

The Enemies

Elizabeth Jennings

1955

Read the poem

- First read **silently** to yourself
- Then read the poem **aloud around the class**, stopping at each punctuation mark.
- Notice where the **pauses** are, and where the **pace** changes.

First impressions

Share your first responses to the
poem.



The Enemies

- Last night they came across the river and
Entered the city. Women were awake
With lights and food. They entertained the band,
Not asking what the men had come to take
Or what strange tongue they spoke
Or why they came so suddenly through the land

-
- Now in the morning all the town is filled
With stories of the swift and dark invasion;
The women say that not one stranger told
A reason for his coming. The intrusion
Was not for devastation:
Peace is apparent still on hearth and field.

-
- Yet all the city is a haunted place.

Man meeting man speaks cautiously. Old friends
Close up the candid looks upon their face.

There is no warmth in hands accepting hands;

Each ponders, 'Better hide myself in case

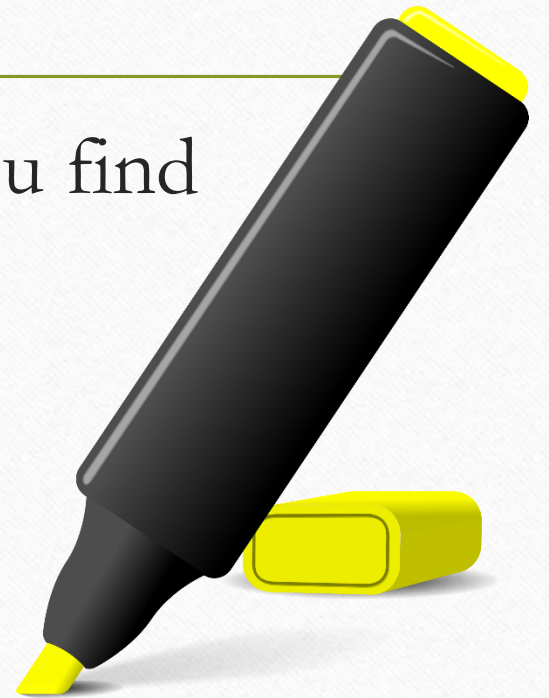
Those strangers have set up their homes in minds

I used to walk in. Better draw the blinds

Even if the strangers haunt in my own house'.

Delving deeper

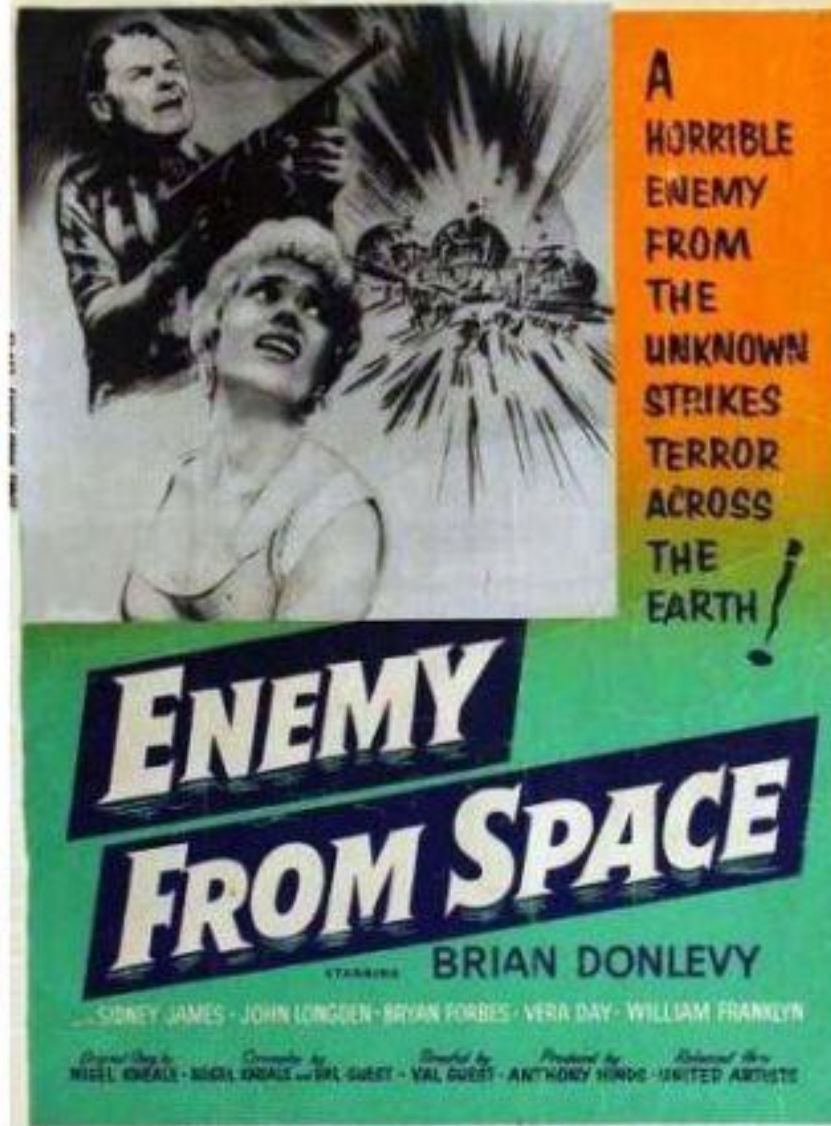
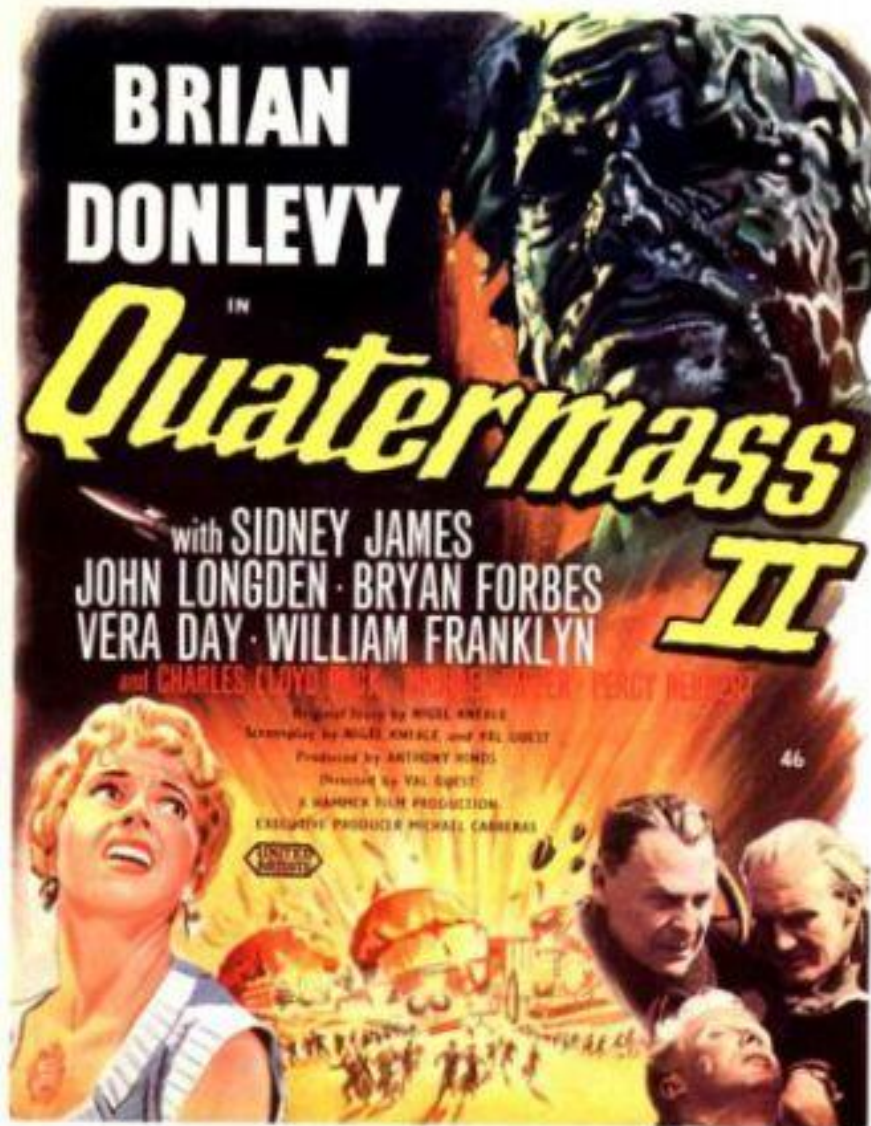
- Read the poem again, annotating anything you find
- Interesting
- Puzzling
- Incomprehensible
- Share with your neighbour



Exploring themes

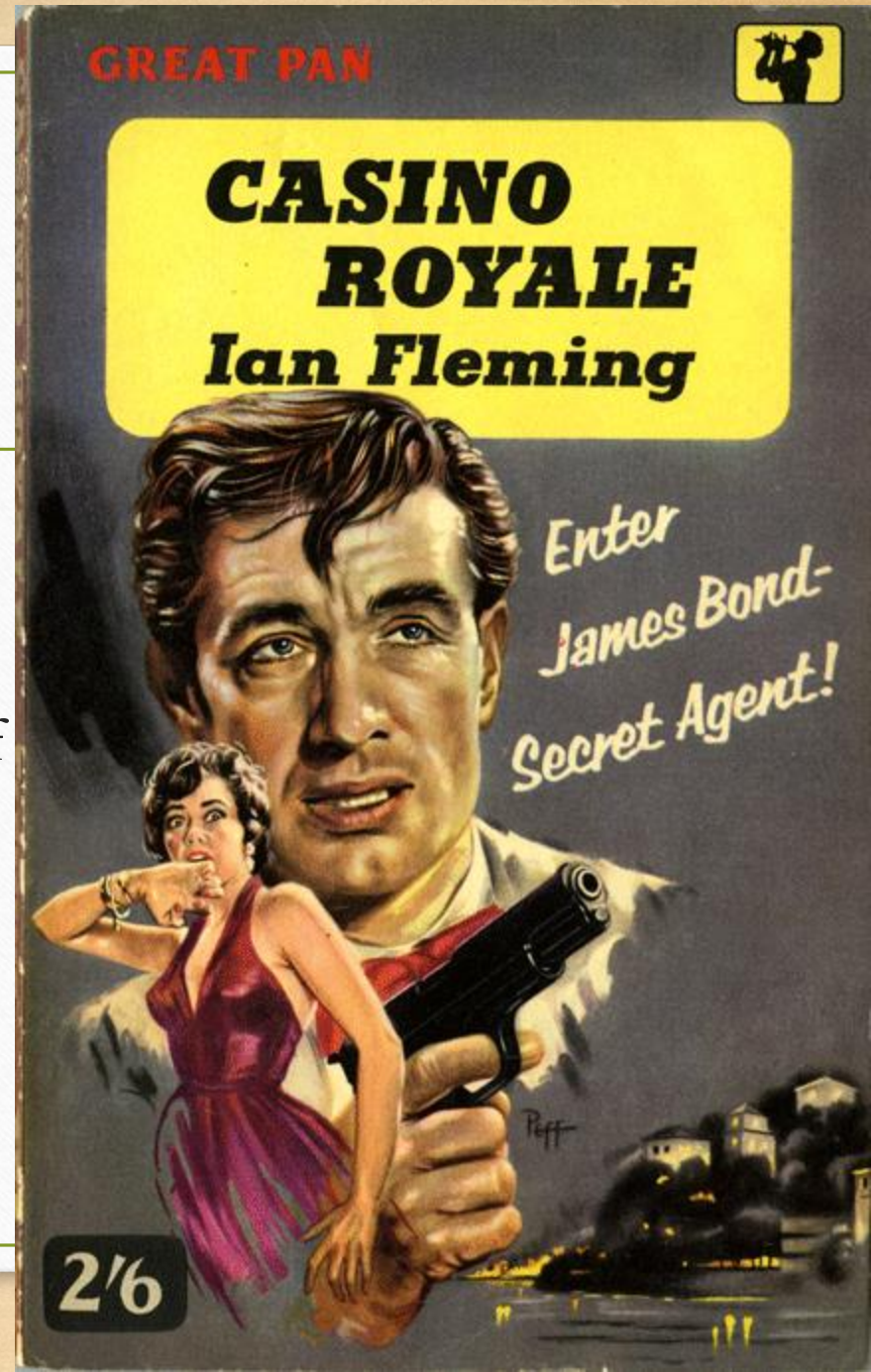
- Watch the following videos and note down themes that characterise the 1950s
- How do you think these relate to the title?

Sci-Fi: Fears in the Fifties

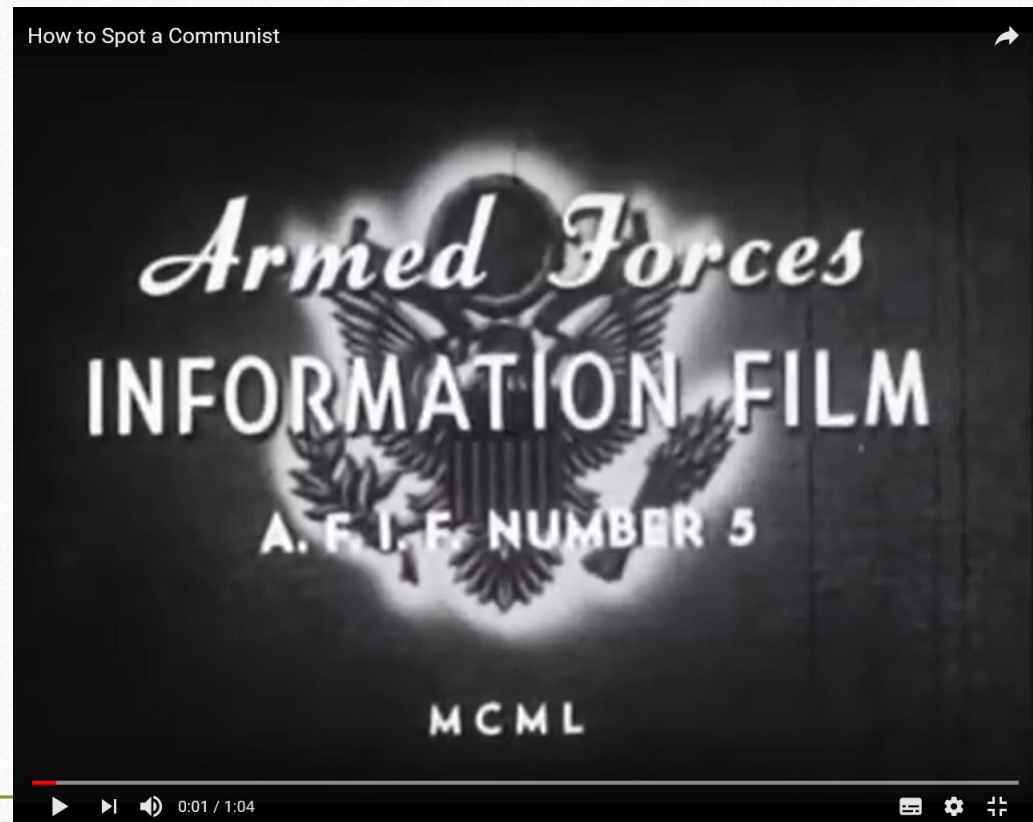


It's a Deadly world
...with Deadly enemies!

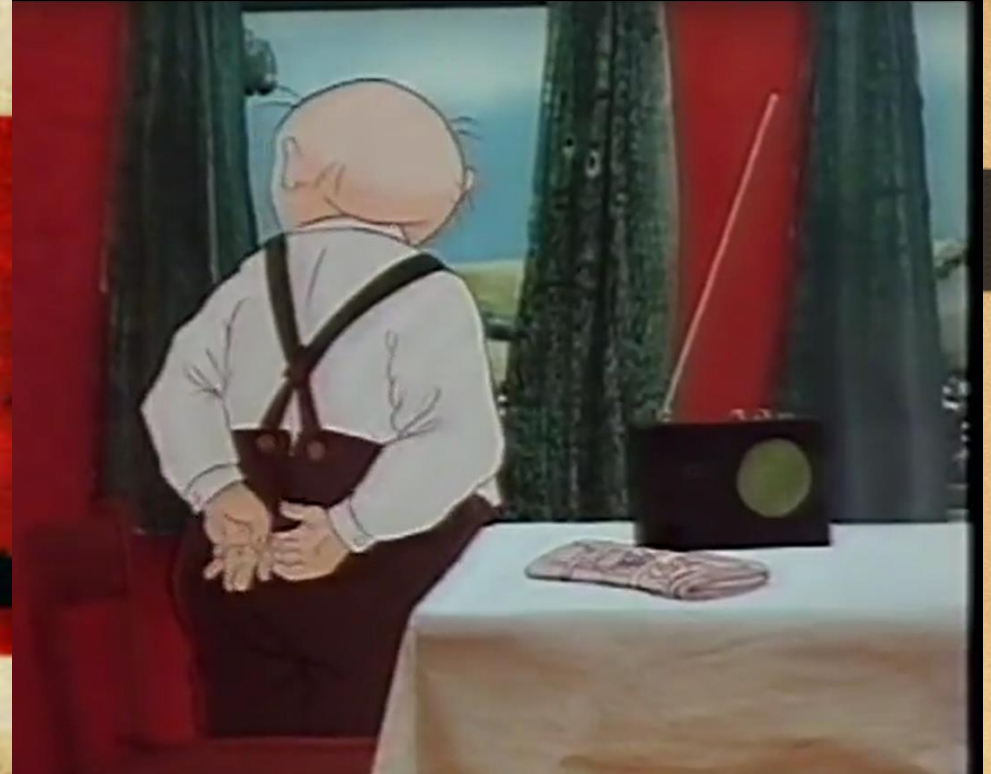
- Watch the James Bond Trailer: 1954
- What made this so popular? What kinds of Enemies feature in the Ian Fleming's work?
Why?



Fear of Communism



The nuclear Threat



Threat to the hearth and home



Analytical tasks: in small groups explore the link with the theme of fear in the following devices:

- a) Pronouns and subjects
- b) Form, rhyme scheme and meter
- c) Structure and contrasts
- d) Settings and Imagery
- e) Diction (choice of words) and Title



The Enemies

- Last night **they** came across the river and
Entered the city. **Women** were awake
With lights and food. **They** entertained the band,
Not asking what the **men** had come to take
Or what strange tongue **they** spoke
Or why **they** came so suddenly through the land

Look
carefully at
subjects and
pronouns:
What do you
notice?

Rhyme: The
rhyme scheme
follows loose
rhyme ababba:
What is the
effect of this
form?



- Now in the morning **all the town** is filled
With stories of the swift and dark invasion;
The women say that **not one stranger** told
A reason for **his** coming. The intrusion
Was not for devastation:
Peace is apparent still on **hearth** and field.

The poem is
syllabic:each
stanza follows
the pattern:
10/10/10/10/6
/11: effect?

:Notice the
contrast between
the latinate words
and the
Anglosaxon words:
effect?

The final stanza is an Octave,
while the first two are Sestets- is
she playing with the Petrarchan
sonnet form- upside down?

- Yet **all the city** is a haunted place.

Man meeting man speaks cautiously. Old friend
Close up the candid looks upon their face.

There is no warmth in hands accepting hands;

Each ponders, 'Better hide myself in case

Those strangers have set up their homes in minds

I used to walk in. Better draw the blinds

Even if **the strangers haunt in my own house**'.



The rhyme
scheme here
changes to
abababb
With the last line
c stands out: why?

Interpretations

- Who are the enemies in the poem?
- Women? Feminists?
- Windrush immigrants? Or Refugees after WWII? Immigrants in general?
- A generic fear of change?

- Find evidence to support these interpretations

Your turn!

- Make a video trailer using the poem.
- Be creative!
- In your video, try to bring out the themes in the poem.

Elizabeth Jennings

1926-2001

- Born in Boston, Lincolnshire: UK
- Moved to Oxford aged 6
- Spent the rest of her life in Oxford
- Worked briefly in advertising and publishing in London
- Initially linked to The Movement with Larkin and Amis
- Catholicism

