

In stanzas, the first  
and second stanzas  
have



In the poem "Nostalgia" Duffy tells us about the pain of returning to a place you no longer belong, after you've been missing it so much it "made you ill". The word nostalgia comes from the word nostos meaning return and algos meaning pain, the word itself means a desire to return home or a feeling of loss involving longing for the past. The first stanza of the poem sets the scene for us and tells us what is going on.

The poem is about men who had to go off to war they were hired and paid, then had to leave their homes in the mountains and go down to the flat grounds of the land below. The speaker of the poem isn't involved in what is going on as it is written in the third person. The poem has 3 stanzas, the first and second stanzas have 9 lines but the final stanza has 10. Duffy says "down, down" which suggests that the men were falling down the mountain rather than marching down it, it also emphasizes how far they had to travel. After this Duffy then repeats the word "wrong" suggesting that everything about this new and unfamiliar place is wrong, "... the wrong taste... the wrong sounds, / the wrong smells, / the wrong light, every breath-/ wrong."

This suggests that everything the men did felt wrong or perhaps just different but they didn't like it, even breathing the most important thing in life seemed wrong, as if the air was somehow poisonous this is emphasized as Duffy repeats the constantly in this section of the poem. She also tells us that the men were given raw simple coins which they were all biting to make sure they were real.

Then she tells us the men started to have aches and pains, "they pined, wept, grown men." The men were calling for the doctor as they didn't

understand what was wrong with them; it didn't have a name so people feared the "illness" and the physical effect that it appeared to have on the men. In the next stanza Duffy refers to the illness as "it" this could possibly be the way people described it as they didn't understand the illness, but Duffy then tells us "It was given a name." so someone somewhere decided that it should be given a proper name. "hearing tell of it / there were those who stayed put," this could mean that people didn't want to move away from the places they loved encase they got this illness or it could mean that some other group of men refused to join the war and also it could mean that people stayed away from the men as they were afraid it was contagious.

The men missed their homes greatly while they were away, but it hurt them to think of the homes, friends and family that they had left behind even though the memories were pleasant Duffy describes this very by saying "sweet pain in the heart;". The rest of this stanza tells us about the sadness the men feel and the happy memories of home; however it could also be the things the people who had kept their distance due to hearing of it thought they should feel if they were experiencing it.

Duffy then tells us that if you didn't know what the word love meant how could you experience it? Then Duffy gives us examples of people trying to relive or expand their past, this now brings in the theme of time making this illness incurable as you can not control time, she does this by saying "through the colour of leaves," which can also refer to autumn when the leaves change colour but then die. The last part of the final stanza describes one of the mercenaries from the beginning of the poem who has now returned home.

This should cure his illness but now as time plays a part it doesn't work the physical aspects of the town are the same, but while you were away time has moved on although Duffy using spring which normally a new start and happy it is not that case in this particular poem. Also with Time there is no possibility of return, things changes, even without the action of one person. Both these poems deal with the theme of nostalgia, missing a past time or place and they both long for " their country" in a sense.