

# AQA English GCSE

## Poetry: Worlds and Lives

The Jewellery Maker – *Louisa Adjoa Parker*

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## THE JEWELLERY MAKER

Louisa Adjoa Parker

### Brief Summary

*The Jewellery Maker* describes a skilled **craftsman** who walks to his workshop each morning, following the same routine as his father and grandfather before him. The poem presents him as disciplined and friendly, greeting neighbours as he moves through a **picturesque landscape** of blossom, stone, and sky. Inside the workshop, the focus **shifts** to his craft, showing the care and precision with which he shapes metal into delicate designs like butterflies, flowers, and moons.

As the poem continues, it reveals his quiet hopes and frustrations: he dreams of decorating his own home and giving his wife more than the simple jewellery she wears, but he knows his creations are mainly for wealthier women. By the end, the poem leaves the reader thinking about the beauty of his work, and the **contrast** between the maker's **modest** life and the **luxury** his hands create for others.



### Synopsis

- The poem opens with the jewellery maker walking to his workshop early each morning, establishing his **daily rhythm**.
- As he travels, details of the landscape (“heat-baked stone”, “blossom”, “plate-blue sky”) place him in a **vivid** and **sensory environment**.
- He greets his neighbours, and a wild dog barking in the distance introduces a quiet sense of **unpredictability**.
- At his workspace, he arranges his tools with precision and begins his work with metal.
- The poem follows the sequence of his craft as he transforms raw metal into **intricate** forms – insects, flowers, moons, and dragonflies.
- Midway through, the poem **shifts inward** to the maker’s thoughts about his personal life, including his home and his wife.
- He considers the jewellery he would make for her, contrasting her simple appearance with the finer pieces he creates.
- The poem ends with the maker imagining the women who will wear his jewellery, highlighting the **contrast** between his own life and the world of those who will benefit from his skill.

### Context

#### Louisa Adjoa Parker and marginalised perspectives

Louisa Adjoa Parker is a British poet of **Ghanaian** and English **heritage**. Her writing often centres identity, belonging, and the lives of ordinary people whose work and routines are not usually **celebrated** in poetry. Her poems



frequently use **vivid sensory detail** and close observation to make everyday moments feel rich and meaningful, giving **dignity** to people who might otherwise be overlooked. This fits *The Jewellery Maker*, which treats the craftsman's daily walk, careful skill, and quiet pride as something valuable and worthy of attention.

### Jewellery-making as traditional craft labour

Jewellery-making is a skilled craft that relies on patience, precision, and specialist knowledge of tools and materials. In many cultures, these crafts are learned through long practice and are rooted in **local tradition**, with techniques often passed down through families or communities. This gives the jewellery maker's work a sense of **discipline** and pride, where **craftsmanship** becomes both an art form and a way of earning a living.

### Luxury, status, and economic inequality



Jewellery is closely associated with wealth, celebration, and **social status**, even though it is created through intense **manual labour**. In many economies, skilled **artisans** produce expensive items for richer customers, tourists, or export markets while living **modestly** themselves. This reflects a real **imbalance** between the value of what is made and the life of the person making it, where beauty and luxury often belong to the wearer rather than the worker.

### The title “The Jewellery Maker”

The title is simple and direct, focusing attention on the maker rather than the jewellery itself, which immediately values labour, routine, and skill over wealth or appearance. It suggests the poem will centre an ordinary worker as someone worthy of attention.

The definite article “The” makes the jewellery maker feel representative, as if he stands for many unseen workers whose artistry is often taken for granted. It encourages the reader to see him as more than one individual, but a symbol of skilled labour in wider society.

#### The Jewellery Maker

By using “maker”, the title emphasises creation and craftsmanship, hinting that the poem will explore the careful process behind beauty, not just the glamorous finished product worn by others. It also makes the jewellery feel earned through effort rather than effortless luxury.



## Perspective and Tone

The Jewellery Maker is told through a **third-person narrator** who follows the craftsman closely, creating a calm, **observant perspective** that feels respectful rather than intrusive. Although the jeweller never speaks directly, the narrator moves in and out of his **inner thoughts**, revealing both his pride in his skill and the **private desires** behind his work, such as imagining how his jewellery will be worn. This gives the poem a **quiet intimacy**, as if the reader is being invited to notice the dignity and detail in an ordinary working life.

The **tone** is warm and admiring, shaped by the poem's rich **sensory description** of place and craftsmanship. It feels peaceful and almost celebratory as the jeweller's routine and artistry are described with care, but there is also a subtle edge of **tension** and sadness beneath it, especially in the contrast between his modest world and the wealth and beauty his jewellery will belong to. By the end, the **tone** becomes more reflective and slightly **melancholic**, as the poem lingers on the distance between the maker's life and the luxury he creates for others.



## The Jewellery Maker

The opening establishes steady routine, presenting work as inherited rather than chosen.

Heat suggests endurance, while blossom and bright colour introduce beauty alongside hardship. His life contains struggle and richness before he even reaches the workshop.

His upright posture and careful preparation show discipline. The surgeon simile suggests precision and control, while "neat as soldiers" adds rigidity, blending creation with quiet threat

Natural imagery makes the jewellery seem alive. Movement verbs suggest he gives metal energy through skill. The moon cycle reflects repetition and continuity, while precise detail highlights exact craftsmanship.

His wife is described plainly, contrasting with the delicate jewellery. Sun-wrinkled skin suggests labour and exposure. The worn wedding band symbolises loyalty but also limited wealth and quiet sacrifice.

The final image feels bittersweet: he "caress[es]" the metal, yet it will warm someone else's body.

Each day after sunrise he walks to the workshop-

like his father before him, and his father too –

the slap of sandalled feet on heat-baked stone,

the smell of blossom, a plate-blue sky. He greets

his neighbours with a smile. In the distance

a wild dog barks.

He sits straight-backed, lays out pointed tools

the way a surgeon might – neat as soldiers.

He likes hot metal, the smell, the way it yields

to his touch. Under deft fingers gold butterflies dance;

flowers bloom; silvery moons wax and wane,

then wax again; bright dragonflies flap two pairs of wings.

He likes the tiny loops and curls – he'd decorate

his house in this, drape his wife in fine-spun gold;

her skin wrinkled by sun, in simple cotton dress,

her only jewellery a plain gold band, worn thin.

He imagines the women who will wear

what he has made, clear-eyed, bird-boned, unlined skin

warming the metal his hands caress.

The generational reference links identity to labour and honours tradition through the deliberate pause of the hyphen.

The friendly greeting creates community warmth, while the distant barking dog hints at underlying threat and creates tension.

The sensory focus makes the work feel intimate and absorbing, as if he is drawn to its intensity. "yields" is tactile imagery, suggesting the metal softens and submits under his hands, giving him a rare sense of control and power.

The hyphen signals private longing. He imagines surrounding his own life with luxury, revealing the gap between making beauty and owning it.

The focus widens to unknown women who will wear the jewellery, highlighting inequality between his harsh world and their softness.

The ending lingers on touch, keeping the focus on the maker rather than the wearer. It suggests closeness between him and the jewellery, as if the labour leaves part of him inside what he creates.



## Structure

### Free verse

- The poem is written in **free verse** with no regular rhyme scheme or metre, which makes it feel natural and **observational**, like the reader is quietly watching the jeweller's day unfold.
- This suits the focus on **routine** and **realism**, beginning plainly with **"Each day after sunrise"**, which immediately establishes **repetition** and steadiness.

### Stanza progression

- Each stanza marks a clear stage: the walk to work and setting, the jeweller's careful process and artistry, then his private thoughts about home and the women who will wear his work.
- The poem structurally moves from public life (greeting neighbours) into private imagination, ending with **"He imagines the women who will wear"**, which **shifts focus** outward to a different world.



### Enjambment

- **Enjambment** helps the poem flow smoothly, mirroring the continuous rhythm of daily labour and the jeweller's calm concentration.
- Lines often run on through **sensory detail**, such as **"the slap of sandalled feet on heat-baked stone, / the smell of blossom"**, which creates a gentle forward movement like walking.
- The long, flowing list of what he creates (butterflies, flowers, moons, dragonflies) also uses **enjambment** to build a sense of **accumulation**, reflecting patient, ongoing craft rather than a single dramatic moment.

### Hyphens and pauses

- Parker uses **hyphens** to create controlled pauses and shifts in focus, such as **"the workshop-"** and **"the way a surgeon might – neat as soldiers"**.
- These pauses slow the reader down and make the description feel **measured**, reflecting the jeweller's careful precision and the deliberate nature of his work.

### Ending

- The poem ends by **widening** away from the workshop into the jeweller's imagination, shifting attention from making to wearing.
- Structurally, the final lines move towards a more **reflective** tone, finishing on the contrast between his labour and the life his jewellery belongs to through **"warming the metal his hands caress"**.



## Language and Imagery

### Sensory imagery

Parker uses vivid **sensory imagery** to place the jewellery maker in a world that feels physically real and richly observed. The sound in **“the slap of sandalled feet”** makes his morning walk immediate, while **“heat-baked stone”** suggests harsh conditions and endurance.

At the same time, softer images like **“the smell of blossom”** and **“a plate-blue sky”** bring calm and beauty into the scene, creating a balanced atmosphere where labour exists alongside natural richness. The sudden dog bark adds an edge of unease, hinting the calm routine sits near unpredictability.



### Precision and control

The jeweller’s craft is presented as careful and exact through **metaphor** and **simile**. His tools are arranged **“the way a surgeon might”**, which suggests precision and expertise, while **“neat as soldiers”** adds a sense of strict order and discipline. Parker’s language makes the workshop feel almost **ritual-like**, as if the maker’s control over his tools mirrors his control over the metal itself. The **tactile verb** in **“the way it yields / to his touch”** emphasises physical skill, showing the material responding to him as if it can be persuaded and shaped through experience.

### Nature and beauty

Parker repeatedly uses **natural imagery** to show how the jewellery maker turns hard metal into something light and alive. The creations seem to move through **verbs** like **“dance”** and **“bloom”**, suggesting his work **imitates** nature rather than simply copying it. The cyclical image of **“moons wax and wane”** gives the jewellery a sense of **rhythm** and time, making the pieces feel connected to the natural world’s patterns. Even the detail of **“dragonflies flap two pairs of wings”** highlights precision, showing how carefully the maker observes life and recreates it in miniature.

### Touch and distance

**Tactile imagery** makes the jeweller’s relationship with his work feel intimate, especially in **“warming the metal his hands caress”**, which suggests gentleness and pride rather than just skill. Parker then widens this closeness into imagination, as he pictures his wife and then the women who will wear what he makes, shifting from domestic tenderness to a more idealised, luxurious world. Descriptions like **“fine-spun gold”** and **“bird-boned”** emphasise delicacy and beauty, while also hinting at the distance between the maker’s working life and the wealth his jewellery will end up adorning.



## Themes

### Pride in craft

The poem presents work as a source of dignity and identity. The jeweller's careful routine and **disciplined** preparation show that his craft is not casual but skilled and precise. Comparisons to a surgeon and soldiers elevate his tools and technique, suggesting expertise and control. The **tactile** focus on metal that **"yields"** under his touch highlights the quiet power he holds in his workspace. Through this, the poem shows that craftsmanship offers meaning, pride, and a sense of mastery in a life that may otherwise offer little control.

### Tradition and inheritance

The jeweller is part of a **generational chain**, walking to work **"like his father before him."** This positions his identity within inherited labour rather than personal ambition. The steady routine and repeated cycles of creation **mirror** this sense of continuity. Craft is shown as rooted in family history and place, not temporary or accidental. The respectful **pause** in the opening reinforces the weight of this tradition, suggesting that inheritance here is not wealth but skill, discipline, and endurance.

### Beauty created from hardship

The setting combines heat, stone, and physical effort with blossom, bright skies, and delicate gold. This **contrast** shows beauty emerging directly from tough conditions. The jeweller transforms rigid metal into butterflies, flowers, and moons, suggesting creativity as an act of **transformation**. The repeated moon cycle mirrors the rhythm of daily work, emphasising **persistence** rather than glamour.



### Inequality

The poem subtly exposes the gap between maker and wearer. The jeweller's wife is described in plain, practical detail, her wedding band worn thin, while the imagined customers are delicate and **idealised**. This **contrast** highlights how luxury travels away from the labour that produces it. His hands shape and **"caress"** the metal, yet it will warm someone else's skin, leaving the ending quietly **bittersweet**.



## Comparisons

### Name Journeys – Raman Mundair

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both poems explore <b>identity</b> as something carried through everyday life, with work and language acting as markers of belonging. In <i>The Jewellery Maker</i>, the man's routine is rooted in place and <b>tradition</b> through <b>“like his father before him, and his father too”</b>, while <i>Name Journeys</i> shows identity travelling across cultures through the speaker's name and its shifting <b>pronunciation</b>.</li> <li>Both poets focus on ordinary experiences to reveal bigger ideas about culture and <b>heritage</b>. Parker makes craft feel meaningful through the jeweller's careful process, while Mundair uses the name as a <b>symbol</b> of how identity can be shaped by other people's voices and expectations.</li> <li>Both poems suggest that personal identity is connected to history and inheritance. Parker links the jeweller's life to <b>generational continuity</b>, while <i>Name Journeys</i> suggests identity is shaped by ancestry and movement across borders.</li> </ul>
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Jewellery Maker</i> centres on <b>physical labour</b> and making, presenting identity through craft and routine, while <i>Name Journeys</i> focuses more on <b>cultural displacement</b> and the emotional experience of <b>migration</b>.</li> <li>Parker's poem creates a calm, <b>observational tone</b> through steady description and <b>sensory detail</b>, while <i>Name Journeys</i> is more inward and reflective, focusing on selfhood being negotiated through language and perception.</li> <li><i>The Jewellery Maker</i> highlights inequality through the gap between maker and wearer, shown in the jeweller imagining others with <b>“unlined skin”</b>, while <i>Name Journeys</i> is more focused on the pressures of <b>assimilation</b> and how identity can be reshaped by unfamiliar environments.</li> </ul>

### A Wider View – Seni Seneviratne

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both poems celebrate working lives that are often <b>overlooked</b>, showing dignity in ordinary labour. In <i>The Jewellery Maker</i>, craft is shown through careful control and pride, while <i>A Wider View</i> presents the ancestor enduring long shifts, shown in <b>“twelve hours combing flax”</b>.</li> <li>Both poems use place and routine to connect identity to environment. Parker's jeweller is grounded in daily movement and familiar</li> </ul>
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	<p>surroundings, while Seneviratne’s speaker uses the city walk to connect past and present through shared space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both suggest imagination helps people endure <b>limitations</b>. The jeweller pictures beauty and luxury beyond his own life, while <i>A Wider View</i> shows the ancestor mentally escaping industrial hardship through <b>“the comfort of a wider view”</b>.</li> </ul>
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A Wider View</i> is shaped by time travel and <b>generational connection</b>, shifting from <b>“In eighteen sixty-nine”</b> to <b>“Today”</b>, while <i>The Jewellery Maker</i> stays in one <b>continuous present</b> moment, focusing on a single day and mindset.</li> <li>Seneviratne’s poem ends in shared stillness and connection across time, while Parker’s ending leans into longing and distance, as the maker imagines others <b>“warming the metal his hands caress”</b>.</li> <li><i>A Wider View</i> focuses on <b>industrial hardship</b> and survival in a polluted city, while <i>The Jewellery Maker</i> presents labour through beauty and precision, using natural imagery like <b>“gold butterflies dance”</b> to soften the setting.</li> </ul>

### Homing – Liz Berry

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both poems explore inheritance and identity through something <b>physical</b>: Parker uses jewellery and craft, while Berry uses accent and dialect. In <i>Homing</i>, identity is stored and <b>suppressed</b> in <b>“a box beneath the bed”</b>, while <i>The Jewellery Maker</i> shows identity expressed through skilled making and <b>repetition</b>.</li> <li>Both connect personal identity to <b>working-class roots</b> and labour. Berry links voice to industry through images like <b>“vowels ferrous as nails”</b>, while Parker shows craft as disciplined and exact through comparisons like <b>“the way a surgeon might”</b>.</li> <li>Both poems suggest that what people create or carry can <b>outlast</b> them. Berry’s speaker wants to keep a voice alive by speaking it, while Parker’s jeweller leaves traces of himself in objects that will travel into other lives.</li> </ul>
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Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Homing</i> is emotionally intense and shaped by memory and loss, while <i>The Jewellery Maker</i> is calmer and more <b>observational</b>, focusing on routine rather than grief.</li><li>• Berry presents identity as something that has been actively <b>suppressed</b> by social pressure, shown through “<i>hours of elocution</i>”, while Parker presents identity as something quietly <b>sustained</b> through tradition and craft.</li><li>• <i>Homing</i> ends with movement and release as language returns home, while <i>The Jewellery Maker</i> ends with a quieter sense of distance, as the maker’s labour is <b>separated</b> from the lives his work will belong to.</li></ul>
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