

POPPIES

- **Context:** in this poem, written by Jane Weir, the narrator is a mother who is describing seeing her son leave home to join the army. She shares her emotions and explores the mother-son connection through her use of maternal language.
- **“Spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade of yellow bias binding...”** - the word **“spasms”** in this phrase links to the idea of a dead body and could show how the mother is deeply concerned for her son’s safety, whom she treats as if he were just a child. The phrase **“paper red”** introduces the theme of poppies as a symbol of remembrance, which could foreshadow her son’s death (which is implied, as poppies are often placed on the graves of war veterans). The use of **military language** is highlighted through the word **“blockade”** which is a tactic used in the army. This could show how the mother sees things in a different perspective, now her son is at risk, and that this adventure for her son is deeply troubling her. **“Blockade”** could also give the sense that the speaker feels trapped out of her son’s new life, and that this makes her feel sad. The **“yellow bias binding”** introduces **domestic imagery** into the poem, which is poignant for the reader, as well as **sewing metaphors**. These help the reader empathise with the mother and her struggles as she adapts to a different lifestyle.
- **“Glaze my nose... play at being Eskimos”** - this highlights the mother’s sense of longing to return to simpler times and creates a sense of nostalgia in the poem. It may also portray her **fear** at losing the person she loves so much. Additionally, she is clearly very **close** to her son, which must make the experience of losing him even harder. This creates a sense of **pain**.
- **“The world overflowing like a treasure chest”** - the word **“treasure”** could suggest that the mother feels as if her son’s experiences in the army will enrich him and be varying and fulfilling. This could imply that she is in fact, happy for him. **“Treasure”** also connotes images of searching for gold and could be suggesting that the boy will have to work hard in the army to gain rewards and be respected. The word **“overflowing”** also suggests that perhaps he has lots to learn and that the mother shares some of her son’s excitement.



KEY THEMES, FORM AND STRUCTURE