

## The Will to Live

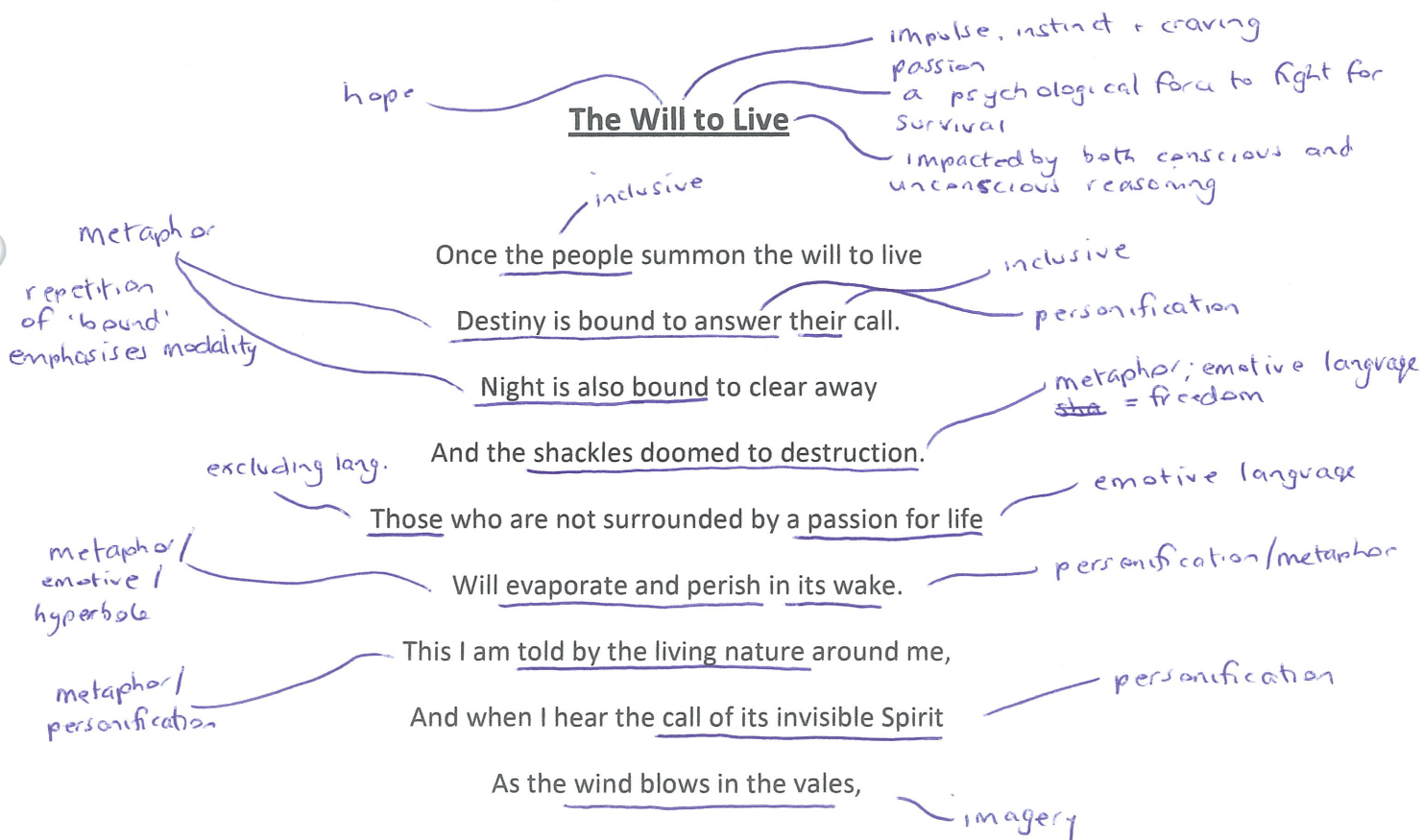
### Abu Al-Qassem Al-Shabi

Ghayth Armanazi, Syrian diplomat and writer, provides an urgent and timely translated extract from the iconic Arabic poem 'The Will to Live', which is also known widely as the 'Marseillaise' of Tunis. He writes:

Abu Al-Qassem Al-Shabi's poem became the rallying call for the Tunisian Revolution. It is galvanising street protests everywhere and spreading with new vitality throughout the Arab world.

Al-Shabi was born in Tunisia in 1909 and, because of persistent ill-health, died at a very young age in 1934. He left a substantial poetic legacy, often giving vent to a romanticism and almost Rousseau-like passion for nature. He was also an early twentieth-century champion of his country's independence and of the 'people's' struggle against tyrannical rule everywhere. This poem is his most famous, and generations of Arab students in the thirties, forties and onwards memorised its powerful, stirring words as they sought the freedoms they were being denied by colonial regimes.

Now these verses have come full circle to inspire a new generation struggling against repression from 'within' a post-independence Arab state system.



Over the mountains and through the trees –

imagery

Should I be called to a high purpose

metaphor /  
emotive lang.

I shall ride the waves of hope and dismiss all trepidation.

emotive language / fear

For he who desires not the ascendancy of mountains

emotive;  
link to passion / desire

imagery; higher purpose

Shall live ever after between the crevices.

metaphor; will not achieve  
success

In my heart erupts the blood of youth

metaphor / hyperbole

And in my breast a raging wind,

metaphor / emotive

As I listen to the bursts of thunder

imagery; synaesthesia of  
aural and visual

And the rhythmic tune of storm and rain.

imagery

The Earth replied when I asked: do you hate humanity?

emotive language

I bless among people the champions of ambition

emotive language  
metaphor

reference to  
spirituality,  
religion?

Who find pleasure in riding the storm

metaphor, imagery

And I curse those overtaken by the charge of time –

metaphor

emotive

Submitting to a life quiescent as a stone.

simile; imagery.  
quiet surrender of no  
passion for life.

contrast

Alive is the Universe with its Love for Life.

metaphor  
personification

emotive,  
emphasis by use of  
capitals.