: set the scene, outline where – when – who
- Middle: what happens – the events of the story
- End: the consequences of, or a reflection on, the events

## Further Reading & Weblinks

The poems 'The Ice-Wolf', representing Croatia, and 'Wolf Shadow', representing Serbia, are part of The Written World – a collaboration between the Scottish Poetry Library and BBC radio to broadcast a poem from every single nation competing in London 2012.

[www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/about/projects-partners/written-world](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/about/projects-partners/written-world)

All the poems selected for The Written World – to find those for Croatia and Serbia, click on Croatia or Serbia on the map, or on the 'Europe' icon below the map

<https://zokstersomething.wordpress.com/2011/10/23/charles-simic-a-suspect-in-the-eyes-of-super-patriots/>

A review of Popa's *Collected Poems*, offering a good overview of his life and work

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17212572](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17212572)

Croatia country profile

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17907947](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17907947)

Serbia country profile

[www.guardian.co.uk/world/croatia](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/croatia)

Recent news articles about Croatia

[www.guardian.co.uk/world/serbia](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/serbia)

Recent news articles about Serbia

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*This is one of twelve resources, written by Ken Cockburn for the Scottish Poetry Library's project The Written World, May 2012.*

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

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