



# ONE SHEET REVISION

## 'Prayer Before Birth' by Louis MacNeice

Summarise what the poem is about in full sentences:

Annotate the poem with points you remember from your initial study:

### Prayer Before Birth

I am not yet born; O hear me.  
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the  
club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me,  
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,  
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,  
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me  
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk  
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me  
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words  
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,  
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,  
my life when they murder by means of my  
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me  
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when  
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains  
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white  
waves call me to folly and the desert calls  
me to doom and the beggar refuses  
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,  
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God  
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me  
With strength against those who would freeze my  
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,  
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with  
one face, a thing, and against all those  
who would dissipate my entirety, would  
blow me like thistledown hither and  
thither or hither and thither  
like water held in the  
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.  
Otherwise kill me.

What is the background to the writing of 'Prayer Before Birth'?

What is MacNeice's intention in writing this poem?

When was this poem written?

to inform

What event was this poem inspired by and why?

to plea

to highlight

to warn

Language		Structure and form	
	Example and effect		Example and effect
Imperative		Dramatic monologue	
Adjectives		Free verse	
Nouns		Increased stanza length	
Metaphor		Enjambment	
Alliteration		Repetition	
Assonance		Punctuation	

**What other poems in the anthology can we link to this poem to and why?**

**In what ways is the theme of religion evident in the poem 'Prayer Before Birth'?**