**The Destruction of Sennacherib Lord Byron**

One way of opening up this poem for students would be to use the ‘text-mapping’ approach. This involves students using different forms of marking the text (highlight / bold / italic etc) and then making a key to explain their selections. The second worksheet provides an example. A word processed copy is ideal but a print copy with highlighters and pencils will work well too.

More able students can be asked to devise their own key once they have been shown a few examples. You can vary the amount guidance. The second worksheet has had a lot f work done on it already. The point of the first and third columns is to provide space for additional findings, explanations and comments.

When appropriate a composite version can be displayed to include all (or a selection) of students’ investigations.

There are two follow up questions -

* This is not a well-known Biblical story. Why do you think Byron chose to use it as the subject for a poem?
* Why do you think this poem was chosen for study?
* Does it have any relevance to the present day?

Answers to the first question might include: it suited his dashing image of himself / it gave an opportunity to show off or use some extravagant language / it was a lesser know story and readers were unlikely to quibble over his accuracy…

Your answer to the second question is as good as anyone’s! As a comparison to other ‘war poems’? It was someone’s favourite poem?

It’s hard to find much relevance to the present day as there seems to be no heavenly Angel of Death avenging wrongs. Pride goes before a fall, perhaps?

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| What I have noticed | **The Destruction of Sennacherib** | My comments |
|  | The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.  Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,  That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,  That host on the morrow lay wither’d and strown.  For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass’d;  And the eyes of the sleepers wax’d deadly and chill,  And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!  And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  But through it there roll’d not the breath of his pride:  And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.  And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;  And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.  And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord! |  |
|  | KEY |  |

Some questions to consider:

This is not a well-known Biblical story. Why do you think Byron chose to use it as the subject for a poem?

Why do you think this poem was chosen for study? Does it have any relevance to the present day?

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| What I have noticed | **The Destruction of Sennacherib** | My comments |
| Contrast between lines 1-5 and lines 6 – 8.  Repetition ‘Like…’  Repetition ‘And…’  Repetition ‘And there lay…’  Repetition ‘Un….’ | The Assyrian came down *like the wolf on the fold*,  And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  And the sheen of their spears was *like stars on the sea,*  *When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee*.  *Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,*  That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  *Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,*  That host on the morrow lay wither’d and strown.  For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass’d;  And the eyes of the sleepers wax’d deadly and chill,  And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!  And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  But through it there roll’d not the breath of his pride:  And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  And *cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf*.  And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;  And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.  And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  Hath *melted like snow* in the glance of the Lord! | **Painting a visual picture to set the scene**  **An old story needs ‘old’ language?**  **The images of death keep building up** |
|  | KEY  Archaic or unusual words  *Comparisons*  Colours  Refs to decay / death |  |

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