Carol Ann Duffy included this poem in her collection entitled *The World's Wife*. In the anthology, Duffy told the stories of the women behind some of the most famous men in the world.

In this poem, Duffy retells the story of Theseus from the Medusa’s perspective. In the myth, Medusa is a heartless, dangerous gorgon who turns men to stone. In Duffy’s poem, however, Medusa becomes something altogether more human.

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**Medusa**

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy
grew in my mind,
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes
as though my thoughts
hissed and spat on my scalp.

My bride’s breath soured, stank
in the grey bags of my lungs.
I’m foul mouthed now, foul tongued,
yellow fanged.
There are bullet tears in my eyes.
Are you terrified?

Be terrified.
It’s you I love,
perfect man, Greek God, my own;
but I know you’ll go, betray me, stray
from home.
So better by for me if you were stone.

I glanced at a buzzing bee,
a dull grey pebbly fell
to the ground.
I glanced at a singing bird,
a handful of dusty gravel
spattered down

I looked at a ginger cat,
a housebrick
shattered a bowl of milk.
I looked at a snuffling pig,
a boulder rolled
in a heap of shit.

I stared in the mirror.
Love gone bad
showed me a Gorgon.
I stared at a dragon.
Fire spewed
from the mouth of a mountain.

And here you come
with a shield for a heart
and a sword for a tongue
and your girls, your girls.
Wasn’t I beautiful
Wasn’t I fragrant and young?

Look at me now.

Carol Ann Duffy, 1999
Medusa by Carol Ann Duffy
Medusa: Monster or human?

Tasks

1. **Label** the following language features in the poem.
   
   a. triplet
   b. sibilance
   c. rhetorical questions
   d. imagery
   e. metaphor
   f. short sentence for effect
   g. repetition

2. Identify and highlight three quotations that demonstrate Medusa's jealousy.

3. The poem is written as a dramatic monologue. How does this affect our understanding of the character of Medusa?

4. In a maximum of 2 sentences **explain** what Duffy means when she uses the metaphor 'And here you come/ with a shield for a heart/ and a sword for a tongue'.

5. Is Medusa a monster or a human?
   
   a. State your point of view.
   b. Select a quotation to support your point of view and identify a language feature within it.
   c. Explain the effect the language feature has on our understanding of the poem.