**‘Death of a Teacher’ – Carol Ann Duffy**

The big trees outside are into their poker game again,  
shuffling and dealing, turning, folding, their leaves

drifting down to the lawn, floating away, ace high,  
on a breeze. You died yesterday.

When I heard the hour – home time, last bell,  
late afternoon – I closed my eyes. English, of course,

three decades back, and me thirteen. You sat on your desk,  
swinging your legs, reading a poem by Yeats

to the bored girls, except my heart stumbled and blushed  
as it fell in love with the words and I saw the tree

in the scratched old desk under my hands, heard the bird  
in the oak outside scribble itself on the air. We were truly there,

present, Miss, or later the smoke from your black cigarette  
braided itself with lines from Keats. Teaching

is endless love; the poems by heart, spells, the lists  
lovely on the learning tongue, the lessons, just as you said,

for life. Under the gambling trees, the gold light thins and burns,  
the edge of a page of a book, precious, waiting to be turned.