

## The Choice

**Task 1a: Read the following poem, which was written about Roger Casement in 1919 by Dora Sigerson Shorter. Pay special attention to the first line of each stanza.**

[1] THIS Consul Casement – he who heard the  
cry  
Of stricken<sup>1</sup> people – and who in his fight  
To lift the torture load from broken men,  
[5] And shield sad women from eternal night,  
Went through lone, hot and fevered foreign  
lands.

For doomèd Casement, slaves that he raised up  
Pray with strong voices, so a wide world hears.  
[10] Men saved from anguish<sup>2</sup>, women saved from  
shame,  
He dried your children’s tears!  
He gave you life – for him lift pleading<sup>3</sup> hands.

Sir Roger Casement, honoured for his years  
[15] Of stress and struggle, of fatigue and work,  
What is the claim of his frail human needs  
For arduous<sup>4</sup> hours he did not shun<sup>5</sup> nor shirk<sup>6</sup>,  
A King’s reward, a royal friendliness!

For honoured Casement titles and renown,  
[20] A future great with promise, all life’s page  
Writ in gold letters, and a path so soft  
One could not hear the coming of old age  
To point an honoured tomb<sup>7</sup> that nations bless.

Ah! Irish Casement, in the roar of war  
[25] That stung his blood and whipped his manhood’s  
fire.  
What did he hear upon red shaken earth,  
Where little nations struggle and expire?  
Some banshee cry upon the hot wind thrills!

### Structure of a poem

“[P]oetry is set out on the page in **lines** (dt.: Verse) whose length is decided by the author (Furniss and Bath 14). These lines are organized into groups, which are called **stanzas** (dt.: Strophe).

### Banshee

In Irish and Scottish folklore, a banshee is a female spirit, whose cries and screams are only heard by someone who will soon die.



Image 7. Banshee (Banshee)

<sup>1</sup> angeschlagen

<sup>2</sup> Qual

<sup>3</sup> flehentlich

<sup>4</sup> mühselig

<sup>5</sup> meiden

<sup>6</sup> sich vor etw. drücken

<sup>7</sup> Grab

[30] And Roger Casement – he who freed the slave,  
 Made sad babes smile and tortured women hope,  
 Flung all aside, King’s honours and great years,  
 To take for finis here a hempen<sup>8</sup> rope,  
 And banshee cries upon far Irish hills.

**Task 1b: What names are given to Roger Casement in the first line of each stanza? Write down the names on the lines below.**

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**Task 1c: In what way do these words describe Roger Casement? Place them in one of the three columns.**

Neutral description	Formal description	Emotional description

**Task 1d: There are further descriptions of Roger Casement: Place them in the right column of the above table.**

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Roddie, his pet name (Ó Síocháin 5)</li> <li>(2) cousin</li> <li>(3) diplomat</li> <li>(4) traveler</li> <li>(5) nationalist</li> <li>(6) orphan</li> <li>(7) traitor</li> </ul> |
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<sup>8</sup> hanfen