**The Basics AOs: 1 2 and 3**

***The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred Lord Tennyson**

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| ***Groups:*** | War, Violence, Power |
| ***Good poems to link with:*** | *Bayonet Charge, Exposure, Remains* |
| **Bio and Context:** Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was a popular Poet Laureate for during the Victorian period. He wrote this poem, in 1855, as a dramatic tribute to British cavalrymen who risked charging through an exposed valley during the Crimean War. He wrote it just minutes after reading an account of the battle in the *Times* newspaper. Whilst most of the poem centres around the bravery, honour and sacrifice of the soldiers, Tennyson reluctantly acknowledges that the Charge was the result of a misunderstood order, and that almost a third of the ‘noble six hundred’ died needlessly. | |
| ***Summary:***  https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/18/Charge_of_the_Light_Brigade.jpg?uselang=en-gb | Stanza 1 sets the scene, describing the men charging on horseback, through a valley, towards enemy guns. Stanza 2 focuses on the morale of the men and their obeying orders without questioning, despite the fact that the order to charge was made in error. The next two stanzas focus on the sounds and weaponry of the battle, and how the Brigade started to breach the Russian enemy line at the end of the valley. Tennyson uses the fifth stanza to show how bravely they fought until forced to retreat, depleted in number. The shorter final stanza celebrates their bravery and says that the Light Brigade will always be remembered ‘wild’ charge – that the world will always be in awe of them. |
| **Interesting Features:**   * Form * Rhythm (the famous **dactylic** pattern of one stressed syllable, followed by two unstressed) * Rhyme – quite a complex scheme, but a lot of rhyming for effect * Repetition | |
| **In a Nutshell:** The poem can either be read as a shameless celebration of the dedication and unquestioning bravery of these cavalrymen; or a more subtle critique of the risk and sacrifice men take in war. Either way, it is very exciting and memorable verse, carried forward by a strong yet complex rhyme scheme, and an irrepressible rhythm! Throughout a long and distinguished career, it is probably the poem that Tennyson will be most remembered for. | |