

# 12

English  
Home Language

CAPS

## Prescribed Poetry

X-kit

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LITERATURE STUDY GUIDE

- ★ Aligned to the latest Exam Guidelines and CAPS
- ★ Developed by experienced teachers



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### Explanations of words

**lead** – a heavy metal

**toll** – the sound a bell makes

**solitary** – alone

**plank** – a piece of wood, part of the floor

**plunge** – a sudden, quick fall

And then I heard them lift a Box  
And creak across my Soul 10  
With those same Boots of Lead, again,  
Then Space – began to toll,

As all the heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race 15  
Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down –  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing – then – 20

## Before you begin to read

- First read the information about the poet. This information tells you about the kind of world the poet was writing in; the politics and values of the poet's time and place. It will give you a context to help you understand the poem. For example, a poet writing during the time of apartheid might write about experiences of injustice. The background information will also tell you something about the ideas and issues that gripped the poet, for example a very religious poet will write about people and their relationship to God.

### Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

Emily Dickinson was an American poet whose very modern, unique poetry was initially censored and only published in its original form nearly 70 years after her death. She grew up in an intellectual family and received a good early education. She completed just one year at the Amherst Academy, leaving when she was 16. She found the routine of domestic life and work terribly boring and challenged conventional ideas about women's roles and marriage. She lived her whole life in her parents' home and as an adult went out less and less, until eventually she never left her room. After she died, her family discovered nearly 2 000 poems in her room, most of them untitled. She is one of America's most important poets and she has influenced and inspired many later great poets. Her poetry is characterised by its economy (using few words to say a great deal), and an original use of punctuation, as well as by her fascination with death.

- Next, read the title of the poem. The title will give you an idea of what the poem is about.
- Look at the way the words are set out on the page. Notice line lengths, stanzas and the placement of the words in the lines.
- Think about funerals and the kind of music you would hear in a funeral march.

## Read the whole text through

- Read the poem aloud, or listen to someone read the poem aloud, to get a sense of the sounds of the poem. Reading aloud will also help you to work out how the poet has arranged her ideas, where lines flow on (**enjambment**) and where there is a pause or break at the end of a line.



- ▮ You can read the poem through a few times, to get a sense of what the poem is about and how the poet has built the form and structure of the poem.
- ▮ As you read, ask yourself these questions:
  1. What words does the poet use to refer to a funeral?
  2. Is the poet referring to an actual funeral?
  3. What could the idea of the funeral refer to?
  4. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
  5. What two things do you notice about the punctuation?
  6. What effect does the repetition in the first two stanzas have on the rhythm and sound of the poem?

## Close reading

When you do a close reading, you examine the form and structure of the poem, the word choices (diction), figures of speech, sound devices, tone and mood of the poem. In this poem, notice the following:

### Form and structure

Poets have a lot of freedom in how they organise words on a page. They can divide a poem into stanzas and choose any number of lines for each **stanza**. They can write in **free verse** (without a fixed structure or rhyming pattern) to create a more conversational effect. They can vary the length of the lines, or use the same number of syllables in each line to create a steady rhythm. They can use traditional forms of poetry that have rules about how the lines and rhyme scheme must be structured.

All of these choices contribute to the overall meaning and effect of the poem. In this poem, Dickinson has used five **quatrains** (each stanza has four lines) and a rhyme scheme to create order in the poem and show the relentless march of the funeral. But the uneven sentence structure reflects the mood of the speaker, who is uneasy and disturbed.

### Diction

Poets must use just a few words to capture an experience, an idea or a profound understanding or insight. So the **diction** (choice of words) is very important – each word counts. Dickinson was a particularly economical poet. When you analyse her poetry, pay careful attention to the words and what they convey. Ask yourself:

1. What tone or mood do words like “funeral”, “mourners” and “box” create?
2. What do the words “numb” and “wrecked” tell us about how the speaker feels?
3. What words are repeated to emphasise the noise and confusion in her brain?

Linked to the diction is the poet’s particular use of punctuation:

1. All the nouns have capital letters, which emphasise their importance.  
Why do you think the poet chose to do that?
2. The poet used dashes extensively, which have the effect of breaking up the lines. What do the dashes tell us about the speaker’s state of mind?
3. The poem ends with a dash, leaving the reader unsure of the poet’s meaning.

### Imagery

An **extended metaphor** is one long comparison that the poet uses throughout the poem. An extended metaphor provides unity to the poem. In this poem, the poet uses the extended metaphor of a funeral to create a comparison with her feelings of dread and her separation from others.

- ▶ The speaker says she is an “Ear”, which emphasises her sensitivity to sound.
- ▶ The speaker says she is a “strange Race”, which emphasises her aloneness.
- ▶ She says “a Plank in Reason broke”, which compares reason to a solid house made of wooden planks. The break indicates how she has lost control.
- ▶ The image of the heavy “Boots of Lead” which “creak across my Soul” emphasises her sense of being squashed and oppressed.
- ▶ In line 12, the poet compares the speaker’s world to a bell: “Then Space – began to toll”. This continues the idea of a funeral service, with church bells ringing, and also suggests that her soul is a large, empty space. The metaphor of a bell is extended into the next stanza: “As all the heavens were a Bell”.

### Sound devices

Because reading poetry is partly an aural experience, we need to examine the sounds of the poem and the use of devices such as **rhyme**, **rhythm** and **repetition**. The poet’s use of repetition to create rhythm, and to suggest the impact sound has on the speaker’s brain are a strong feature of this poem.

1. Notice the repetition of “treading” in stanza 1 and “beating” in stanza 2. This describes the pounding in her head and her feeling of anxiety.
2. Notice the rhyme that the poet uses in lines 2 and 4 of each stanza. The rhyme is not always consistent – see stanza 1 (which has a **half-rhyme** in “fro” and “through”) and stanza 5. This break in the rhyme scheme reflects the disorder in the speaker’s brain.

### Tone and mood

Dickinson’s preoccupation with death and her sense of isolation from the world and from other people affect the **tone** of her poetry. Because the main metaphor is a comparison with a funeral, this creates a sombre (depressing or gloomy) tone. The speaker’s feelings of anxiety, the pounding in her head and the constant, relentless movement of the funeral, create an unsettled, uncertain **mood**.

### Understand the overall meaning of the poem

Once you have done a close reading of a poem you are ready to step back from the detail and think about the overall message. Here are some questions you can ask:

1. What is the poet trying to say about the speaker’s experience?
2. What observation about the world has the poet made?
3. What message is the poet sending us?

Emily Dickinson is a famously enigmatic poet: the meaning of her poetry is often obscure and mysterious. This poem is a good example because we can’t be absolutely sure what the speaker means in the last line. After this experience, has she reached some understanding (“Finished knowing”), and can now move on? Or is she unsure of what it is she has come to know? Does it mean she stopped knowing anything as she fell into unconsciousness, or does the final word, “then” tell us she suddenly became aware of something else entirely? What do you think?

In the exam you will get a question that asks for your opinion. You will need to consider what you have learnt from the close reading of the poem and what you know about the poet, to build your personal response to the meaning of the poem.



## Part

# 2 Explore the poems

### Remember – Christina Rossetti

#### Explanations of words

**corruption** – in this context “corruption” refers to the decay of the body after death

**counsel** – to give advice

**grieve** – feel sad

**vestige** – the last trace left behind

Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you planned:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve: 10  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

#### Christina Rossetti, 1830–1894

Christina Rossetti is considered one of the best English poets of her time. She was the youngest child in a family of very talented artists and writers. During her lifetime, women didn't have the vote and weren't allowed to own property. Very few were allowed to study at university. Rossetti was taught by her mother, at home. She wrote her first poem when she was 11 years old and her first published poem appeared in a national publication when she was 17. She soon became widely recognised and her work was published in many literary journals, as well as in feminist magazines. Rossetti was a devout Christian and much of her work was influenced by her faith. In addition to her writing, she did charity work and spoke out against social injustices, including slavery, imperialism and the use of animals in experiments. She received two marriage proposals but rejected both, because of her faith. She was ill for long periods and died of breast cancer. Her work has influenced many writers, including Gerard Manley Hopkins. The poem you will study, like many of Rossetti's other poems, deals with loss and death.

#### Summary

The speaker is talking to the one she loves, and asking them to remember her after she dies. She points out that in her absence, they will no longer be able to touch her, or give her advice, or plan their future together – remembering will be all that is left to her beloved. At the end of the poem, however, she tells them that her greatest wish is for their happiness – so they should not feel guilty if they find that they forget about her sometimes. Although she wants her loved one to remember her, she would not like their memories to make them unhappy.

#### Discussion

##### Title

The title, “Remember”, sums up in a single word the command or instruction that the speaker is giving to her loved one.

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#### Discussion

##### Title

The title, “Remember”, sums up in a single word the command or instruction that the speaker is giving to her loved one.



### Type and form

The poem is written in the form of an Italian (or Petrarchan) **sonnet**, with the 14 lines divided into:

- the **octave** – lines 1–8 (Remember that an octopus has eight legs!)
- the **sestet** – lines 9–14, the last six lines of the poem. Like most Italian sonnets, a change takes place between the octave and the sestet. (This is discussed in more detail in the section on tone.) The rhyme scheme of the octave follows the traditional pattern of *abbaabba*. In the sestet the pattern is a little less regular – *cddece* – rather than the more common *cdcdcd*.
- The **metre**, or **rhythm**, of the poem is **iambic pentameter**. This means that each line has five pairs of syllables, and one of each pair is stressed – usually the second one. In line 1, for example, we read “Re-mem/ber me/when I/am gone/a-way”.

### Theme

The poem is about the importance of remembering, but also the importance of letting go of memories that cause pain. Someone who loves another will want to be remembered, but will also not want those memories to cause unhappiness to the loved one. “Remember” also shows the poet’s struggle to understand and come to terms with the unavoidable transition between life and death – between our physical existence and the crossing-over into the unknown.

### Imagery

There are two contrasting groups of imagery in the poem. The first group of images is about death. These images emphasise the unknown quality of death – we can only describe it in terms of silence and darkness:

- “the silent land” (line 2) which is “far away”
- “the darkness and corruption” of death (line 11) which may, or may not, allow any “vestige” of her to remain (line 12)

The second group of images is about life. These are simple, everyday experiences but they express what someone might miss most about a loved one who has died:

- physical contact: “hold me by the hand” (line 3)
- making decisions: “half turn ... turning stay” (line 4)
- the discussions she had with her beloved: “tell me ... you planned” (line 6)
- the comfort they could bring each other: “to counsel ... or pray” (line 8)

The image of “turning” creates a unity between these two ideas of life and death:

- In line 4 the speaker describes how she would sometimes begin to turn away from her loved one, to go somewhere, and then decide she would rather stay with him, and turn back again: “I half turn to go yet turning stay.”
- In contrast to this **literal** image of turning away, death can be seen as a figurative “turning-away” from life and the living.
- Remembering those who have died could be a way of allowing them to “stay” in some way, whereas “turning” might represent forgetting.

### Diction

- Most of the words used by the speaker are simple and easy to understand, showing that this is almost like a conversation that she is having with a loved one. The simple words emphasise that it is the little, uncomplicated events, such as holding hands or making plans together, that make a relationship

strong and pleasurable. These are also the things that will be missed after one partner dies.

- The words she uses to describe death are also simple, such as “far away” and “silent land” (line 2). The speaker is trying to express in an uncomplicated way something that is impossible to fully understand.
- The words she uses that have negative **connotations** are “darkness” and “corruption” in line 11. Here she refers only to the physical side of death; the death and decay of the body.

### Tone

The following table illustrates the slight change in the tone of the poem from the octave to the sestet:

	Differences	Similarities
<b>Octave</b>	The tone of the octave is slightly more urgent than the sestet: In line 1 the speaker gives a clear, firm instruction to her loved one – “Remember me”. The poet uses repetition in lines 5 and 7 to emphasise its importance. The phrase “gone away” is also repeated (lines 1 and 2) as well as “no more” (lines 3 and 5). This repetition suggests an underlying grief at the thought of losing her life and her loved one.	Throughout the poem the tone is fairly calm and controlled. The speaker seems thoughtful, contemplating her own death without any expressions of panic or horror.
<b>Sestet</b>	In the sestet the speaker’s attention turns away from herself and focuses instead on her loved one. She realises that some forgetting is inevitable (“Yet if ... afterwards remember”, lines 9–10) and that she would not want him to suffer feelings of guilt about this (“do not grieve”). The last two lines of the poem reinforce this idea. She decides that if there should be any part of her consciousness that somehow remained after death – “A vestige ... I had” (line 12) it would definitely be “better by far” that he should be happy. She does not want memories of her to make him miserable. The tone is therefore more resigned and gentle, without the urgency we see in the octave.	

### Important points

Form: Italian/Petrarchan sonnet (14 lines)	Content and poetic devices
Octave rhyme scheme: abba, abba	The speaker tells her loved one to remember her after she is dead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetition of key phrases: “remember me”; “gone away”; “no more”</li> <li>• Metaphor: death is compared to a “silent land”</li> <li>• Tone is rather urgent and there is an underlying fear at the idea of being forgotten.</li> </ul>
Sestet rhyme scheme: cddece	She decides that if he does forget her, he should not feel guilty or sad; she would rather he forgot her than remember her and be miserable. Her change of attitude is signalled by the word, “Yet” at the beginning of the sestet.



## Test yourself

### Questions

1. Describe in your own words how the speaker portrays death in the poem. (2)  
*(Find the answers in the poem and explain them in your own words.)*
2. What impression are we given of the speaker's relationship with the person she is addressing in the first eight lines of the poem? Quote from the poem to support your answer. (3)  
*(Examine the way she describes their relationship. Look at the words she uses – are they positive or negative? What activities does she mention them doing together? Give your opinion and quote the word or phrase that you base your answer on.)*
3. Discuss the effect of the repetition used in lines 1–8. (2)  
*(Repetition is used to emphasise something. Look at what is being emphasised and work out why the poet would want to emphasise that particular aspect.)*
4. What kind of change in attitude is introduced by the word "Yet" at the beginning of line 9? (3)  
*(Identify and explain the differences between what the speaker is saying in lines 1–8, and lines 9–14. This is a 3-mark question so explain in detail. Support your statements with words and phrases from the poem.)*
5. Explain in your own words what the speaker means in lines 11–12. (2)  
*(You must read lines 11–12 and explain them in a way that shows you understand what she means.)*
6. Do you think the last two lines of the poem provide an effective summary of the message the speaker wants to convey? Justify your answer with reference to the text. (3)  
*(Give your own opinion BUT support it with evidence from the poem. Here, you could explain briefly what the last two lines are saying, and then quote words or phrases from the last two lines that convey that message clearly.)*

### Essay question

In "Remember", the speaker explores the opposing ideas of 'remembering' and 'forgetting' the dead.

By close reference to the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** of the poem, critically discuss the above statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

The following points are a guideline for structuring your essay. You may have other points which could also be valid.

- **Introductory paragraph:** "Critically discuss" means you have to evaluate the statement, so introduce your essay by setting out your ideas about what the speaker is saying and whether the above statement is accurate.
- **Body – Paragraph 1:** In this paragraph, discuss the words (diction) the speaker uses. Show whether her word choice supports the statement or not.
- **Body – Paragraph 2:** Here you can examine the images the speaker uses. Explain how they explore both of the opposing ideas.
- **Body – Paragraph 3:** Discuss the tone of the poem. Does the speaker show positive or negative feelings about "remembering" or "forgetting"?
- **Conclusion:** Give a brief summary of your arguments to show whether you think the statement is valid.

## First Day after the War – Mazisi Kunene

### Explanations of words

**coiling** – wrapping around, like a metal spring or a snake

**ululating** – a high-pitched cry; in this context it is for joy

### Mazisi Kunene, 1930–2006

Mazisi Raymond Fakazi Mngoni Kunene was one of South Africa's greatest intellectuals. He was a poet, historian, and professor of African Literature. Kunene was born in Durban and grew up in the village of Amahlongwa, south of the city. He wrote poetry at a young age and his first poems were published when he was 11 years old. He qualified as a teacher and obtained a Master's Degree at Natal University. As apartheid intensified, Kunene went into exile in 1959, first to Lesotho and later to Britain where he studied at London University. He was a founder member of the Anti-Apartheid movement in Britain and represented the African National Congress in Britain and Europe. In 1966, the apartheid government banned his work in South Africa. In 1975, he moved to the University of California where he later became Professor of African Literature. Kunene was inspired by the history of the African people and their struggle for freedom. His work is influenced by the oral traditions of African literature and he drew on Zulu culture and mythology. He wrote his poetry in Zulu and translated it into English. His most famous work is the 1700-line long poem, "Emperor Shaka the Great". Kunene returned to South Africa in 1992 and in 1993 was appointed the **Poet Laureate** of Africa, by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). In 2005, he was appointed the first Poet Laureate of South Africa.

### Summary

Kunene wrote this poem during his time in exile from South Africa, some years before the end of apartheid. In the poem the poet creates a vision of the day after the end of apartheid. The speaker describes the joy and jubilation as people come together to celebrate freedom. The poem ends with a powerful reminder of history and the need to look backwards and take direction from the ancestors, before moving forward into the future.

### Discussion

#### Title

The title indicates a sense of a new beginning, with the words "First Day". It signals hope and change after the suffering and struggle of war.

#### Type and form

Kunene's work was inspired and influenced by African cultural traditions, including the oral tradition of storytelling:

- The poem is written in **free verse**, with run-on lines (**enjambment**) that create the sense of a story being told.
- Even though this poem is a vision for the future, it is told in the past tense, reinforcing a storytelling form. In telling the story, the poet appeals to our sense of hearing: "the songs" in line 1, "ululating" in line 10 and the people who "shouted" in line 15.
- The poet uses two lines of dialogue (lines 7 and 8). Dialogue is also used in African oral storytelling traditions.
- The poem is paced like a story, with a slow beginning, building up to a climax, and ending with a concluding message.



### Theme

- This poem is about renewal – it is a message of hope to people who have suffered and struggled, announcing a new beginning that will bring joy and peace.
- The last line of the poem is significant, because it refers to the ancestors, who symbolise the past and the community's roots. "We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon" suggests that the people who are struggling for freedom must take direction from the past, as they build something new.

### Imagery and sound devices

- The poet draws on images from the natural world: "a soft light", "young blades of grass", "the mountains and the pathways", the "first fruits of the season", "waterfalls", the "horizon". These images remind people of their links to nature and their rootedness in the land.
- The images of new growth in nature: "young blades of grass" (line 3) and "the first fruits of the season" (line 13), symbolise the newness of peace and the optimistic vision of peace as something that will grow and flourish.
- The **metaphor** in lines 2 and 3, "a soft light coiling ..." is an interesting **juxtaposition** of the softness of the light with the tightness or sinewy strength of a coiling spring or a snake. This comparison suggests the strength and power of the poet's vision for the future.
- In lines 4 to 7, freedom is **personified** as a woman. This suggests the nurturing nature of freedom, which is associated with women, in contrast to the aggression of war, which is associated with men.
- The **alliteration** in line 18, in "travelling tall" creates a rhythm and liveliness that is a reminder of the importance of the ancestors.

### Diction

- The poet chooses several words that create the joyous noise of celebrations: "songs", "ululating", "calling", "shouted".
- The poet brings to mind a post-war world that is majestic and that embraces all nature and countries on earth in the words "mountains", "all the circles of the earth", "waterfalls" and "travelling tall on the horizon".
- There is a strong sense of movement in the poem. First there is a gentle start, in which the people are passive receivers of the good news, when they "heard" and "saw" in lines 1 and 2. This is followed by the slow movement of the "coiling" light, and the small uncertainty when they "hesitated" in line 4. Then the **pace** picks up dramatically in line 9 when the people, "without waiting", "ran". They became impatient for freedom when they "shook up" the man, "demanding a festival". Then the pace is calmer, from line 13, as the people "asked" and "held hands" in line 14, which leads to the arrival of "the first day of peace" in line 17.
- The poet creates a vision of the future that is inclusive, generous and embraces everyone, for example in line 14: "we held hands with a stranger" and line 16, "people came from all lands".

### Tone and mood

The tone of this poem is upbeat and it creates a mood of excitement and jubilation.

- In the first few lines, the people hear and see the first suggestions of a new beginning, and the tone is gentle.
- Then the poet picks up the **pace** and increases the excitement. There is a celebratory mood.

### Theme

- This poem is about renewal – it is a message of hope to people who have suffered and struggled, announcing a new beginning that will bring joy and peace.
- The last line of the poem is significant, because it refers to the ancestors, who symbolise the past and the community's roots. "We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon" suggests that the people who are struggling for freedom must take direction from the past, as they build something new.

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- The poet creates a vision of the future that is inclusive, generous and embraces everyone, for example in line 14: "we held hands with a stranger" and line 16, "people came from all lands".

### Tone and mood

The tone of this poem is upbeat and it creates a mood of excitement and jubilation.

- In the first few lines, the people hear and see the first suggestions of a new beginning, and the tone is gentle.
- Then the poet picks up the **pace** and increases the excitement. There is a celebratory mood.



- ▶ In lines 14 to 18, the short sentences create an emphatic tone – peace has arrived.
- ▶ In the last line of the poem the tone is serious, as the poet injects his message into the narrative.

### Important points

Aspects of the arrival of peace	Poetic devices
• beautiful	Images from nature: "soft light", "young blades of grass"
• strong yet nurturing	Juxtaposition: "a soft light/Coiling" Personification: freedom is a woman: "her footprints", "her face", etc.
• forging unity	Images of inclusivity and generosity: "We held hands with a stranger", "People came from all lands"
• growth and rebirth	Images from nature: "young blades of grass", "first fruits of the season"
• cause for celebration	Word choice: the sights and sounds of celebration: "songs", "wedding party", "ululating", "calling", "shouting", "festival"
• a link to the land and to history	Images from nature: "young blades of grass", "mountains", "first fruits", "waterfalls" Image and alliteration of last line: "Ancestors travelling tall"

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. What does the phrase "a wedding party" suggest about the "First Day"? (1)
2. Refer to lines 2 and 3.
  - 2.1 What do the words "a soft light" tell us about what was coming? (1)
  - 2.2 Comment on the effectiveness of the image of the light "coiling". (2)
3. Quote two aspects of the poem that show that the poet has drawn on African oral traditions. (2)
4. Quote from the poem to show how the poet uses personification to depict freedom. (2)
5. This poem is a reminder of the role the past plays in shaping our future. Critically discuss how the poet conveys that message. (3)

#### Essay question

Kunene's poem, "First Day after the War" is a celebratory vision of a post-apartheid future, built on renewal and a strong message about the power of the past.

Critically discuss this statement and refer to the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** of the poem. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Build your essay around these key points:

- **Diction:** Words of celebration and joy: "wedding party", "freedom", "ululating", "calling", "festival", "shouted".
- **Imagery:** Freedom is a woman, who smiles and has an expression of freedom in her eyes. Freedom is new and will grow, shown in images from nature.
- **Tone:** The poem sings and rings with celebratory sound. The serious tone in the last line is a reminder to look back and draw on the past.

## The Zulu Girl – Roy Campbell

### Explanations of words

**acres** – areas of land, each one measuring about 4 000 square metres

**curbed** – restrained or controlled

**drowsy** – sleepy

**frail** – weak and vulnerable

**harvest** – literally, the mature crops that are gathered to be used; may also refer to the results or consequences of something

**hoe** – a farm or garden tool used to break up the soil

**languors** – feelings of laziness and lack of energy

**looms** – rising above something with the appearance of great size

**plies** – works hard and conscientiously at a task

**pooled** – formed a pool or pool-shaped object

**prowl** – to move stealthily or secretly around as if in search of prey

**ripple** – make small waves in water

**smoulder** – to burn without flame, like a coal in a fire; can also refer to emotions that exist without visible signs

**sullen** – silently upset or discontented

**tormented** – severely troubled or distressed by something

**unslings** – takes him out of the cloth tied on her back

When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder,  
Down where the sweating gang its labour plies,  
A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder  
Unslings her child tormented by the flies.

She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled 5  
By thorn-trees: purpled with the blood of ticks,  
While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled,  
Prowl through his hair with sharp electric clicks,

His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple, 10  
Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feeds:  
Through his frail nerves her own deep languors ripple  
Like a broad river sighing through its reeds.

Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes  
An old unquenched, unsmotherable heat –  
The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes, 15  
The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Her body looms above him like a hill  
Within whose shade a village lies at rest,  
Or the first cloud so terrible and still  
That bears the coming harvest in its breast. 20

### Roy Campbell, 1901–1957

Ignatius Royston Dunnachie Campbell is one of South Africa's best known poets, praised for his imaginative and inventive writing. He was born in Durban, but left South Africa to study at Oxford University in Britain. He soon dropped out of university, saying he needed time to write poetry. He published his first collection of poems in Britain and was considered to be one of the best poets writing between World Wars I and II. He returned to South Africa and started a poetry magazine called *Voorslag* (whiplash) through which he challenged the racism he observed around him. He wrote "The Zulu Girl" during this period of his life. He left South Africa again and travelled to Europe, but his political views caused much criticism, disagreement and anger among fellow writers and artists because he supported the fascist leader, Franco, during the Spanish Civil War. Campbell later lived in France, Spain and Portugal and died in a car accident in Portugal. He had lived a wild, adventurous life, during which he took on daring challenges, including a short time as a bullfighter.

### Summary

The poem describes a Zulu woman who stops her work in the fields to feed her baby in the shade of a tree. The poet suggests that as the baby drinks its mother's milk he absorbs her calm contentment. But he also learns subconsciously about his ancestors' tragic and violent history, in which the Zulu nation was defeated by the British and then subjected to colonial rule. She gives the baby not only her motherly protection, but also the desire to correct the injustice of the past.



## Discussion

### Title

- The title tells us what the poem is about (a young Zulu woman) but does not hint at the complex themes dealt with in the poem.
- While the title mentions a “girl”, she is obviously old enough to have a child and to do an adult’s share of the work in the fields. At the time that Campbell was writing, it was common for white South Africans (and those of European origin in other countries, too) to describe African men and women as “boys” and “girls”. This reflected a racist belief that Africans were child-like and inferior, not capable of taking on the responsibilities of an adult.

### Type and form

- The poem is divided into five stanzas of four lines each.
- The **rhyme scheme** is simple and regular – *abab, cdcd, efef*, etc.
- The **metre** is regular, with most lines consisting of ten “beats” or syllables.

### Theme

- The poem contrasts the peaceful life of the Zulu people with their dramatic history of struggle and defeat.
- It suggests that their pride and will to resist is still strong, and that they will rise up against their oppressors in the future.

### Imagery

- *Stanza 1*: In line 1 the soil of the fields is compared to burning coals: “... hot red acres smoulder” to evoke the extreme heat.
- *Stanza 2*: In lines 5 to 6 the **metaphor** compares the shade of the thorn-trees to a pool of water, providing a cool place for the mother to feed her baby. The shade is also described as “purpled with the blood of ticks”, which gives us an idea of the deep, dark colour of the shade in contrast to the hot, red soil in the sunshine. In the **metaphor** in lines 7 to 8 the mother’s nails are compared to a living creature, as they “prowl” through the baby’s hair.
- *Stanza 3*: In line 10 the **simile** compares the baby to a puppy. The instinctive sucking action, pulling at his mother’s nipple, is similar to a puppy feeding. In lines 11 to 12 the mother’s “languor” or exhausted calm flows into the baby along with the milk, and is compared in a **simile** to a river “sighing through its reeds”.
- *Stanza 4*: The **metaphor** in lines 13 to 16 suggests that the baby’s “flesh imbibes” or drinks in the anger, pride and dignity of his tribe along with his mother’s milk. The physical act of feeding is likened to the complex intellectual and emotional process of learning, understanding and accepting one’s history and culture. The fiery “heat” of the Zulu people’s anger contrasts with the cool of the river water in the previous stanza.
- *Stanza 5*: Line 17’s **simile** compares the mother’s body to a hill “looming” above the baby, protecting him as a hill provides shelter for a village. At the same time her body can be seen as a dark cloud, indicating the arrival of a violent storm.

### Diction

- *Stanza 1*: The poet uses words to describe the extreme heat – “hot red” and “smoulder”; the “sweating gang”. He also emphasises how harsh the conditions are by using words like “labour”; the girl “flings” down her hoe as if she is tired of working; the baby is “tormented” by flies.

- Stanza 2:** The words give a feeling of coolness and relaxation, in contrast to Stanza 1. The mother sits in a “shadow”, which is “pooled” by the tree and “purpled”. The words “slow caresses” also give the impression of gentleness. However the poet also uses words that give a less pleasant feeling – he describes the purple colour of the shade as being from “the blood of ticks”. The mother’s nails are “sharp” and they “prowl” through the baby’s hair like an animal hunting. The word “sharp” is repeated when the poet describes the sound the mother’s nails make – “sharp electric clicks”.
- Stanza 3:** This stanza describes the baby feeding and the words give the impression of sleepiness and contentment – “sleepy mouth”; “heavy nipple”; “puppy, grunting”; “deep languors”; “broad river sighing”.
- Stanza 4:** The diction gives a strong impression of suffering and violence that is lurking just beneath the surface – “unquenched, unsmotherable heat”; “curbed ferocity”; “sullen dignity”.
- Stanza 5:** Here the poet uses words that describe safety and protection – “shade” and “lies at rest”. There are also words that warn us of violence and destruction in the future – “looms”; “terrible and still”.

### Tone

	Tone	Words that contribute to the tone/mood
<b>Stanza 1</b>	The tone is neutral – the poet is describing the scene. The group is working hard in the heat.  But we do get a hint of the underlying conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutral: “in the sun”; “the sweating gang ... plies”; “flings down her hoe”; “from her shoulder ... by the flies”</li> <li>• Underlying conflict: “smoulder”, “tormented”</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 2</b>	The tone suggests calm sleepiness but there is an underlying threatening feeling. The positive image of the mother feeding her baby is in contrast to the negative feelings suggested by some of the images.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive images – “pooled by thorn-trees”; “slow caresses”</li> <li>• Negative images – “shadow”; “the blood of ticks”; “sharp nails”; “prowl”; “sharp electric clicks”</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 3</b>	Here the tone is one of calm and intimacy as the baby feeds and the mother’s sleepy relaxation is passed on to the child.	“sleepy mouth”; “heavy nipple”; “tugs like a puppy”; “deep languors ... its reeds”
<b>Stanza 4</b>	The calm, contented tone of Stanza 3 changes to one of hidden menace and passion as the poet describes how the baby absorbs, with its mother’s milk, the knowledge of the past defeat and humiliation of the Zulu people.	“unquenched, unsmotherable heat”; “curbed ferocity”; “sullen dignity”
<b>Stanza 5</b>	Here the poet describes the mother’s body rising above the baby – first with a positive tone, but then the ominous (suggesting something bad is going to happen) mood created by the use of the word “looms” returns as the poet portrays the mother’s body as a thundercloud bringing a terrible storm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive tone – “like a hill ... at rest”</li> <li>• Negative tone – “the first ... and still”</li> </ul>



### Important points

	Structure/form	Content	Tone/mood/diction/imagery
<b>Stanza 1</b>	Rhyme scheme: abab	A group of people are working in the fields under the hot sun. One of them, a "girl", stops work to feed her baby.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The overwhelming impression is one of extreme heat.</li> <li><b>Metaphor:</b> "the ... smoulder"</li> <li>An ominous or disturbing <b>mood</b> is introduced by the words "smoulder" and "tormented".</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 2</b>	Rhyme scheme: cdcd	The mother sits in the shade of a thorn-tree and feeds her baby.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The surface tone of relaxed sleepiness has an underlying threatening mood: "blood of ticks"; "sharp nails"; "prowl".</li> <li><b>Metaphors:</b> "shadow ... thorn-trees"; "sharp nails ... prowl"</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 3</b>	Rhyme scheme: efef	Her relaxed weariness, caused by the heat and hard work, is passed on to the baby.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>tone</b> is drowsy and relaxed.</li> <li>The only indication of anything disturbing is the description of the baby as "frail".</li> <li><b>Similes:</b> "Tugs ... puppy"; "her own ... its reeds"</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 4</b>	Rhyme scheme: ghgh	The poet describes how the baby takes in not only the mother's relaxed mood, but also the unconscious awareness of the proud and violent history of the Zulu people, and the humiliation of their defeat by British colonisers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Tone</b> switches completely. It becomes darker and describes the rage and fierceness of the Zulu people, which still survives: "old unquenchable, ... defeat"</li> <li><b>Metaphor:</b> "his flesh imbibes ... defeat"</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 5</b>	Rhyme scheme: ijij	The mother's body towers protectively over the baby, yet also seems to represent something menacing – like the first cloud of a violent storm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a <b>tone</b> of protectiveness conveyed in the image of the mother's body being a "hill" sheltering a village.</li> <li>This is overtaken by a threatening tone as her body is described as a storm cloud, bringing a "terrible ... harvest".</li> <li><b>Similes:</b> "like a hill ... at rest"; "first cloud ... its breast"</li> </ul>

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Read Stanza 1. Describe the conditions in which the “gang” is working, quoting from the poem to support your answer. (2)
2. Refer to Stanza 3. Explain how the feeding affects the baby. (2)
3. Refer to Stanza 4.
- 3.1 Line 14 reads “An old ... hear”. What does this tell us about the emotions and attitudes of the Zulu people, according to the poet? (2)
- 3.2 How is this reinforced by the phrase “sullen ... defeat” in line 16? (2)
4. Explain the connotations of the following phrases from the poem:
  - 4.1 “red acres smoulder”
  - 4.2 “looms above him” (2)
5. Refer to Stanza 5.
  - 5.1 This stanza has two differing descriptions of the mother’s body. Do you think they are compatible with each other, or do they contradict each other? Justify your answer. (2)
  - 5.2 What do you think “the coming harvest” in line 20 refers to? Explain your answer with reference to the whole poem. (3)

#### Essay question

“The Zulu Girl” foreshadows the future resistance of the South African people to policies of segregation and apartheid. It demonstrates Campbell’s sympathy for the people of the Zulu nation, as well as his fear of them.

By close reference to **diction**, **imagery** and **tone**, critically discuss this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Here is a sample structure for your essay:

- *Introduction*: Write a sentence or two, setting out what your essay is about.
- *Paragraph 1*: Write about the poet’s **diction**: quote examples from the poem and explain what the words tell us about the people, their history and their feelings.
- *Paragraph 2*: Quote key **images** from the poem and explain what they mean or signify.
- *Paragraph 3*: Explain how the **tone** shifts through the poem.
- *Conclusion*: Show what the poet has to say about the people he is writing about, and the predictions he makes for the future.



## Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang (A Person Is a Person Because of Other People) – Jeremy Cronin

### Explanations of words

**antennae** – the two pieces sticking up on an insect's head or from a TV to gather signals

**arc** – circle

### Jeremy Cronin, 1949–

Jeremy Cronin is one of South Africa's best-known poets, whose work ranges from powerful political witness to beautiful love poetry. Cronin was born in Durban and grew up in Cape Town. He studied literature and philosophy at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where he became a Marxist and was recruited into the South African Communist Party, then a banned organisation. He studied in France and returned to South Africa to lecture in the philosophy department at UCT. He continued his work in the struggle against apartheid and in 1976 was arrested and sentenced to seven years in prison. While he was in prison, his wife died and he was not allowed to attend her funeral. He wrote a lot of poetry during his years in prison, including "Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang". He had to smuggle his poetry out of the prison, or memorise it and record it when he was freed. He left prison in 1983 and continued his work as a political activist. Cronin was forced to flee the country in 1987 with his second wife and baby boy and they lived in exile in London and Lusaka. He returned to South Africa in 1990 and became an ANC member of parliament, and later a deputy minister in the Cabinet.

### Summary

The speaker is in prison because of his participation in the anti-apartheid struggle. He is locked in his cell, but by holding a small mirror out of the window leading onto the passage, he can see the reflection of another prisoner at the end: a "comrade" also imprisoned for his political activity. The prisoner notices him, and by carefully gesturing with the hand that is not visible to the prison warder, he is able to communicate several messages to the speaker. The final gesture (a clenched fist) signals political solidarity.

### Discussion

#### Title

- The title refers to a well-known African philosophy: *Ubuntu*.
- At first the connection between the title and the poem is not clear, but as we read we realise that the prisoners, who are isolated from each other in their cells, find ways to communicate with and support each other in order to maintain their humanity in an inhumane situation.

#### Type and form

- The poet uses **free verse** without any rhyme scheme or rhythm.
- There are many examples of **enjambment**, where the line runs on to the next line without any pause. This creates a smooth flow, as if the speaker is talking to the reader.
- The **visual layout** of the poem is important. The meaning of the messages that the other prisoner is communicating are placed on the right side of the page, to set them apart from the speaker's description of what he sees. The warder's words to the other prisoner are located in the middle of the page, emphasising that the warder is not part of the same conversation that the two prisoners are having. The warder's direct speech and the prisoner's silent messages are both shown in italics.

### Theme

- As the title suggests, the theme of the poem is that we can only live a truly human life if we are connected to and interacting with other humans.
- It is just as important to have contact with like-minded humans – the prisoners got strength and support from their fellow prisoners, not from the warders.
- Any human endeavour, whether it is a political struggle or an everyday activity, is made easier and more meaningful by the support and encouragement of others.

### Imagery

The images in the poem are the gestures made by the other prisoner, which are meaningless to the reader until the speaker translates them. As the speaker describes the small movements of the prisoner's hand, we visualise them in our mind's eye:

- The first message, “A *warder*” is conveyed by a gesture imitating the round badge on a warder's cap. We imagine the four fingers bunching together and travelling up to his “imaginary cap”.
- The second message, “*He's being watched*” is communicated by two fingers wiggling “like two antennae” of an insect on the lookout for danger. This **simile** refers to the common gesture that indicates “I'm watching you” by pointing two fingers at one's eyes and then at the other person.
- The third message, “*Later*” involves a finger making an “arc” like the curved path of the tip of a watch-hand as it shows the passing of time.
- The final message, “*Strength brother*” is conveyed by a simple clenched fist, the easily recognisable **symbol** for people's power and unity. The speaker mentions that it is a “black” fist but because the message is clearly between comrades (the speaker uses the word “*brother*”) the image also represents a bond of humanity that cuts across racial barriers.

### Diction

- The words used by the poet are simple. Mostly, they convey meaning without any positive or negative **connotations**.
- The use of Afrikaans to show the words of the warder, however, immediately has connotations in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle. We do not need to be told that this is the warder speaking, as the use of Afrikaans makes this clear. The warder's words are also abrasive and authoritative (“*Hey! Wat maak jy daar?*” – What are you doing?).
- Similarly, the prisoner's use of the word “*baas*” (boss) in his reply to the warder is a clear indication of his understanding of power relationships in the prison. We understand that the prisoner does not really consider the warder to be his boss but is using the term almost ironically, to keep the warder's attention away from the conversation he is having with the speaker.

### Tone

- Because the messages between the prisoners have to be conveyed in silence, the tone is secretive and intimate. It is as if the speaker is inviting the reader to join him and the other prisoner in their communication, which excludes the warder.
- The fact that the gestures are instantly understood by the speaker increases this sense of intimacy.
- We do not know the prisoner's name, and it seems that the speaker also doesn't know him personally. The speaker describes him as “a person” (line 3) and “a prisoner” (line 4). Their comradeship and intimacy are based on their shared beliefs and values, and their shared opposition to apartheid.



- ▶ In line 23 the speaker says “now watch” as if he is urging the reader to watch with him as the prisoner communicates his messages of solidarity and defiance. This also heightens the tone of intimacy and secrecy.

### Important points

Key features	Examples	Effect
Enjambment	Lines 1–2; lines 5–6; lines 7–8 etc.	This makes the poem flow smoothly from one line to another, and gives the impression the speaker is talking to us.
Personification	“Which travels ... forehead” (line 10); “the talkative one” (line 24)	This increases our focus on the prisoner’s hand, which is so cleverly communicating with the speaker.
Layout	The narrative – the story of what the speaker sees – is on the left side of the page, while the unspoken words are set off to the right and in italics.	This makes a clear distinction between what the speaker is telling us, and the messages that are being exchanged between the characters.
Contrast	Dishonest, false communication is contrasted with honest, “real” communication. The spoken words between prisoner and warder do not reflect true communication because the warder does not get a truthful answer. The silent conversation between the speaker and the prisoner shows their complete understanding of each other.	The effect of this is to emphasise that real understanding between people does not depend on words, but on shared values and a sense of comradeship.

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Explain in your own words why the speaker holds his mirror “out of the window”. (3)
2. Explain the effect of the use of the word “travels” in line 10. (2)
3. Refer to lines 16–18: “A finger ... his work”. What does this tell us about the manner in which the prisoners communicate with each other? (2)
4. Describe the **tone** of the communication between the warder and the prisoner. (3)
5. Explain the relevance of the layout of the poem. (3)
6. Discuss the effectiveness of the last three words of the poem. (2)

#### Essay question

Cronin’s poem “Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang” demonstrates his belief that we need the support of others, and close communication with others, in order to maintain our humanity.

By close reference to the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** used in this poem, critically discuss this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Here are some pointers to help you deal with the three key elements in your essay: diction, imagery and tone:

- **Diction:** When referring to diction you need to look for words that arouse emotion or are very obviously positive or negative in connotation. In this poem, however, the diction is neutral – the words are ordinary and informal. Instead, Afrikaans is used to show the power relations between the prisoners and the warder.
- **Imagery:** Identify the ways in which the poet tries to give us a clear picture of what he is talking about. For example, when describing the prisoner's fingers he says "and wiggle like two antennae" (line 14) and he describes this hand as "the talkative one" (line 24).
- **Tone:** When referring to tone, you should deal with the feelings and attitudes conveyed by the text. Try to imagine what tone of voice the speaker would use if he/she were speaking aloud to you. In this poem the tone is intimate as the speaker shares with the reader his secret conversation of signs with his fellow prisoner.



## Funeral Blues – WH Auden

### WH Auden, 1907–1973

Wystan Hugh Auden was one of the most influential English poets of the twentieth century. He went to Oxford University to study Science, but soon switched to a degree in English. He was part of a group of poets who were all influenced by socialist ideas. Auden travelled to Spain, to support the struggle against the forces of fascism in the Spanish Civil War. He emigrated to the United States just before the outbreak of World War II in 1939, and later became an American citizen. Auden wrote poetry in a wide variety of styles and forms, including long, book-length poems and elegies like “Funeral Blues”. In 1956, he became Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

### Summary

The speaker expresses his overpowering feelings of grief at the death of his loved one. He feels that there should be dramatic public displays of mourning, such as putting black bows around the necks of the doves flying around the city, to show the devastating extent of his loss. He describes how important his beloved was to him, in every possible context, and how he had assumed that their love would last his whole life. He ends the poem with an almost apocalyptic (imagining the complete destruction of the world) desire to pack away the entire natural world, because he feels that without his loved one, nothing good will ever happen.

### Discussion

#### Title

The “blues” is a genre of music originating in the United States among the African-American community, arising from the songs sung by slaves from West Africa. It features slow, reflective melodies and lyrics and often uses the sorrows of life as a subject. From this we get the concept of “having the blues”, meaning to feel sad or depressed. The title therefore refers to the feeling of sadness associated with the death of a loved one.

#### Type and form

This could be classified as an **elegy** (a mournful funeral poem) or a **dirge** (a mournful funeral song) for someone who has died.

The poem has four stanzas of four lines each. There is a consistent rhyme scheme of *aabb ccdd eeff ggbb*.

An elegy often has a slow **pace**, but in this poem the pace is fast, as if the speaker is rushing to say everything he or she feels, until the pace slows down towards the end.

#### Theme

- The poem concerns grief and mourning for a lost loved one, and the impulse to spread the dreadful news far and wide.
- It demonstrates how shocking it can be to realise that love may not, in fact, last forever.

#### Imagery

- In Stanza 1 the speaker describes the manner in which he would like the death of his loved one to be noted. He makes an allusion to several old mourning customs, common in nineteenth century Britain but now seldom

seen. In line 1 he commands that we should “stop ... the clocks” (which was a custom in a house in which someone had died, to signify that time had ceased for the departed person) and “cut off the telephone” (this was also done, to prevent disturbance in a house of mourning).

- He shows the same desire for silence, and the need to stop inappropriate sounds, in line 2 when he speaks of preventing the dog from barking.
- Instead of happy or tuneful piano music he wants the slow, solemn beat of “muffled drums” (line 3), which describes the drums used at funeral processions, with cloth around the drumsticks to soften the noise. (This is still done at some official or military funerals.) Then he is ready for the coffin to be brought out as the mourners arrive.
- In Stanza 2 the speaker expresses his need for his own overwhelming grief to be demonstrated to the public. He would like to see “aeroplanes ... overhead” (line 5), writing in the sky, for all to see, the bad news that “He is Dead”. He would like bows of black crêpe to be tied around the necks of doves (the custom was to display fabric bows on the door of the deceased’s home, to alert any visitors to the death). Even the policemen should wear black gloves. These exaggerated desires emphasise how the speaker is almost wild with grief.
- Several metaphors in Stanza 3 show how much the speaker’s loved one meant to him. They are images representing the *completeness* of their love. In line 9 the speaker refers to all four compass directions, showing that the person’s presence in his life gave him direction and stability. Their love filled every day of the week (line 10) and all hours of the day and all happy leisure activities (line 11).
- In the last stanza the speaker shows his feelings of despair by referring to the wider context of stars, moon, sun, ocean and woods. For example, he wants “the stars” to be “put out” (line 13) as their light has no relevance to him now.

### Diction

- *Stanza 1:* After a death in the family during the nineteenth century, instructions would be given for the mourning customs to be observed, for example, black clothes were worn and crêpe bows were put on the front door. In Stanza 1 the speaker seems to be imitating these instructions – his words take the form of brief, authoritative commands. The words he uses describe the way in which a death halts the normal routine of life, and introduces a period of sadness and reflection, in which attention must be given to the necessary arrangements. The verbs, for example, speak of ending the normal routine – “stop” and “cut off” in line 1, “prevent” in line 2, “silence” in line 3.
- *Stanza 2:* In this stanza the speaker mentions aeroplanes “moaning” (line 5), a word that describes a noise of pain or grief. The message he would like the aeroplanes to “scribble” on the sky is “He is Dead” (line 6). This simple statement – the person’s name is not mentioned, but “He” and “Dead” are given capital letters – seems to indicate that this person is so important (to the speaker, even if to no one else) that it is not necessary to use his name. He mentions “crêpe bows” and “black cotton gloves” (lines 7 and 8) which denote mourning.
- *Stanza 3:* The speaker describes what his loved one meant to him, beginning with “He was ...” (line 9) and then listing the images that show the completeness of their love. He repeats the word “my” many times in lines 9–11 to emphasise their closeness: “My noon ... my song” (line 11). In line 12 the speaker makes a simple statement using the word “I”, which shows his new state of loneliness, and where he acknowledges how wrong he had been to think that his loved one would always be with him.



- Stanza 4:** The words used in this stanza shows how the speaker has lost all enthusiasm for life – he feels as if the world may as well end, and uses words and phrases such as “not wanted” and “put out” (line 13), “pack up” and “dismantle” in line 14 and “pour away” and “sweep up” (line 15). This reminds us of someone packing up the belongings of a dead person, or cleaning up after something is over and done. The phrase “nothing now” in the last line emphasises that the speaker feels there is nothing left for him after this loss.

### Tone

- Stanza 1:** The speaker’s tone is curt (speaking shortly, almost angrily) as he issues the sad instructions about setting up the signs of mourning. He is stopping everything that represents everyday life; the only thing he welcomes is the coffin and the mourners.
- Stanza 2:** His desire to share his loss with others, even the general public, leads to an almost hysterical tone as he suggests impossible ways of marking this death that means so much to him – writing “He is Dead” in the sky (line 6) and putting “crêpe bows ... doves” (line 7).
- Stanza 3:** This stanza brings a still sad but calmer mood as the speaker describes nostalgically how his loved one meant everything to him. The stanza concludes with a moving statement in line 12: “I ... wrong.” This **antithesis** demonstrates what a shock the sudden and unexpected loss of his love has been to him.
- Stanza 4:** The speaker then returns to his tone of near-hysterical grief, when he describes how he wants to “put out” the stars and “dismantle the sun” (lines 13 and 14). This demonstrates the depth of his grief, and is reinforced by the bleak statement in the last line: “nothing ... good”.

### Important points

	Content	Poetic devices	Effect
<b>Stanza 1</b> Rhyme scheme: aabb	The speaker describes how he wants to stop all everyday activity and observe strict mourning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allusion to old-fashioned mourning practices</li> <li>Enjambment in lines 3–4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasises the depth of his grief.</li> <li>Gives smooth transition to final line, puts emphasis on “coffin”.</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 2</b> Rhyme scheme: ccdd	He lists the public signs of mourning he would like to see.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjambment in lines 1–2</li> <li>Images of exaggerated public mourning – “crêpe ... doves”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates smooth transition to line 2, puts emphasis on “He is Dead”.</li> <li>Emphasises the extent of his grief.</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 3</b> Rhyme scheme: eeff	He describes how complete and absorbing their love was, and how devastated he is to find that this love will not, after all, last forever.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metaphors: “He ... West”; “My ... rest”; “noon ... song”</li> <li>Antithesis in line 12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasises how close he and his beloved were – they were part of every aspect of each other’s lives.</li> <li>Emphasises his shock at the sudden loss of what he had assumed would always be there.</li> </ul>

	Content	Poetic devices	Effect
<b>Stanza 4</b> Rhyme scheme: gghh	He expresses the wish to end everything, even the stars and the sun, because he does not see any hope for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metaphor: the physical elements of our universe are compared to unwanted household items, to be swept up and put away.</li> <li>Alliteration in line 16: "Nothing now ... "</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows his feeling that nothing is of any value now that he has lost his loved one.</li> <li>Emphasises that after his beloved's death, he finds no good in anything.</li> </ul>

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Refer to Stanza 1. Explain why the speaker wants to do all the things he mentions in this stanza. (2)
2. Refer to Stanza 2.
  - 2.1 What effect is created by the use of the word "moaning" in line 5? (2)
  - 2.2 Account for the use of the capital letters in the phrase "He is Dead" (line 6). (2)
  - 2.3 The idea of putting bows around the doves' necks is not a realistic one. Why does the speaker make the exaggerated suggestions in this stanza? (2)
3. Refer to Stanza 3.
  - 3.1 In this stanza the speaker uses metaphors that mention one thing and its opposite – for example "my North" and then "my South" (as well as East and West). Identify two other examples of such metaphors. (2)
  - 3.2 What does this tell us about the relationship between the speaker and his loved one? (2)
4. Refer to Stanza 4. Discuss the effectiveness of the extended metaphor used in this stanza. (2)

#### Essay question

"Funeral Blues" is a powerful exploration of the devastating effects of grief and loss.

By carefully examining the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** of the poem, evaluate the validity of the above statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Build your essay around these key points:

##### Diction

- Negative forms and words that speak of stopping, preventing and finishing things.
- Words about death and mourning.

##### Imagery

- Images relating to mourning customs.
- Images showing the importance (in the speaker's life) of his loved one.
- Images of clearing out and cleaning up, signifying the end of something

##### Tone

- Sad, sombre tone with curt instructions.
- Emotional tone speaking of showing the public his loss.
- Tone of mournful reflection as the speaker tells of the importance of his loved one to him.



## A Hard Frost – Cecil Day Lewis

### Explanations of words

**blossomer** – producer of flowers

**elm** – a type of tree

**fairings** – small inexpensive items bought at the fair (a place where goods were bought and sold, and where games and refreshments entertained the local people)

**flounce** – a frill of material that is gathered or pleated as decoration on a dress

**frost** – tiny ice needles that form on surfaces when temperatures drop below freezing

**gear** – in this context, an outfit

**lilac** – a plant with large clusters of tiny purple or white flowers

**maid** – in this context, a young unmarried woman

**maydrift** – “may” is a hedge with tiny white clusters of flowers; “maydrift” refers to the petals that have fallen or been blown off by the wind

**raw** – in this context, unsophisticated and ignorant

**tissue** – in this context, a group of cells of similar type or function in any multi-cellular organism

**whence** – from where

**windowpane** – the sheet of glass that fills the frame of a window

**worrying** – to harass or distract with constant attention

### Cecil Day Lewis, 1904–1972

Cecil Day Lewis, who was the **Poet Laureate** of Britain from 1968 to 1972, was a member of a group of poets at Oxford University during the 1930s, who embraced socialist ideals. Day Lewis was born in Ireland but grew up in Britain. He did not do well at school, but managed to secure a place at Oxford and later became a teacher. As a young man, he was active in the Communist Party and his early poetry was an expression of radical ideas. His first wife was a nature lover and he also became one. Day Lewis's later poetry, including “A Hard Frost”, showed his preoccupation with the natural world. He was also a successful novelist, who wrote detective stories under the name Nicholas Blake. In 1951, he became Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He had four children and his youngest son, Daniel, is a famous actor.



### Summary

The speaker describes how a freezing winter night has left icy frost crystals all over the window glass, the grass, the trees and the hedge in the garden. It looks very beautiful, almost like white flowers showing the arrival of spring, but the frost will soon melt and leave the landscape dreary and grey again. He says that this overnight “transformation” is actually just an illusion, and the real change is happening underground, where the hard lumps of earth are being cracked and broken by the sudden frost. This will eventually allow the seeds – held frozen and dormant through winter – to reach the air and moisture they need to start growing as the weather warms up.

### Discussion

#### Title

“A Hard Frost” occurs when temperatures become very low (below -2° Celsius) and anything exposed to the night air gets a coating of ice crystals. This can be very beautiful but is also damaging to plants.

#### Type and form

- The poem is written in free verse and has two stanzas, one of nine lines and the other of ten.
- The poet does not use rhyme.
- There are a number of run-on lines (enjambment) creating a smooth flow, as if the poet is thinking aloud.

#### Theme

- The beautiful, spring-like appearance of the frosty scene is deceptive, as it will soon melt away and the frost-damaged winter landscape will be revealed. The actual approach of spring is happening underground – less glamorous but more meaningful.
- In the same way, much of what we see as beautiful and worthy is actually an illusion, and the truly important things in life are often happening unseen and unappreciated.

## Imagery

Line	Type of image	Explanation
1	Personification	The frost “came in the night and stole my world”: the frost is described in negative terms from the start.
2	Metaphor	The brilliant frosty scene is described as a “changeling”, a word which describes a folklore belief that spirits can swap one baby for another. The implication is that this beautiful scene cannot be trusted.
4–5	Metaphors and similes	The patterns and shapes made by the frost are compared to flowers – “White lilac on the windowpane”, “each grass-blade/ Furred like a catkin” and “maydrift loading the hedge”.
7	Metaphor	The elm trees are described as “blossomers in crystal” serving as “stems” for the clouds of mist. The trunks of the tall trees become the stalks which support the shapeless clouds formed by the mist.
7–9	Simile	The mist is compared to “blind tissue whence creation formed” – this refers to the unformed, primitive matter that existed before “creation” and from which the natural world grew, or was made.
10	Personification Metaphor	“The sun looks out” – the sun is compared to a person, looking out of a window perhaps, which describes the first appearance of the sun over the horizon. The light reflecting off the ice particles is compared to the “blaze” or fiery sparkle of diamonds.
11–14	Personification	Spring is personified as “Mockery spring” (imitation spring) who cruelly gives a “raw country maid” (the landscape) this beautiful “bridal gear” (the decorative ice crystals), knowing that it will not last and she will be left with nothing but “old fairings” (the few flowers tough enough to grow during the cold months).
15	Alliteration	The alliteration “flounce and filigree” refers to the beautiful patterns the frost makes on the windows and plants – this beauty will actually cause damage and death to many plants.
17–19	Personification	The frost is personified as “worrying” the clods of earth to break them up. The clods of earth are personified as having a strong “grip” on the seed, which the frost forces them to loosen (“unclenches”). The future is personified – once the seeds have been released from the hard, frozen earth our future can “breathe” – in other words, the rebirth of the earth’s fertility is assured and our future is safe for another year.
Whole poem	Metaphor	It can be argued that the poet is using “frost” as a metaphor, comparing the beautiful ice crystals to the superficial things of this world, which may be attractive and seem like a promise of something good, but which prove to have no lasting value. True progress and value, we might conclude, is often unseen and unglamorous, and not appreciated by many.

## Diction

- The poet uses words which describe the amazing beauty of the frosty scene: “brilliant” (line 3), “blossomers in crystal” (line 7); the “fields blaze with diamonds” (line 10) and “bridal gear” (line 11).
- Other words suggest that the beauty is not, in fact, a real or positive thing. The frost “stole” the speaker’s world and left a “changeling” that is “precocious”, and just an “image” (picture) rather than the real thing – “too



brilliant to be true” (lines 1–3). He also describes the mist as “amorphous” and “blind tissue” (lines 8–9).

- In the second section of the poem the poet personifies the frost as a “Mockery spring” who allows the countryside (a “raw country maid” in line 12) to be beautiful for a few hours before leaving her “disconsolate with old fairings” (line 13). Finally, the decorative ice crystals are described as the “flounce and filigree of death” (line 15). These words show his disapproval of the frost’s beauty.
- In the last few lines the speaker says the frost forces the “stiff clods” under the earth to “unclench[es] their grip” on the seeds so that “our future” can “breathe” (lines 18–19). These words describe a more positive process of liberating the seeds so that the natural cycle of the seasons can continue.

### Tone

- From the beginning the speaker’s tone shows his distrust of the frost and its beauty. To him it is a thief who has stolen the real world and replaced it with this “changeling”, which looks attractive but is too good to be true.
- He acknowledges the beauty of the frost but with a dismissive tone, pointing out that it is not lasting – it is a “precocious” (too early) image of the flowers that will grow in spring.
- His description of the mist has an uneasy tone. It reminds him of a prehistoric substance, full of possibility for growth (“whence creation formed”, line 9) but without identity or intelligence (“amorphous as the blind tissue”, lines 8–9).
- In lines 11–14 the speaker’s tone becomes disapproving as he compares the frost to a “mockery” who tricks the poor innocent “country maid” into thinking she has been given all this beauty – the “bridal gear” (line 11) that will disappear and leave her disappointed and upset (“disconsolate”) with nothing but a few sad old “fairings”, worthless items.
- The speaker ends with a more emphatic, positive tone as he points out where the *real* work is being done – “No, not here” but “deep below” (lines 14 and 17) where the frost works not to trick and destroy but to “worry” (crack and break) the hard clumps of soil so that the earth is loosened and the dormant seeds released in time for spring.
- The last line of the poem has a tone of satisfaction, as the speaker says the frost “lets our future breathe”.
- The change in tone demonstrates that it is not the frost itself that the speaker disapproves of, because the frost is actually doing valuable work where we don’t even see it. It is the superficial, illusory (not real) beauty (which actually damages the plants) that the speaker distrusts. This can be extended to life, where beauty is often superficial and real value is harder to see.

### Important points

Characteristics of the frost		Poetic devices
The icy crystals	Beautiful	Images such as metaphors and similes, comparing the crystals to flowers, jewels, apparel: “White lilac”; “Furred like a catkin”; “maydrift loading the hedge”; “blossomers in crystal”; “blaze with diamonds”; “bridal gear”
	Deceitful	Images such as personification : “stole my world”; “left this changeling”; “a precocious ... true”; “to lend ... snowdrop!”

Characteristics of the frost		Poetic devices
	Temporary	Personification: "For a ... maid"
	Harmful	Alliteration: "Flounce ... death"
The underground action of the frost	Helpful	Personification: "frost worrying ... breathe"

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Explain why the speaker says the frost "stole [his] world" in line 1. (2)
2. Why does he describe the world he sees as a "changeling" (line 2)? (2)
3. In lines 8–9 the speaker describes the mist as "amorphous ... tissue". Discuss the effect of this phrase. (2)
4. What impression are we given of the frost by the speaker's personification in lines 11–14? Refer to the poem to support your answer. (3)
5. Refer to the phrase "flounce and filigree of death" in line 15. Comment on the appropriateness of this image in the context of the poem. (2)
6. The poet expresses the opinion that the beauty of the frost is a meaningless illusion. Do you agree with this statement? Justify your response by referring to the imagery and diction used in the poem. (3)

#### Essay question

In "A Hard Frost" Day Lewis puts forward the idea that the superficial beauty that many people admire is worthless, even harmful. He believes that most of the valuable things in life are actually unseen and unacknowledged.

By close reference to **diction**, **imagery** and **tone**, assess the validity of this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

You can build your essay around these key points:

#### Diction:

- Words from the poem describing the beauty of the frost: brilliant, crystal, blaze, diamonds, bridal gear
- Words critical of the frost: stole, changeling, precocious, amorphous, blind, mockery, death
- Words describing the positive action of the frost: real transformation, progress, unclenches, future, breathe

#### Imagery:

- frost as a "changeling"
- the mist as prehistoric "blind tissue"
- frost as "Mockery spring" deceiving the "raw country maid"
- frost "worrying" the "stiff clods" and forcing them to release their "grip" on the seeds so the "future" can "breathe"

#### Tone:

- tone of contempt and disapproval for the beauty of the frost
- tone of satisfaction when describing the frost's action underground.



## An African Thunderstorm – David Rubadiri

### Explanations of words

**plague** – a large group of locusts that destroys crops

**stately** – grandly

### David Rubadiri, 1930–

James David Rubadiri was born in Malawi and went to school in Uganda. He developed a love of literature at primary school and started writing at a very young age. He went to Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda and then studied English literature at Cambridge University in Britain. Malawi won its independence from Britain in 1964 and Rubadiri was appointed Malawi's ambassador to the United States. However, he became increasingly opposed to the undemocratic leadership of President Banda, and went into exile in Uganda. When the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin took power, Rubadiri was again forced into exile in Kenya, where he became a lecturer at the University of Nairobi. After Banda's death in 1997, Rubadiri was Malawi's ambassador to the United Nations until he retired. His poetry has been widely published and "An African Thunderstorm" is one of the most anthologised poems in Africa.

### Summary

This poem describes the energy and excitement of a storm. In the first two stanzas, the poet focuses on the effects of the natural elements of the storm – the wind and the clouds – as the storm is approaching. Then, in the last stanza the poet moves his focus to the people and the impact the storm has on them. The storm intensifies, the natural elements behave dramatically and terrifyingly and the effect is powerful and destructive.

### Discussion

#### Title

The title locates the poem in Africa. The indefinite article 'An' suggests that the poem is about a generalised, rather than specific, event. The word "thunderstorm" tells us that the poet will focus on this natural event.

#### Type and form

This poem has three stanzas and is written in free verse. Free verse gives the poet the freedom to use words in a way that takes the form of the storm itself:

- The lines are of different lengths and many lines have only a single word. The unpredictable lengths mirror the unpredictability and chaos of the storm.
- The first two stanzas are short, to set out the advancing aspects of the storm and build up the tension.
- The last stanza is longer and describes the effects of the storm on people and how they are at the mercy of the power of the elements.

#### Theme

- The **literal** or surface meaning of this poem is the chaos and destruction of a storm and the helplessness of the people caught in its path.
- However, there is another way to read this poem: to see the storm and its negative effects as a **metaphor**. The storm could stand for British and European colonialism and the destructive impact it has had on the people of Africa. This second reading is possible if we consider the poet and the context in which he worked: he was part of the first Malawian government after independence from Britain and he stood for the rights of people to rule themselves and to determine how they live their lives.

### Imagery

In Stanza 1, the images of the storm and its elements (the clouds and the wind) are frightening:

- the clouds are compared to a “plague of locusts” (line 6). This **simile** suggests destruction, because of the way locusts descend on fields and crops and wipe out everything that is growing, in a matter of minutes, causing starvation.
- The wind is compared to a powerful animal “tossing up things on its tail” (line 8). This **metaphor** reinforces the animal savagery of the “locusts” simile two lines earlier.
- In the last line the wind is compared to a “madman chasing nothing” (line 9) and this **simile** tells us about the frightening unpredictability of the coming storm.

In Stanza 2 the images reinforce the comparisons with frightening creatures and introduce a new image of the storm:

- The clouds are **personified** in the first three lines: they are “pregnant” (line 10), which suggests the weight of water they will release onto the land, and they “ride stately” (line 11), like queens. In line 12 they are “gathering”, like a group that has strength in numbers.
- In line 13, the poet continues with an animal comparison, “Like dark sinister wings”, suggesting in this **simile** that the clouds are frightening birds of prey.
- The image of the wind in the last line (15), in which the “trees bend to let it pass” tells us that the wind meets no resistance, which heightens its power.

In Stanza 3, the storm reaches a climax and the images of chaos and destruction reflect the impact on humans:

- Initially, in line 17, there is a sense that the storm is fun, because we hear “screams of delighted children”.
- But this happy image is contrasted with the restlessness and uncertainty of the women who, as they “Dart about/In and out/Madly” (lines 22–24) are at the mercy of the storm.
- The **simile** in line 27 of the women’s clothes being torn off them “like tattered flags” is an image of loss and underlines the sense of the storm as all-powerful and ruthless.
- In the last line, the **metaphor** in which the storm is compared to an army (“the pelting march of the storm”) confirms the storm as a destructive force.

### Sound devices

Storms are noisy events and thunderstorms are particularly frightening because of the noise. The poet has used a range of sound devices to create the effects of the wind, rain, thunder and lightning.

In Stanza 1, there is **onomatopoeia** in lines 2 and 7, with the words “hurrying” and “whirling”, which sound like wind rushing through the air.

In Stanza 2, the poet uses **onomatopoeia** in line 14, with “whistles”.

In Stanza 3 there are many sound devices to emphasise the arrival of the storm:

- The **alliteration** in line 18, “Toss and turn”, suggests chaotic movement created by the strong wind.
- In line 19, the **onomatopoeia** of “din” emphasises the deep noise, and of “whirling” continues the powerful movement and sound of the wind.
- The word “whistles” appears again in line 25, and this **repetition** emphasises the ongoing noise.



- The **alliteration** in lines 27 and 28 (“flags/flying off”) conjures up the sounds of the clothes flapping uncontrollably in the wind.
- Line 31 is dense with **onomatopoeia**: “rumble” is the noise of the thunder, “tremble” is the shaking effect of the thunder and “crack” is the loud, frightening noise when the thunder is very close.

### Diction

This poem is a good example of the power of the economy of poetry: in other words how the careful choice of just a few words can have immense effect and contribute towards the aesthetic (beautiful) qualities of the poem.

- Because this poem is about physical action in the world, the choice of verbs helps to build the dynamism of the storm. The verbs relate to movement and many of them are in a present participle form (ending in ‘-ing’), which makes the verb seem more vivid. For example, in Stanza 1 “hurrying”, “turning”, “whirling”, “tossing” and “chasing” all create a sense of chaotic movement. The action continues with “ride”, “gathering”, “whistles” and “bend” in Stanza 2. In Stanza 3, we reach the climax of the storm with these verbs: “Toss and turn”, “dart”, “whistles”, “wave”, “flying”, “Rumble, tremble and crack”.
- The **repetition** of words helps to emphasise the power of the wind and the powerlessness of everything in its wake: “The Wind whistles by/And trees bend to let it pass” in Stanza 2 is repeated as, “The Wind whistles by/Whilst the trees bend to let it pass” in Stanza 3. In Stanza 1, the poet uses the word “madman” in line 9 and the word “madly” in Stanza 3, line 24, to emphasise how irrational the storm is.
- Finally, the words associated with the children and women emphasise their helplessness in the face of the storm: The children “scream”, babies are “clinging”, the women “Dart about/Madly” and their clothes are torn off by the wind and “wave like tattered flags.”

### Tone and mood

- While this poem is dynamic and echoes the energy of the storm, the tone is ominous (suggesting something bad is going to happen): words like “plague” and “madman” in Stanza 1, “dark sinister” in Stanza 2, and “madly”, “jaggeder blinding”, “Rumble, tremble, and crack” in Stanza 3 all contribute to an uneasy, uncomfortable mood. This ominous tone contributes to the idea that the storm is a metaphor. It symbolises the destruction caused by colonialism. The storm comes “like a plague of locusts”, which causes starvation and it tears off the women’s clothing, taking what little they have.
- The short, uneven lines, especially in Stanza 3, which brings the climax of the storm, help create a mood of chaos and devastation.

### Important points

	Form	Content	Poetic devices	Effect
<b>Stanza 1</b>	Free verse; varying line lengths	The speaker describes the approaching storm.	<b>Comparisons (similes)</b> to a plague of locusts and a madman  Extensive use of <b>verbs</b> denoting physical action	It warns of bad things to come.  The power of the storm is felt.

	Form	Content	Poetic devices	Effect
<b>Stanza 2</b>	Free verse; longer and more even lines	The speaker describes the approaching clouds and wind.	<b>Personification:</b> "pregnant clouds" are heavy with water <b>Metaphor:</b> the clouds "perch" and have "wings", like an animal	It suggests a possibility of a life-giving force, but then this is overridden by their "sinister wings".
<b>Stanza 3</b>	Free verse; very uneven lines to emphasise the chaos	The storm hits the village and we see the effects on the women and children.	<b>Similes and metaphors</b> that compare the storm to a very destructive force  Sound devices like <b>onomatopoeia</b> and <b>alliteration</b> "din" and "whirling"	We feel the fear that the people felt in the face of this brutal violence and chaos.  These harsh sounds underline the fear and devastation the storm causes.

### Test yourself

#### Questions

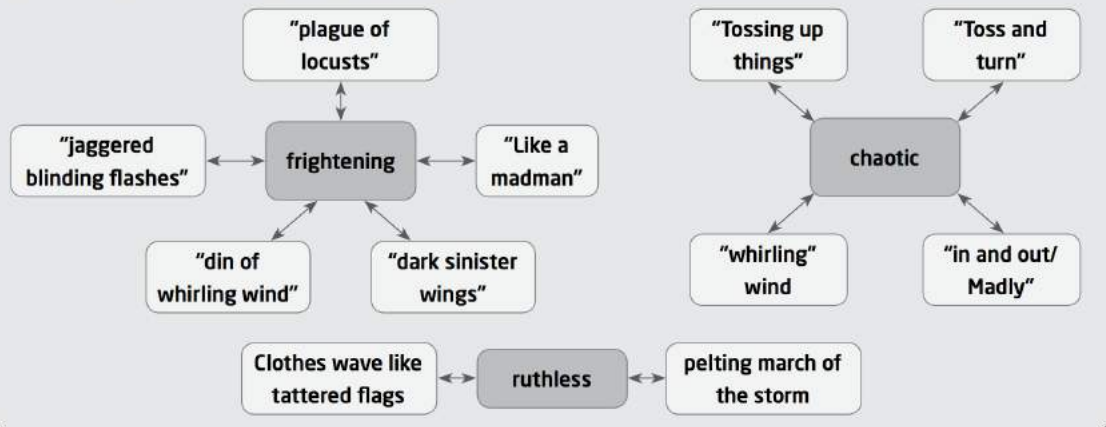
1. What does the word "plague" suggest about the impact of the storm? (2)
2. Explain the effect of the alliteration in "Toss and turn". (2)
3. Refer to lines 14 and 15: "The Wind whistles by/And trees bend to let it pass." Comment on the appropriateness of this image in the context of the poem. (2)
4. What effects do the references to "madman" and "madly" have? (1)
5. This poem could be read as a warning about the impact of colonialism in Africa. Do you agree with this statement? Justify this response by referring to the imagery. (3)

#### Essay question

The storm in "An African Thunderstorm" is a frightening, chaotic, ruthless force.

With reference to the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone**, critically discuss this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Plan your essay: Use three mind maps to prepare a draft, by organising references from the poem around the three key words in the question, like this:





## An African Elegy – Ben Okri

### Explanations of words

**bring forth** – produce, present

**wonders** – things causing surprise, astonishment and admiration

### Ben Okri, 1959–

Ben Okri is one of Africa's leading writers. He writes poetry, novels, essays and short stories. He was born in Nigeria, but spent his early childhood in London, while his father was studying to become a lawyer. When the family returned to Nigeria, Okri spent hours reading the many books in his father's extensive library. He decided at 14 years old to become a poet and he published his first novel at the age of 21. He studied at universities in Nigeria and Britain and moved to live permanently in Britain in 1988. His most famous work, the novel *The Famished Road*, won the most important prize for English literature, the Booker Prize, in 1991. Okri writes about the developments in Africa after the end of colonialism and examines the struggles against corruption and exploitation. He says poetry is "the great river of soul-murmurings that runs through humanity". He has won many awards for his work and campaigns against censorship.

### Summary

This poem describes the way the people of Africa, in spite of the poverty and suffering they have experienced in the past and continue to experience in the present, are still able to find joy in the small pleasures of life and have hope for the future.

### Discussion

#### Title

- An "elegy" is usually a mournful poem written to mark someone's death. It may also be a serious, thoughtful poem. The title, therefore, indicates that the poem is about serious matters such as grief and pain. However, the poem is not a "traditional" elegy because, although the poem mentions the "suffering" (line 4) and "pain" (line 8) of Africans, it describes their ability to enjoy life in spite of their troubles, and to keep their optimism about life's possibilities.
- The fact that it is described as an *African* elegy suggests that Africans have a unique way of dealing with grief and pain.

#### Type and form

- The poem is written in **free verse**, with no regular **metre** or rhyme scheme.
- There are six stanzas of five lines each.
- There are many examples of enjambment (run-on lines) in the poem, contrasted with shorter sentences that stop at the end of the line. For example, in the first stanza, lines 1 and 2 are enjambed, while line 3 is short, and lines 4 and 5 are enjambed. This creates changes in the **pace** of the poem.

#### Theme

The theme of the poem is the African people's ability to find joy and wonder in life in spite of their difficult circumstances, and to celebrate life's possibilities and mysteries.

#### Imagery and sound devices

- In Stanza 1, the speaker compares Africans to "miracles ... Time" (lines 1 and 2). This suggests that Africans are in some way chosen by God to bear suffering, and then eventually to be celebrated as "the wonders of the earth" (line 5). This **metaphor** introduces the idea that the African experience of life, and way of dealing with life, is unique and astonishing.

- ▶ Stanza 2 describes how some things may “burn” (line 6) at one point yet “turn golden” at another time. These **metaphors** show the reader that one’s attitude can decide the way in which one experiences something.
- ▶ He mentions “the mystery of our pain” (line 8) which he says allows Africans to “sing ... things” (line 10) even as they endure poverty.
- ▶ This image, of rejoicing in the midst of pain, is continued in Stanza 3. The speaker points out that Africans do not curse pleasant things (like warm air, tasty fruit or the beauty of light moving on water). Instead, he says they “bless” (lines 14 and 15) these things.
- ▶ In Stanza 4 the speaker uses **personification** to describe how the “sweet” (line 16) African music “makes the air remember” (line 17). He also personifies “Time” (line 19), suggesting that Time will eventually reveal the “secret miracles” that are “at work” (line 18).
- ▶ He ends Stanza 4 by stating that he has “heard the dead singing” (line 20) and continues this image in Stanza 5. He says that the message of “the dead” (line 20) is that “life is good” (line 22) and people should live “gently”, “With fire” and “with hope” (lines 23–25). In this way he compares his beliefs to a message from his dead ancestors.
- ▶ He uses **enjambment** to create a smooth flow from the last line of Stanza 5 to the final stanza. The last line, line 25, introduces the idea of the “wonder” to be found in the world around us, and this image is developed in Stanza 6.
- ▶ In Stanza 6, the speaker describes “the unseen” that “moves” in everything around us (line 27). He presents us with two images that emphasise the ideas of mystery, surprise and joy – “The ocean is full of songs”; “The sky is not an enemy” (lines 28–29). The last line of the poem uses **personification** to present us with an image that sums up the message of the poem: “Destiny is our friend”.

### Diction

In stanzas 1, 2 and 3 the speaker uses several words to indicate the painful circumstances that many Africans live with:

- ▶ He begins in Stanza 1 by mentioning that God has made Africans in order that they experience “bitter fruit” (line 2) and “suffering” (line 4).
- ▶ He speaks in Stanza 2 of things that “burn” him (line 6) and says that his people “bear poverty” (line 9).
- ▶ In Stanza 3 he uses the word “curse” (line 11) and in line 14 he mentions “pain”.

Throughout the poem, however, positive words outnumber negative:

- ▶ In Stanza 1 we find the words “miracles” (line 1), “precious” (line 3) and “the wonders of the earth” (line 5).
- ▶ Stanza 2 describes how some difficult things “turn golden” (line 7) when the speaker is feeling happy, and how even poor people are still able to “sing ... things” (line 10).
- ▶ Stanza 3 mentions the small pleasures of life and how African people are still able to “bless” them (line 14) – the opposite of the word “curse” in line 11. The speaker describes “the air ... warm” (line 11), the “fruit ... good” (line 12) and the bouncing “light” (line 13).
- ▶ In Stanza 4 the speaker describes Africa’s “sweet” music (line 16) and talks of “secret ... work” (line 18). The stanza ends with the description of how he has heard the dead “singing” (line 20).
- ▶ The speaker continues to use words with pleasant, happy **connotations** in Stanza 5. The speaker describes what the dead tell him: “This life is good”



(line 22) and we should “live it gently” (line 23) and with “fire” and “hope” (line 24) because there is “wonder” in the world (line 25).

- Finally, in Stanza 6 the speaker uses words to describe his sense of the hidden mysteries that we sense but do not understand. He speaks of “surprise” (line 26) and the “unseen” (line 27). The natural world around us, the sea and sky, are “full of songs” (line 28) and “not an enemy” (line 29). “Destiny” – the fate that the future is bringing us – is our “friend” (line 30).

In this way, the diction of the poem supports the idea that although the world (Africa in particular) contains pain and sorrow, it is still a place of joy.

### Tone

In spite of the fact that the poem is called an “elegy” and deals with the suffering of the African people, the tone of the poem is optimistic, positive and full of wonder.

- In Stanza 1, the speaker describes his people as “miracles that God made” (line 1) who are “precious” (line 3) and will be “wonders of the earth” (line 5).
- Stanza 2 mentions the “mystery of our pain” (line 8) which allows people to “sing” and “dream” (line 10) in the midst of suffering. This continues the tone of joyful amazement.
- The speaker emphasises in Stanza 3 that they “never curse” (line 11) but rather “bless” (lines 14–15) “even in our pain” (line 14), which reinforces the optimistic, positive tone.
- The idea of joy and mystery is brought up again in Stanza 4, where the speaker mentions “There are secret miracles ... forth” (lines 17–18). He says he has “heard the dead singing” (line 20).
- In Stanza 5 the speaker develops the positive tone. The singing dead bring a message that is not gloomy, but of hope – “life is good” (line 22) and we should enjoy it and be both kind and passionate (“live ... fire”, lines 23–24) and never forget our sense of “wonder” (line 25).
- The final stanza introduces a tone of celebration and triumph. The speaker says there is “surprise” (lines 26) and that “In everything the unseen moves” (line 27) or directs human existence. In spite of our difficulties, the natural world is “full of songs” (line 28) and “not an enemy” (line 29). In fact, far from being hostile, our fate and our future (“Destiny” in line 30) are “our friend”.

### Important points

Form	
<b>Whole poem</b>	Free verse No rhyme scheme Five stanzas of five lines each
Content and poetic devices	
<b>Stanza 1:</b>	The speaker acknowledges African suffering but maintains that God made Africans as “miracles” and the “wonders of the earth”. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metaphors – “We ... Time”; “one ... earth”</li> <li>• Enjambment – lines 1–2 and 4–5</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 2:</b>	The speaker points out that Africans can endure poverty and still find joy in life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metaphors – “things ... happy”; “mystery ... pain”</li> <li>• Enjambment – lines 6–7 and 9–10</li> <li>• Rhetorical question – line 8</li> </ul>

<b>Stanza 3:</b>	Suffering has not caused Africans to become bitter – they are still able to appreciate life's pleasures. The speaker lists some of the things that cause joy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjambment lines 11–13</li> <li>• Repetition "We bless ..."</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 4:</b>	The speaker shows a mystical understanding of the world, speaking of "secret miracles" and "the dead singing". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjambment lines 18–19</li> <li>• Personification "makes ... remember"; "Time ... forth"</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 5:</b>	The speaker explains what "the dead" have told him about living life to the full. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjambment lines 21–24</li> </ul>
<b>Stanza 6:</b>	The speaker states his certainty that the universe is not a hostile place but full of miraculous possibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjambment lines 26–27</li> <li>• Metaphor – "The ... songs" (line 28)</li> <li>• Personification "The sky is not an enemy"; "Destiny is our friend"</li> </ul>

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Refer to Stanza 1.
  - 1.1 In your own words explain why, according to the speaker, God created the people of Africa. (2)
  - 1.2 In lines 4 and 5 the speaker says "one day our suffering/Will turn into the wonders of the earth". What do you think he means by this? (2)
2. Refer to Stanza 2.
  - 2.1 Discuss the contrast between the images in line 6 ("things that burn") and line 7 ("that turn golden"). (2)
  - 2.2 Explain why the poet uses the phrase "the mystery of our pain" (line 8). (2)
3. In your own words summarise the message that the speaker receives from "the dead" in lines 20–30. (3)
4. Would you agree that the last line of the poem summarises the speaker's message? Justify your answer, referring to the imagery and diction used in the text. (3)

#### Essay question

In "An African Elegy", Okri mourns the pain of Africa and celebrates its unique resilience.

Discuss the validity of the above statement, paying close attention to the **diction, imagery and tone** used in the poem. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Use this outline to structure your essay:

- *Introductory paragraph*: Contextualise briefly – explain 'elegy' and point out that this poem deals with both suffering and celebration.
- *Body paragraph 1*: Discuss the diction used in the poem, pointing out that, although there are negative words, the positive ones outnumber them.
- *Body paragraph 2*: Mention the imagery used by the speaker and show how it is overwhelmingly positive, in spite of the acknowledgement of hardships.
- *Body paragraph 3*: Identify the tone of celebration in the poem.
- *Conclusion*: Summarise your arguments to show that the statement is a valid one.



## somewhere i have never travelled,gladly beyond – EE Cummings

### Explanations of words

**compels** – in this context, fascinates, keeps your attention

**enclose** – surround and cover completely

**fragility** – being easily broken or damaged

**intense** – concentrated

**perceive** – see or notice; in this context, understand

**skilfully** – cleverly

### EE Cummings, 1894–1962

Edward Estlin Cummings is one of the most famous American poets of the twentieth century, best known for his innovative and experimental uses of language. From the age of eight, until he was 22, he wrote a poem every day. He studied English Literature at Harvard University, where his father was a professor. He was a pacifist, but he volunteered as an ambulance driver in France during World War I. After the war, Cummings went to live in the countryside, where he built his writing career. In addition to writing thousands of poems, he wrote plays, novels and essays and was also a talented painter. In his poetry, he introduced radically new ways of writing by arranging words in unusual sequences on the page, by breaking the rules of punctuation and grammar and by constructing new words. He wrote on simple themes (such as love, childhood and nature) and was considered the best love poet of his time. He also used satire in his work and believed strongly in the power of the individual.

### Summary

The speaker is addressing the one he loves, with great tenderness and wonder. He admits the power that person has over him but does not really understand why it should be so. Even the small things about that person (textures, gestures, a look) are utterly fascinating.

### Discussion

#### Title

The first line of the poem serves as the title of the poem. The use of lower case letters, the unusual word order, the unfinished sentence and the missing space after the comma tell us we can expect unusual ways of using language in the poem.

#### Type and form

- The poem has five stanzas of four lines each.
- Although the lines are roughly the same length, the **metre** of the poem is irregular and the use of **enjambment** gives the poem a free-flowing, irregular **rhythm**.
- Only the second and fourth lines in the last stanza **rhyme**.
- Cummings is famous for his unusual use of punctuation, word order and vocabulary. Although the **structure** of this poem is fairly 'normal' there are many examples of unusual punctuation. For example, he does not use any capital letters, except for the word "Spring" in line 7. This increases the free-flowing rhythm, as if the speaker is thinking to himself rather than speaking.
- He also leaves out the spaces between some words after a comma or brackets, for example "travelled,gladly" in line 1 and "skilfully,mysteriously)her first rose" in line 8. This strengthens the link between the two words that are joined.
- In the fifth stanza, the speaker uses brackets in an unusual way. In a poem which is free-flowing and indicates the stream of his thoughts, he inserts brackets around three lines as if saying something as an 'aside' to himself, and then leaves the last line out of the brackets as if it is a continuation of the fourth stanza (and indeed the subject matter could be regarded as related). Yet the fifth stanza is tied together by the only rhyming words in the poem. This seemingly random use of brackets could be seen as intensifying the theme of the poem.

### Theme

The poem deals with the mysterious, even incomprehensible nature of love, while also emphasising its overwhelming force and intensity.

### Imagery and sound devices

#### Stanza 1

- Cummings uses unusual combinations of words to provide a fresh and vivid description of something hard to describe. In lines 1 and 2 he speaks of a place “somewhere i have never travelled” where the eyes of his loved one “have their silence”. This place is not a physical location, but an emotional destination where he experiences the “silence” or peaceful stillness he feels as he gazes into the eyes of his beloved.
- He speaks of “things which enclose me” in line 3, a **metaphor** describing his feeling of total immersion in love.
- He feels there are some things he “cannot touch” or deal with because they are “too near” (line 4) – too intimate perhaps, leading to intense vulnerability.

#### Stanza 2

- The speaker picks up the idea of “enclosing”, saying that one look from his loved one “will uncloset me” (line 5) – as if they have the “key” to his heart or mind. Even if he has “closed” himself like clenched fingers, his beloved can “open” him bit by bit, like a rose opening gradually (lines 6–8).

#### Stanza 3

Again he mentions the idea of closing, but this time the image is of him closing himself up. There are images of nature: “the heart ... flower” and “the snow ... descending”. The flower is personified: “this flower imagines” (line 11).

#### Stanza 4

- In this stanza the speaker describes “the power” of his beloved’s “intense fragility” (line 14) – a **paradox**.
- He uses **alliteration** in line 15 – “compels”, “colour” and “countries” – to emphasise how mesmerising he finds the delicate “fragility” of his beloved.
- He also uses **assonance** in line 16 – “rendering ... death ... forever” and “each breathing”.
- Line 16 describes each breath his loved one takes as “rendering death and forever”. This image suggests the depth of his love: complex concepts like “death” and “forever” (eternity) are contained in a single breath.

#### Stanza 5

- In lines 17–19 the speaker returns to the image of a flower, and the idea of closing and opening. He says that he knows “the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses” – another unusual metaphor which seems to make no sense – it has to be understood intuitively. The messages he reads in the beloved’s eyes, perhaps, give him a joy more intense than the deep red of a rose. Roses are often symbols of love in poetry.
- The last line of the poem seems to be a continuation of the thoughts he was describing in Stanza 4 when he mentioned the “intense fragility” of his beloved. He finishes the poem by referring to their “small hands” and saying “not even the rain” has smaller hands. This metaphor seems to compare the soft, gentle touch of the rain to the touch of small, delicate fingers.



### Diction

Words describing the power of his love include:

- ▶ Stanza 1 – “things ... enclose me” (line 3); “i cannot ... near” (line 4)
- ▶ Stanza 2 – “easily will uncloset me” (line 5); “you open ... myself” (line 7)
- ▶ Stanza 3 – “i ... beautifully, suddenly” (lines 9–10)
- ▶ Stanza 4 – “nothing ... equals the power” (lines 13–14); “compels me” (line 15); “death ... breathing” (line 16)

Words describing the mystery of love include:

- ▶ Stanza 1 – “beyond any experience” (lines 1–2)
- ▶ Stanza 2 – “mysteriously” (line 8)
- ▶ Stanza 4 – “nothing ... world” (line 13)

Words describing his loved one include:

- ▶ Stanza 1 – “your eyes ... silence” (line 2); “most frail gesture” (line 3)
- ▶ Stanza 2 – “slightest look” (line 5); “you open ... rose” (lines 7–8)
- ▶ Stanza 4 – “your intense fragility” (line 14); “rendering death ... breathing” (line 16)
- ▶ Stanza 5 – “the voice ... roses” (line 19); “such small hands” (line 20)

### Tone

The tone of this poem combines bewilderment at love’s mysterious power with a joyful acceptance of his love.

- ▶ In Stanza 1 the speaker says he has “never travelled” this path – it is “beyond any experience” but he allows his love to “enclose” him.
- ▶ In Stanza 2 he acknowledges that his loved one has the power to “uncloset” him with just the “slightest look” even though he has “closed” himself.
- ▶ Stanza 3 describes how he will obey any “wish” of his beloved, “very beautifully, suddenly”.
- ▶ He says in Stanza 4 that “nothing ... in this world” is equal to “the power” the beloved has over him; their “fragility ... compels” him and each breath they take seems to contain “death and forever”.
- ▶ In the last stanza the speaker says “i do not know” what gives his loved one such irresistible power over him, yet “something in me understands”.

### Important points

Form	Poetic devices
<b>Stanza 1</b>	Images showing the power of his emotions: “somewhere ... never travelled”; “beyond any experience”; “things ... enclose me”; “which ... too near” Images describing his loved one: “your eyes ... silence”; “in your ... gesture” Enjambment: lines 1–2
<b>Stanza 2</b>	Images of closing and unclosing: “your slightest ... me”; “i have ... fingers”; “you open ... myself” Images of flowers: “petal by petal”; “as Spring ... rose” Personification: “Spring ... her first rose” Enjambment: lines 5–6 and 7–8
<b>Stanza 3</b>	Images of closing: “if your ... close me”; “i ... will shut” Images of nature: “the heart ... flower”; “the snow ... descending” Personification: “this flower imagines” Enjambment: lines 9–10 and 11–12

Form	Poetic devices
<b>Stanza 4</b>	Paradox: "the power ... fragility" Enjambment: lines 13–14 Alliteration: "compels", "colour" and "countries" Assonance: "rendering death and forever"; "each breathing"
<b>Stanza 5</b>	Images of closing and opening: "i do not ... opens" Images of nature: "deeper ... roses"; "not even ... rain" Personification: "not even ... hands"

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Refer to Stanza 1.
  - 1.1 In line 1 the speaker uses the image of a journey: "somewhere i have never travelled". What does this tell us about his experience of love? (2)
  - 1.2 What do you think the speaker means by "your ... silence" (line 2)? (2)
  - 1.3 In line 4 the speaker seems to contradict himself when he mentions things he "cannot touch" because they are "too near". Discuss. (2)
2. Refer to Stanza 2. Explain how the image the speaker uses of being "unclosed" by his loved one expresses the power of his feelings. (2)
3. Refer to stanzas 2 and 3. The speaker uses the image of a flower in these lines. Why do you think he chooses this image? (2)
4. The speaker describes his loved one's physical delicacy.
  - 4.1 List as many references as you can find in the poem. (3)
  - 4.2 Explain how they contribute to our understanding of his feelings. (2)

#### Essay question

Cummings uses words, images and grammar in a way that seems almost illogical – yet he creates a reality that is vividly evoked and extremely moving.

By a close examination of the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** in "somewhere i have never travelled ...", evaluate the validity of the above statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

You can build your essay around these key points:

##### Diction

- Unusual words in the context – "*gladly ... experience*"; "*touching ... mysteriously*"; "*shut very beautifully*"
- Words that are made up – "unclose"
- Words that are used "wrongly" – "you open ... *myself*"; "each *breathing*"

##### Imagery

- Images of closing and unclosing; flowers and nature
- Contradictory or illogical images – "your eyes ... silence"; "i have closed ... as fingers"; "my life ... beautifully"; "the power ... fragility"; "the colour of ... countries"; "the voice ... eyes"

##### Tone

A tone of wonder and reverence; willing surrender to the power of love



## The Garden of Love – William Blake

### Explanations of words

- bore** – carried  
**briar** – wild rose with long, prickly stems  
**chapel** – church  
**midst** – middle  
**writ** – written



I went to the Garden of Love,  
And saw what I never had seen:  
A Chapel was built in the midst,  
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut, 5  
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;  
So I turned to the Garden of Love,  
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves, 10  
And tombstones where flowers should be:  
And priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars, my joys and desires.

### William Blake, 1757–1827

William Blake was an English poet, painter and printmaker, whose radical ideas about society, politics, marriage and sexuality were far ahead of his time. He was born in London and spent most of his life there. He had no formal schooling, but learnt to read and write at home. His parents recognised his talents and sent him to an art school when he was 10 years old. At 14, he started an apprenticeship as an engraver (book illustrator) and he worked for many years for book printers. Blake lived at the time of the Industrial Revolution, when there was major social and political upheaval in Britain. He was fiercely opposed to the many social injustices of that period, such as slavery, poverty and the exploitation of children. He was also opposed to the Church, but was a deeply spiritual person. During his lifetime and for years afterwards, Blake was not considered a major poet, but now he is recognised as one of the most important voices in English literature. He is considered a foremost Romantic poet, because of his belief that nature represented what was pure and ideal about the world.

### Summary

The speaker visits a garden or park in which he used to play. He finds that a church has been built there, and graves have replaced the lovely flowers he remembers. Priests in black gowns are walking about, and the doors of the church are closed. All the joy, freedom and pleasure associated with the garden has been destroyed, and replaced with repression, gloom and death.

### Discussion

#### Title

“The Garden of Love” refers to an actual garden that the speaker visited, but it also represents a state of innocent joyfulness. The capital letters used for “Garden” and “Love” indicate the **symbolism**.

#### Type and form

- The poem has three stanzas of four lines each.
- **Metre:** The first two stanzas have a fairly regular metre of eight or nine beats per line. The third stanza has two short lines, with eight beats each, and then two longer lines of ten beats each. This change mirrors the disruption of the speaker's mood towards the end of the poem.

- ▶ **Rhyme:** In the first two stanzas, the last words of the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other, for example, “seen” at the end of line 2 rhymes with “green” at the end of line 4. This is called end rhyme.
- ▶ In the third stanza, the change created by the longer lines is reinforced by a change in the rhyme scheme: the words at the ends of the lines do not rhyme with each other, but in lines 11 and 12 the fifth and the tenth syllable rhyme (gowns – rounds; briars – desires). This is called **internal rhyme** and it creates a dramatic **rhythm**.

### Theme

The poem deals with the way in which, according to the poet, our natural instincts and capacity for joy are restricted or even destroyed by institutions such as the Church. The Church teaches that worldly joys and pleasures are evil and that we should focus on the possibility of life after death.

### Imagery

The “Garden of Love” (line 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents innocence and natural joyfulness.</li> <li>• Is also an <b>allusion</b> to the Garden of Eden in the Old Testament of the Bible: Adam and Eve were able to live and love without shame, until they disobeyed God’s instructions and were then burdened with shame.</li> </ul>
The “Chapel” (line 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents Christianity and the Church. The poet felt that the Church of his day had become a repressive organisation, seeking to control people and suppress their natural desires and pleasures.</li> <li>• The gates of the chapel were closed, suggesting that the Church was not a welcoming, compassionate institution.</li> <li>• Over the door the words “Thou shalt not” (line 6) were written, emphasising that the Church concerns itself only with forbidding things and punishing sins.</li> <li>• The graves and tomb-stones have replaced the flowers. This indicates that the Church’s focus on sin and death (and what happens after death) destroys the beauty and joy of life.</li> <li>• The “priests in black gowns” (line 11) are seen as the enforcers of the Church’s laws. Like prison wardens, they patrol the Garden – “walking their rounds” and “binding” or controlling people’s natural impulses and desires.</li> </ul>
The “green” (line 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The colour green represents life, growth and the natural world. It is the <b>antithesis</b> (the opposite) of the black-robed priests who are obsessed with death and sin.</li> <li>• The village green was a place where everyone could play and socialise. It was, therefore, a place of happiness and relaxation.</li> <li>• It was also a communal (shared) space, not owned or controlled by one individual or organisation. It therefore represents a freedom from authority and control.</li> </ul>
The flowers (line 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “sweet flowers” (line 8) symbolise the happy freedom of the speaker’s youth, unburdened by restrictions or shame. He finds they have all gone, displaced by the chapel and the graves.</li> <li>• The plant imagery is picked up again in the reference to the Church’s rules as “briars” (thorny bushes) that imprison his “joys and desires” (line 12). The Church thus rejects the beauty and joyfulness of nature (the flowers) but focuses on the harsh, painful aspects (the thorns).</li> </ul>



### Diction

There is a strong contrast between the words the poet uses to describe the garden the speaker remembers, and those he uses to describe what he sees now. The garden he remembers was a place of joy and sweet playfulness; the garden he sees now is a place of death, guilt and imprisonment.

	The garden as it was	The garden as it is now
<b>Stanza 1</b>	"Garden of Love"; "play ... green"	"Chapel ... midst"
<b>Stanza 2</b>	"sweet flowers"	"gates ... shut"; "Thou shalt not"
<b>Stanza 3</b>	"Flowers"; "joys and desires"	"graves"; "tombstones"; "black gowns"; "binding with briars"

### Tone

The tone is almost dream-like, as the speaker describes the disturbing changes he discovers. He narrates what he sees, using the phrases "I went to ..."; "And saw"; "So I turned"; "And I saw". The poet uses **repetition** of the word "And" to emphasise how he notices one unpleasant change after another. This simple narration and the use of powerful symbols, such as flowers and tombstones, creates a mood almost of horror, as he gradually realises how the joyful place of his memory has been transformed into a place of death and oppression.

### Important points

	Structure	Content	Poetic devices
<b>Stanza 1</b>	4 lines, 8 beats each Lines 2 and 4 rhyme	The speaker describes how, when he returns to the "Garden" he used to play in, he finds that a church has been built in the middle of the space.	<b>Symbols:</b> The "Garden of Love" represents joy and innocence; the "Chapel" represents the gloomy repression of the Church.
<b>Stanza 2</b>	4 lines Lines 5–7: 9 beats Line 8: 8 beats Lines 6 and 8 rhyme	The speaker sees that the chapel is locked and has the words "Thou shalt not" over the door. He turns away from this forbidding sight to look at the garden that used to have so many lovely flowers.	The beauty of his memories of the garden and its flowers <b>contrast</b> with the gloomy description of a locked church with scolding, unpleasant words over its door.
<b>Stanza 3</b>	4 lines Lines 9 and 10: 8 beats Lines 11 and 12: 10 beats Lines 11 and 12: 5th and 10th syllables rhyme	The speaker sees that the garden is no longer full of flowers. Instead, there are graves and black-robed priests patrol the area, imprisoning all the speaker's happy impulses in "briars" of shame and guilt.	<b>Symbols:</b> The graves and tombstones represent death and the Church's fixation on the matter of life after death; the "black gowns" of the priests symbolise the dark, joyless attitude of the Church and its officers. The "briars" represent the feelings of shame, guilt and disapproval that the Church (and other institutions of our society) use to control and intimidate us.

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Refer to Stanza 1.
  - 1.1 How do we know that the poet is surprised by the changes that have taken place in the “Garden” that he visits? (2)
  - 1.2 Why do you think the poet describes the place as “the Garden of Love”? (2)
2. Refer to Stanza 2.
  - 2.1 Explain why the poet turns away from the chapel to look at the garden. (2)
  - 2.2 Comment on the poet’s diction in this stanza. How does his choice of words convey his feelings at this point? (3)
3. Refer to Stanza 3.
  - 3.1 Why does the poet say “where flowers *should be*” instead of “where flowers *used to be*”? (2)
  - 3.2 Describe the impression we get of the priests in line 11. (2)
  - 3.3 The poet says in line 12 that the priests are “binding” or tying up his “joys and desires” with thorny “briars”. This is obviously not meant literally – what does the poet mean by this? (2)

#### Essay question

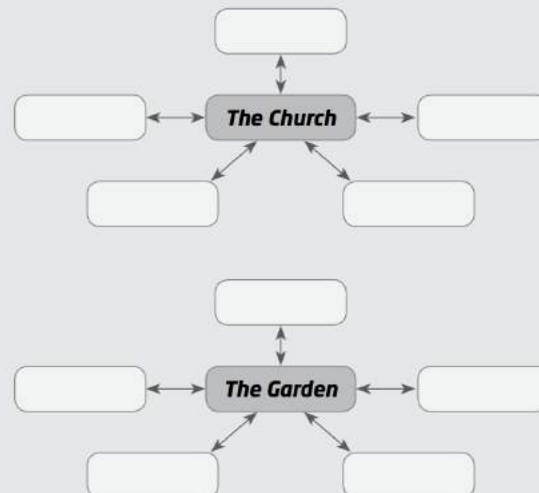
William Blake was very critical of the effect that the institutions of his time had on the individual.

By close reference to the **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** used in this poem, discuss how the poem reflects the truth of this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

You can use mind maps to help you prepare for writing this essay, like this:

- 1 Draw a mind map for the Church, adding to it all ways that the poet describes the Church.
- 2 Draw a mind map for the Garden, adding to it all the ways that the poet describes the Garden.

Now use the contrasts you have mapped out as a first draft for your essay.





## Felix Randal – Gerard Manley Hopkins



### Explanations of words

**battering** – hitting hard and repeatedly

**contended** – competed with each other

**cursed** – swore

**disorders** – sicknesses

**fatal** – causing death

**fleshed** – made into flesh; given a body

**forge** – a workshop in which metal objects (such as horse-shoes) are made and fixed

**grim** – in this context, intimidating and gloomy

**hardy** – strong, capable of enduring hardship

**peers** – those of equal status, age, abilities or qualifications to you

**pinning** – to fail gradually in health, either due to sickness or to grief

**random** – in this context, made from stones or blocks of uneven sizes and shapes

**tendered** – offered or given

Felix Randal the farrier, O he is dead then? my duty all ended,  
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome  
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it, and some  
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended 5  
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some  
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom  
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.  
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears, 10  
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,  
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,  
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!

### Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844–1889

Hopkins, considered one of the greatest poets of the Victorian era, introduced new ways of writing poetry and using language. However, his innovations and brilliance as a poet were only recognised long after he died. He was born in London and grew up in a very religious, artistic family that loved literature. He studied Classics at Oxford University and graduated at a young age. His first poem was published when he was 18. His parents were devout Anglicans, but he converted to Catholicism and became a Jesuit priest. When he became a priest, he burnt all his poetry and did not write for seven years. His superiors in the priesthood persuaded him to write again. His poetry reflects his commitment to religion, his love of nature and his melancholic reflections on the harshness of life. Hopkins served as a young priest in a number of churches in Britain, became a university teacher of the classics and ended his career at University College Dublin, in Ireland, where he was appointed Professor of Greek and Latin in 1884. He contracted typhoid fever and died in Ireland at the age of 45.

### Summary

The speaker hears of the death of Felix Randal, a farrier whom he has counselled (given spiritual guidance to) during his final illness. He remembers how Randal, once so strong, had wasted away physically and how he had fought against his sickness. He remembers that later Randal turned his thoughts to God and the promise of eternal life, which the speaker had convinced him of.

The speaker mentions the close relationship that developed between the sick person and the counsellor. He ends with a vivid description of Felix Randal in his healthier days.

### Discussion

#### Title

The title simply tells us whom the poem is about – the farrier Felix Randal, now dead after a long illness. He was a member of Hopkins's church and was named Felix Spencer in real life.

### Type and form

- This is an Italian or Petrarchan **sonnet**, divided into an octave (the first eight lines) and a sestet (the final six lines).
- It follows the traditional rhyme scheme of *abba, abba* and then *ccd, ccd*.

### Theme

- The poem deals with the fact that even the strongest die.
- The poem also suggests that religious faith has a healing, comforting power.
- Finally the poem is about the bond of friendship, even love, which grows between those who care for the sick, and those who are cared for.

### Imagery

- The poet creates a vivid image of Randal's admirable strength and power before his illness: "big-boned and hardy-handsome" (line 2), "boisterous years" and "powerful amidst peers" (lines 12 and 13). This is reinforced by Randal's ability to work easily with the huge horses he was making shoes for – "the great grey drayhorse" (line 14).
- In contrast to Randal's previous strength, the poet paints a clear picture of his physical and mental decline: "pining, pining" ... "reason rambled" (line 3); "Sickness broke him" (line 5); "thy tears" (line 10); "child ... Randal" (line 11).
- In lines 4 and 5 the poet uses **personification**: he gives the illness that destroyed Randal human characteristics: "Fatal ... contended?" and "Sickness broke him". In this way he emphasises the strength of the disease that was able to defeat such a powerful man.
- To ease the sadness of the contrast between these two images of Randal, the poet uses wonderful images of comfort and friendship that he, the priest, is able to give to the sick man: "a heavenlier ... earlier" (lines 6–7); and "my tongue ... thy tears" (line 10). The word "tongue" in line 10 represents the kind words the priest spoke to Randal – this is called **metonymy** (association between two concepts).
- He also mentions "our sweet ... ransom" (line 7) that he offered ("tendered") Randal – this refers to the Christian belief that Jesus Christ paid with his own life for our sins and thus obtained for us everlasting life, just as one might pay a kidnapper "ransom" money to free someone from captivity. The "reprieve" refers to the comfort and relief that this belief brings to the sick man.

### Diction and sound devices

- Hopkins uses **alliteration** to bring his descriptions to life. When describing Randal in his prime he uses these examples: "mould of man", "big-boned", "hardy-handsome" (line 2); "powerful ... peers" (line 13); "great grey", "bright ... battering" (line 14). The following examples describe the sick man: "reason rambled" (line 3); "Fatal four ... fleshed" (line 4). The comfort brought by the priest is described by: "heavenlier heart" (line 6); "reprieve and ransom" (line 7) and "tongue ... taught ... touch ... tears" (line 10).
- He uses words with **negative connotations** to describe Randal's sickness: "cursed" (line 5), the pitying phrase "Sickness broke him" (line 5) and "pining, pining", repeated for effect in line 3.
- When he discusses the effects of his friendship, the poet uses words with a **positive connotation**. "Heavenlier heart" (line 6) and "sweet reprieve and ransom" speak of the comfort Randal got from his faith and "tendered" has a gentle sound (lines 7–8). Other positive terms are: "endears" (line 9); "comfort", "quenched thy tears" (line 10) and "touched my heart" (line 11).



- In the last three lines the poet's words describing Randal have a positive, celebratory mood ("boisterous" and "powerful", line 12), and describe the huge horses that Randal handled with such strength and confidence ("great" and "bright and battering", line 14).

### Tone

The poem has a thoughtful yet conversational tone. It reminds us of how we react when we are told of someone who has died. The speaker moves from one aspect of the man's life to another, and mentions thoughtfully the comfort that friendship and faith can bring.

- Lines 1–4:** He begins by saying the farrier's name, and immediately goes on to ask, "O he is dead then?" as if he is talking to someone who has just brought him the news. He then describes his memory of the man, and how he watched him "pining" as the illness progressed, and how his "duty" as priest and counsellor is now over.
- Lines 5–8:** Now the speaker remembers thankfully how Randal got comfort and peace from the "sweet reprieve and ransom" that he as a priest could offer him. He ends the octave by hoping that God will "rest him" and forgive any sins Randal may have committed. The **colloquial** phrase "all road" means "if".
- Lines 9–11:** Here the speaker thinks about how the process of caring for the sick can lead to an affectionate bond ("endears ... endears", line 9). He becomes quite emotional as he addresses Randal directly ("My tongue ... comfort", line 10) and then cries out "child ... Randal!" (line 11) in a way that shows his real grief and loss.
- Lines 12–14:** Just as we might end our discussion of someone's death by giving our favourite memory of the person, the speaker becomes calmer and describes the strong, vigorous man in his "boisterous years", when he hammered and mended horse-shoes and nailed them to the hooves of the huge, powerful "great grey drayhorse" with no difficulty. The final image the speaker gives us is of the horse-shoe – the "bright and battering sandal", which gives us an idea of the satisfaction that Randal got from his work.

### Important points

Form	Content	Poetic devices
Italian/ Petrarchan sonnet  Octave: two stanzas of four lines each  Rhyme scheme: <i>abba abba</i>	The speaker hears of Randal's death and describes the effects of his illness on this strong man.	(Lines 1–4) Alliteration: "mould of man"; "big-boned"; "hardy-handsome"; "reason rambled"; "fatal ... fleshed" Repetition: "Pining, pining" Personification: "disorders ... contended"
	Randal was frustrated and upset at first but the care offered by the priest calmed him and allowed him to accept his situation.	(Lines 5–8) Personification: "Sickness broke him" Alliteration: "heavenlier heart"; "reprieve and ransom" Colloquialism: "all road"

- In the last three lines the poet's words describing Randal have a positive, celebratory mood ("boisterous" and "powerful", line 12), and describe the huge horses that Randal handled with such strength and confidence ("great" and "bright and battering", line 14).

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	Randal was frustrated and upset at first but the care offered by the priest calmed him and allowed him to accept his situation.	(Lines 5–8) Personification: "Sickness broke him" Alliteration: "heavenlier heart"; "reprieve and ransom" Colloquialism: "all road"



Form	Content	Poetic devices
Sestet: divided into two sections of three lines each	The speaker describes the affection that grows between the sick and their carers. He tells how moved he was by his friend's tears.	(Lines 9–11) Repetition: "endears"; "tears" "Felix" Alliteration: "seeing the sick"; "comfort – quenched"; "tears – touched" Metonymy: "tongue" to represent speech or words
Rhyme scheme: ccd ccd	He marvels at the contrast between the dying man and the healthy man a few years earlier and describes him vividly.	(Lines 12–14) Alliteration: "far from ... forethought"; "powerful ... peers; "great grey"; "bright and battering"

### Test yourself

#### Questions

- In line 1 the speaker says "my duty ... ended". In your own words explain what his "duty" had been. (2)
- What does the word "pining" (line 3) suggest about the effect of Randal's illness? (2)
- In line 5 the speaker says "Sickness broke him." Describe how Randal managed to find peace in his last days. (2)
- Refer to lines 9–11.
- 4.1 Explain what the speaker means in line 9. (2)
- 4.2 Comment on the appropriateness of the word "child" in line 11. (3)
- The last three lines end the poem with a positive, upbeat tone. Would you agree with this statement? Justify your response by referring to diction and imagery. (3)

#### Essay question

In "Felix Randal", Hopkins emphasises the temporary nature of human existence, and affirms the importance of religious faith.

Critically discuss the above statement, referring closely to the poet's use of **diction**, **imagery** and **tone** in your essay. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

Note that you are not required to say whether you agree with Hopkins' beliefs – you only have to discuss what the poet is saying, and how he is saying it.

Here is a framework for your essay:

- Introduction:** Write one or two sentences to explain what the poem is about. This will give a context for your argument.
- Paragraph 1:** Describe the contrasts of the strong and sick Felix Randal and quote from the poem to support your answer.
- Paragraph 2:** Explain how the illness overtook Randal and how he was powerless against it. Quote from the poem to show this and explain what the images tell us about our human bodies.
- Paragraph 3:** Write about religious faith and the care the speaker was able to give. Explain how this brings comfort.
- Conclusion:** Show that the images you have quoted support the statement. Extend your argument by making a concluding comment about the overall message of the poem.

## Vultures – Chinua Achebe

### Explanations of words

- bounteous** – in this context, generous
- bowel** – the lowest part of the intestine
- caverns** – deep caves
- clinging** – holding on tightly
- coil** – curl
- despair** – (verb) to give up all hope
- fumes** – smoke-like gas or smell, given off by a substance, such as petrol
- germ** – in this context, seed or bud
- glow-worm** – a tiny insect that gives off a light, visible at night
- inclined** – leaned towards
- lodged** – stuck firmly
- nestled** – snuggled up close
- particular** – in this context, fussy
- pebble** – a small, smooth stone
- perching** – sitting on a high place
- rebelliously** – disobediently
- roost** – place where birds sleep, usually high up
- tender** – affectionate; also, young and innocent
- unstirred** – undisturbed
- water-logged** – soaked with water
- wayside** – at the side of the road

### Chinua Achebe, 1930–2013

Albert Chinualumogu Achebe, known as the “father of modern African writing”, was one of Africa’s greatest writers. His first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is one of the most widely-read books of the twentieth century. Nelson Mandela said, “There was a writer named Chinua Achebe, in whose company the prison walls fell down.” Achebe was born in the south-eastern part of Nigeria and grew up listening to the storytelling of his mother and sister. He was a brilliant student and won a scholarship to study medicine. However, he decided to switch to studying literature, so that he could become a writer. In 1967, civil war erupted in Nigeria, when the people of Achebe’s home, Biafra, declared independence from the rest of Nigeria. Achebe supported this unsuccessful struggle for independence, which resulted in terrible suffering for the Biafran people and widespread starvation. He continued being active in politics after the war, but soon became disillusioned with the corruption he witnessed, and resigned his affiliations. Later he moved to the United States, where he lived and worked as a Professor of Languages and Literature until his death. Achebe’s work was concerned with the impact of European colonialism on African societies and his writing challenged the racist European views of Africa as a place of savagery. After writing many successful novels, he wrote mostly poetry in later life, much of which was concerned with war and its terrible effects.



### Summary

The speaker describes a pair of vultures who, after a huge meal of stinking, rotting meat, settle down lovingly together to sleep. He comments on how strange it is that even such ugly and unpleasant creatures can feel love for each other, and compares this to the commander of a Nazi concentration camp (Belsen). The commander has spent his day giving orders for millions to be gassed and burned, but feels love for his children and stops to buy them chocolate on the way home. At the end of the poem the speaker wonders whether we should feel grateful that even the most evil creature has the capacity to feel love and tenderness, or whether we should feel depressed and hopeless, because it does not seem possible to have the potential for love without also having the potential for hate – they are both part of us.

### Discussion

#### Title

The title “Vultures” is a **literal** reference to the scavenging bird species described in the first section of the poem, but it is also a metaphorical reference to people who commit evil deeds.

#### Type and form

- The poem is written in free verse with no rhyme scheme.
- It has no formal stanzas but is divided into four sections, indicated by indenting the line and using ellipses.
- Virtually all the lines are **enjambéd** (run-on) and are very short, although the sentences in the poem are long and the poet uses little punctuation. This gives an almost chaotic feeling as one reads.



### Theme

- The theme of the poem is the strange co-existence (living or existing together) of gross evil, and tender love.
- The reader is left with a question – is this cause for hope or for despair?

### Imagery and sound devices

- Lines 2 and 3 use **alliteration** to emphasise the dreary scene: “drizzle ... dawn”.
- The vulture’s perch, a dead tree, is compared to a “broken bone” in lines 5 and 6, introducing the idea of pain and death.
- In line 9, his head is described as “bashed-in”, which perhaps refers to the hollows of his eye-sockets, and as a “pebble”, which describes the round smooth shape of his skull.
- In the second section of the poem the speaker personifies love, describing how “love”, in spite of her usual fussiness, manages to find a suitable place to stay, even in the heart of the vulture. She will “pick a corner”, tidy it up and “fall asleep” – but she will turn her face towards the wall, so as not to see the disgusting place she is staying in, described as a “charnel-house”, full of dead bodies (lines 23–29).
- In the third section the speaker describes the Nazi camp commander going home smelling of the smoke of burning human bodies (“fumes ... roast”, lines 32–33). These “fumes” are personified as “clinging rebelliously” (lines 33–34) to the hairs in his nostrils. He cannot rid himself of the evil that he has done.
- The last section of the poem personifies “providence” or fate, which allows even an evil person (compared to “an ogre” in line 43) to feel some small amount of love and compassion for others – a “glow-worm” that is “encapsulated” (locked in a protective capsule or container) in the “icy caverns” of the evil person’s heart.
- This tiny spark of emotion is then described as the “germ” or seed that will ultimately allow evil to continue – the “perpetuity” of evil is “lodged” in it.

### Diction

- In the first section the speaker uses very unpleasant words to describe the vultures and their food. He sets the scene by mentioning the “greyness and drizzle” of a “despondent” morning; the tree the vultures are sitting on is “dead” and looks like a “broken bone” (line 5).
- He mentions that the dawn is “unstirred ... sunbreak” (lines 3–4). This adds to the gloomy atmosphere as it indicates that there is no sign that the sun will break through the clouds.
- Although the word “harbinger” means merely a messenger bringing news of what is ahead, it is often used in the phrase “a harbinger of doom” and has a **negative connotation**.
- The vulture’s head is “bashed-in” (line 9) which reinforces the idea of broken bones, and his body is “a dump” and “gross” (line 11).
- The food the vultures eat is from a “swollen corpse” in a “water-logged ditch” (indicating decay and stagnant water) and they break open the corpse’s “bowel” to eat from it. Their eyes are “cold” and “telescopic”, making them sound like heartless machines, rather than living creatures.
- The words in the second section describe the strange scene of a “charnel-house” providing a home for Love, who like a proud housekeeper picks a spot to “tidy” and “coil up” in, turning her face away from the horrible scenes around her (lines 26–29).

- ▶ Similarly, in the third section the horrible words co-exist with the pleasant ones – the speaker mentions the “fumes” of “human roast” and “hairy nostrils”, and then talks about the “wayside sweet-shop” and “chocolates” for his “tender offspring” waiting for “Daddy’s return” (lines 32–40).
- ▶ The same contrasts are evident in the last section, where the speaker uses the words “Praise” and “bounteous” in line 41, and a “tiny glow-worm” (line 44) of “kindred love” (line 49) but also mentions an “ogre” in line 43, and the “icy ... heart” (lines 46–47). He wonders if we may feel “despair” because of the “perpetuity of evil” (lines 47 and 50–51).

### Tone

Section 1, lines 1–21	The tone is of disgust and revulsion – the speaker describes the dreary day and the ugly vultures relaxing after a meal of rotting flesh.
Section 2, lines 22–29	The tone is of puzzlement as the speaker marvels that love could find a place in the heart of such an ugly creature, with such disgusting habits.
Section 3, lines 30–40	The tone is almost of horror as the speaker contrasts the unimaginable evil that the Commandant is guilty of with his feelings of tender kindness for his children, who wait eagerly for their beloved father to come home.
Section 4, lines 41–51	Here the speaker’s tone becomes resigned and pessimistic as he offers us a choice of being thankful for this capacity for love, or feeling “despair” because the capacity for evil seems to go together with it – they are both an integral part of human nature.

### Important points

	Content	Poetic devices
Section 1, lines 1–21	Description of the vultures	Alliteration: “drizzle ... despondent dawn” Metaphors: “broken ... tree”; a “pebble ... stem”
Section 2, lines 22–29	Commenting on the strangeness of feelings of love between such disgusting creatures	Personification of love: “will ... wall!”
Section 3, lines 30–40	Description of the Belsen camp Commandant	Contrast between the horror of “fumes ... nostrils” and the everyday pleasantness of “the wayside ... return”
Section 4, lines 41–51	Reflection on the two sides of human nature	Metaphors: “an ogre”; “a tiny ... tenderness”; “icy ... heart”; “the very ... evil”

### Test yourself

#### Questions

1. Refer to lines 7–13. Quote words or phrases that give contrasting descriptions of the vultures. (2)
2. What impression does the word “gorged” (line 18) give us of the vultures? (2)
3. Read lines 23–29: “love ... wall”. Discuss how this description contributes to our understanding of the poet’s view of love. (2)
4. Comment on the impact of the phrase “human roast” in line 33. (2)
5. The speaker seems to use both the vultures and the camp Commandant as symbols of evil. Do you think this judgement is a valid one? Explain your answer. (2)



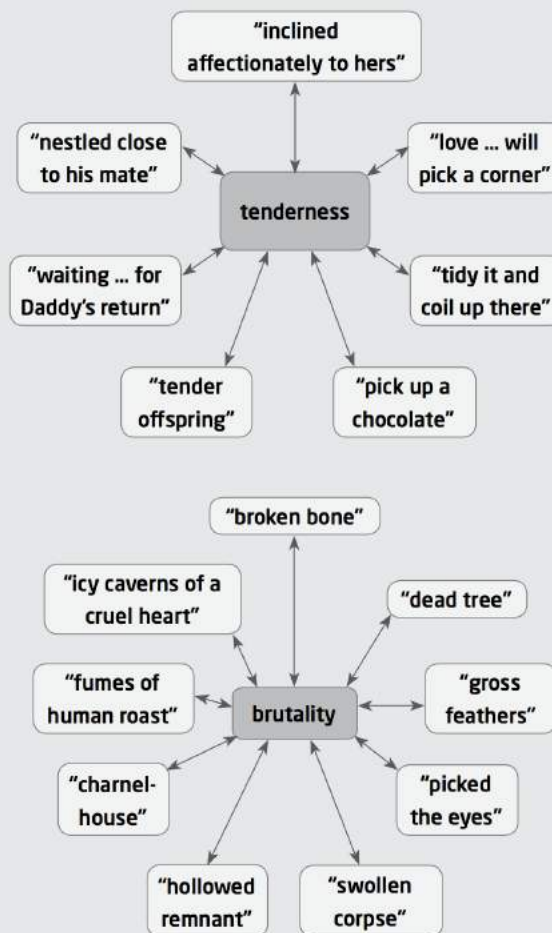
6. Refer to line 45. What does the word “encapsulated” suggest about how tenderness survives in a “cruel heart”? (2)
7. Refer to the last section of the poem. Do you think the poet gives a convincing description of human nature? Explain your answer. (3)

#### Essay question

In “Vultures”, Chinua Achebe presents a chilling description of humanity’s capacity for both tenderness and brutality.

Write an essay of 250–300 words in which you discuss the validity of this statement. Examine closely the poet’s use of **diction**, **imagery** and **tone**. (10)

Plan your essay by using two mind maps to prepare a draft. The mind maps will organise references from the poem around the key words in the question, like this:



## Part

# 3

## Exam preparation

### What to expect in the exam

#### Structure:

- ▶ The Literature exam (Paper 2) is two hours and thirty minutes long, and is out of 80 marks.
- ▶ The poetry section (Section A) is out of 30 marks.
- ▶ There will be FIVE questions in this section – FOUR of them will be on prescribed poems, and ONE will be an unseen poem.
- ▶ You have to choose any TWO of the prescribed poem questions. There will be one essay question, and three contextual questions.
- ▶ The unseen poem is COMPULSORY and will have contextual questions.

#### Length:

- ▶ The length of the poetry essay should be 250–300 words.
- ▶ The length of your answers to the contextual questions should be determined by the mark allocation.

### Exam tips

1. In the poetry section of the Literature exam, the questions focus on how the poet uses **diction, imagery** and **tone** to create an effect or to communicate a message. *It is therefore not enough for you to have a thorough understanding of what the words mean, or what the poem is saying.* You must be able to explain what the effects of the words are, and what makes the poet use those words in particular.
2. In the poetry essay, you will be asked to discuss a statement, or to evaluate a section of the poem – for example, the ending of the poem. You will be asked to examine **diction, imagery** and **tone** in your discussion or evaluation. Focus on answering the question (for example, discussing the validity of the statement) but remember to refer throughout to how the diction, imagery and tone support your answer.
3. In the contextual questions, there are usually two questions of two marks each and two questions of three marks each.

Questions 1–2: These questions test your understanding of the content of the poem and of how individual words, phrases or images are used. Question 3, for 3 marks, also requires you to explain how the diction, imagery or tone contributes to the poem, but in more detail.

Here are some of the ways in which these questions may be phrased:

- ▶ What does the word ... suggest/convey/indicate about ...?
- ▶ Explain the effect of ...
- ▶ Discuss/comment on the appropriateness/significance of ...
- ▶ What impression are we given by the use of ...?
- ▶ Account for the inclusion of ...
- ▶ How does the poet convey ... by the use of diction/tone?

To prepare for these kinds of questions you need to understand not only what is being said, but what the effect is of a particular word or image. Does a word have positive or negative **connotations**? Is the poet using an image that gives a



pleasant impression, or an unpleasant one? What is the poet trying to emphasise by repeating this phrase, or by using that alliteration?

4. The last, three-mark question is like a mini-essay. It will require you to evaluate aspects of the poem, or to give (and justify) your own opinion.

Here are examples of some of the ways in which these questions may be phrased:

- ▶ “Refer to lines ... Critically discuss how the tone of the ... reinforces the central idea of the poem.”
- ▶ A statement is given, and you are asked the following: “Do you agree? Justify/motivate your answer by referring to ...”
- ▶ “By close reference to diction/imagery/tone, show how ... is portrayed in the poem.”
- ▶ “Are the last two lines a valid conclusion to the poem?”
- ▶ “Comment on how the tone of the last two lines supports the main idea of the poem.”

To answer these kinds of questions effectively, you have to give your opinion about how appropriate or successful a certain aspect of the poem is, and back up your opinion by referring to how the poet has used diction, imagery and tone.

5. Here is a fuller explanation of some of the terminology used in the poetry questions:

**Account for** – give reasons for

**Appropriateness** – suitability in this context

**Assess** – examine the information and make a judgement based on the given criteria

**Attitude** – one’s feelings and beliefs about something

**Comment on** – say something about; explain what something means and what its relevance is

**Compare** – look for ways in which two things are similar

**Context** – the particular setting and background in which a word or image is used

**Contrast** – look for ways in which two things are different

**Contribute** – to add something of value

**Convey** – to communicate something clearly, for example a tone or message

**Critically** – having an attitude of evaluation and interpretation, in order to assess the value or validity of something

**Describe** – give relevant information about something; communicate information, or an opinion, in an indirect way

**Discuss** – talk about the different aspects of something

**Emphasise** – to show that something is important by drawing attention to it

**Evaluate** – assess the merits of something or the extent to which something is true

**Identify** – point out

**Illustrate** – give examples or show

**Impression** – a feeling, attitude or opinion about something that is based on the information given

**Indicate** – show or demonstrate

**Interpret** – understand or explain something in a particular way

**Justify** – give valid reasons for

**Motivate** – show your reasons for saying something

**Portray** – describe or present

**Significance** – importance in a particular context

**Support** – give more evidence or reasons for

**Valid** – reasonable, possibly true

**Your opinion** – your beliefs and conclusions about something, based on the evidence you have gathered

### Example of a contextual question

#### REMEMBER – Christina Rossetti

Read the poem (on page 8 of this Study Guide) and then answer the questions below.

1. Explain the effect of the repetition of the words “gone away” in lines 1 and 2. (2)  
*Repetition usually emphasises an important element, so try to identify why the speaker would want to emphasise the fact that she will be “gone away”.*
2. Refer to line 4 “half-turn to go yet turning stay”. (3)  
Comment on the appropriateness of this image in the context of the poem.  
*Say why this particular image is an important or suitable one in this poem.*
3. Refer to line 9. What change in outlook does the word “Yet” introduce? (2)  
*Look at the speaker’s mood, and what she is saying before line 9 – how does this change after the word “yet”?*
4. Critically discuss how the tone of the final two lines reinforces the central idea of the poem. (3)  
*Think about the tone of the two lines, considering things like word choice and imagery. Then think about how this tone supports the theme of the poem: love and the memory of love.*

#### Model answers

1. This repetition introduces one of the main themes of the poem – death (1) – and emphasises how final death is (1).
2. This image describes the speaker’s reluctance to leave her loved one during their everyday visits (1) but also refers to the way death brings a final ‘turning-away’ (1) and how unwilling the speaker is to accept this final parting (1).
3. In lines 1–8 the speaker is asking her loved one to keep her memory alive after her death (1), but in line 9 she realises that she does not want them to be unhappy, so she accepts that it would be better for them to forget her eventually (1).
4. In these last two lines, the speaker contrasts two images: firstly, her beloved having allowed her memory to fade (she uses the words “forget” and “smile” to indicate that forgetting her might allow them to be happy again, which she accepts would be “better”) (1); secondly, she describes her loved one becoming “sad” because they are trying to continually “remember” her (1). The calm, loving tone of the last two lines indicates that she has made her peace with being forgotten, as long as her beloved is happy (1).



## Example of an essay question

### Writing the poetry essay

Examine the question very carefully so that you will be able to focus on writing an answer that is relevant, rather than just writing down whatever you know about the poem. The poetry essay is quite short, only 250 to 300 words, but in an exam you have a short time in which to write, and a lot of information and discussion to cover. So it is a good idea to take a few minutes to plan your essay, even if you quickly draw a mind map.

Introduce your essay with a brief explanation of what the poem deals with, making sure that what you say is relevant to the topic. Then write the body of the essay. Each paragraph should deal with a different aspect of the topic – for example, one paragraph covering diction, one covering imagery, etc. If you are asked to discuss or evaluate a statement about the poem, you could devote one paragraph to each aspect of the statement (where appropriate). As you write, keep the word count in mind – it is surprisingly easy to write too much. Your conclusion can briefly restate the issue you have been discussing, giving your final assessment or evaluation.

### Example of an essay question

Rossetti's "Remember" reveals the victory of love over the fear of death.

Evaluate the validity of the above statement by a close examination of the **diction, imagery and tone** of the poem.

Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). (10)

### Model answer

In "Remember", the speaker begs her loved one to remember her after her death because she cannot bear the idea of completely disappearing. By the end of the poem, however, she concedes that it is better to forget, if remembering will make them unhappy.

She describes death as "the silent land" and repeats the words "gone away", "remember" and "no more", which give a tone of urgency and pleading. Death is described as an absence and a silence. In contrast to this she mentions the pleasant, everyday activities that they enjoy together – holding hands, talking of their possible future together. She emphasises that death will end this and that all that will be left is memory – "only remember me" is repeated in line 7.

She introduces the image of 'turning away' in line 4, describing her reluctance to leave her loved one when they are together. This reinforces the idea of death as an absence – after death she will not be able to turn back and "stay". Remembering her will be the only thing her loved one can do for her after death – it will be too "late" to "counsel" or "pray".

The sestet opens with "Yet" and this signals a change of attitude and tone. She says "do not grieve" if they should happen to forget her "for a while".

She mentions the "darkness and corruption" of death, but with a determinedly positive tone. If there is "a vestige" left of her consciousness, then she would definitely not want their memories to cause them pain.

In the last two lines of the poem she contrasts two images: one of remembering and being sad, and the other of forgetting and smiling. These lines show her resolve to put the happiness of her loved one before her own selfish fears.

**Assessment rubric for literary essay: Poetry (10 marks)**

Criteria	Exceptional 8–10	Skilful 6–7	Moderate 4–5	Elementary 2–3	Inadequate 0–1
<p><b>CONTENT</b></p> <p>Interpretation of topic. Depth of argument, justification and grasp of text.</p> <p><b>7 MARKS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-depth interpretation of topic</li> <li>Range of striking arguments; extensively supported from poem</li> <li>Excellent understanding of genre and poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows understanding and has interpreted topic well</li> <li>Fairly detailed response</li> <li>Sound arguments given, but not all of them as well motivated as they could be</li> <li>Understanding of genre and poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair interpretation of topic</li> <li>Some good points in support of topic</li> <li>Some arguments supported, but evidence is not always convincing</li> <li>Basic understanding of genre and poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsatisfactory interpretation of topic.</li> <li>Hardly any points in support of topic</li> <li>Inadequate understanding of genre and poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No understanding of the topic</li> <li>No reference to the poem</li> <li>Learner has not come to grips with genre and poem</li> </ul>
<p><b>STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE</b></p> <p>Structure, logical flow and presentation. Language, tone and style used in the essay.</p> <p><b>3 MARKS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coherent structure</li> <li>Arguments well-structured and clearly developed</li> <li>Language, tone and style mature, impressive, correct</li> <li>virtually error-free grammar, spelling and punctuation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear structure and logical flow of argument</li> <li>Flow of argument can be followed</li> <li>Language, tone and style largely correct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some evidence of structure</li> <li>Essay lacks a well-structured flow of logic and coherence</li> <li>Language errors minor; tone and style mostly appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structure shows faulty planning</li> <li>Arguments not logically arranged</li> <li>Language errors evident</li> <li>Inappropriate tone and style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly structured</li> <li>Serious language errors and incorrect style</li> </ul>
<b>MARK RANGE</b>	8–10	6–7	4–5	2–3	0–1

NOTE: If a candidate has ignored the content completely and written a creative essay instead, award a 0 mark for both Content and Structure and Language.



## Part 4 Answers

### Remember

(page 8)

#### Questions

1. The speaker describes death as a country far away, where there is silence and darkness. She repeats the words “gone away” to emphasise the infinite remoteness of this “silent land”. She also mentions the physical decay that death brings. *(To get the full 2 marks, you need to mention the distance, the silence, the darkness and the corruption.)*
2. We get the impression that they had a close and loving relationship. She mentions how they held hands, which implies affection (1). She also mentions how they made plans for the future, and uses the words “counsel” and “pray”, which suggest a caring relationship (1). She also describes how sometimes she would start turning away to leave, and then decide she would stay longer, and turn back – suggesting a lover’s reluctance to leave the loved one (1). *(Mention all aspects of their relationship – the physical affection, the planned future, and her unwillingness to leave him.)*
3. The repetition of the phrase “remember me” emphasises how desperately she wants to remain part of her loved one’s thoughts, even after she is dead. It is almost like a command to him (1). She also repeats “gone away” and “no more” which emphasises the finality of death (1).
4. The word “Yet” suggests that the speaker is changing her attitude in some way. After emphasising how important it is to her that she should be remembered, it occurs to her that it is more important to her that her loved one should be happy (1). She does not want his memories of her to cause him lasting unhappiness (1). She becomes more resigned to the idea that his memories of her should eventually fade (1).
5. She is referring to the possibility that even after a person dies (“darkness”) and their body decays (“corruption”) (1), there might be some faint remnant (“vestige”) of their consciousness still in existence somewhere (1).
6. Your own response, for example: Yes, these two lines summarise her conclusions, that remembering her might bring sadness, whereas her loved one could go on to have a happy life if he allows his memories of her to fade (1). This shows she is prepared to sacrifice her wish to be remembered (1) in order to ensure his future happiness (1).

#### Sample essay

*This sample answer is longer than you will need to write in the exam, to give you an idea of the different and detailed points you can make.*

The poem begins with an instruction from the speaker to “Remember me” and ends with two lines beginning “Better by far you should forget and smile”. These two ideas are the main theme of the poem.

The speaker uses words that describe her death, such as “gone away” and “the silent land”. These emphasise that death is felt as an absence, and that she wants her loved one to “only remember” to make that absence more bearable. She uses phrases to describe their everyday intimacy and to describe the small pleasures she wants them to remember, for example, “hold me by the hand”. In the second part of the poem she realises that remembering her for too long might cause pain (“remember and be sad”) or that they might feel guilty about moving on with their lives (“if you should forget me for a while/And afterwards remember, do not grieve”).

The speaker uses images to describe death and life, as well as remembering and forgetting. Death is “the silent land”; she will be “gone away” and be with her loved one “no more”. This imagery of death corresponds with the idea of forgetting. The images she uses to describe their physical life together depict very simple, everyday things (“hold ... hand” and “tell ... planned”) and these are the times she wants her loved one to remember her. The image of her beloved “forget[ting] and smil[ing]” is a less painful idea than the image of them “remember[ing] and be[ing] sad”.

In the octave, when the speaker mentions her death and all the things that will no longer be

possible because she is “Gone far away into the silent land” the tone is quite sad and urgent. When she visualises the loved one forgetting her and then feeling guilty about it, or keeping the memory of her alive even if it causes pain, her tone becomes more tender and gentle as she tells them “do not grieve” but rather “forget and smile”. This change in tone indicates that the speaker has thoroughly confronted her feelings and fears about not being remembered, and come to the conclusion that forgetting is both necessary and good.

The thoughts and feelings of the speaker as she discusses what she wants her loved one to do and feel after her death are made clear in her diction, imagery and tone.

### First Day after the War

(page 12)

#### Questions

1. It will be a day of celebration (1).
- 2.1 It is a hint that something positive lies ahead (1).
- 2.2 This metaphor compares the coming of the light (1) with the power of a spring or a snake (1).
3. The poem is in free verse with run-on lines, like a story being told (1) and the writer uses storytelling features, such as dialogue and the past tense (1).
4. In the poem, freedom is a woman (1) whose “footsteps”, “face”, “eyes” and “smile” encourage the people (1).
5. The poem focuses overwhelmingly on the realisation that freedom is coming and the celebration that follows (1). But in the last line, the poet introduces a dramatic image of the Ancestors on the horizon (1), which reminds the reader that the past is with them and the success of the future is rooted in that past (1).

#### Sample essay

This poem is a vision of what the first day after the struggle against apartheid will be like. It is a poem about celebration and joy.

The poet chooses words that build a sense of celebration and joy by using images of a “wedding party” and a “festival”. The poet draws on the sounds of celebrations with words like “songs”, “ululating”, “calling”. These words help to build a mood of jubilation.

The poet uses comparisons and juxtapositions that embody aspects of freedom, on the one hand as being nurturing and life-giving by personifying freedom as a woman and on the other hand as being strong and powerful by describing freedom as a “soft light/coiling”. The hope of a new life is evident in the images drawn from nature, such as the “young blades of grass” in line 3 and the “first fruits of the season” in line 13.

The use of words that detail the sounds of people celebrating, such as “shouted” and “ululating” add energy and excitement to the tone of the poem. The mood is urgent (the people “shook up the old man demanding a festival”) and emphatic in the short lines near the end of the poem. The tone changes in the last line when it becomes more serious: this line is a reminder that the people must look back to the past for guidance for their future.

In this poem, the poet has built a vision of hope and celebration for freedom and peace, but has also given a strong message about the connection between a new future and the experiences of the past.

### The Zulu Girl

(page 15)

#### Questions

1. The group is working hard in very hot conditions (1). The “acres” of land “smoulder” as if they are burning; the people are “sweating” as they ‘ply their labour’; the baby is “tormented by the flies” (1).
2. As the baby feeds, his mother’s feelings of weariness and laziness seem to enter him as well (1), as if he drinks in her feelings as well as her milk (1).
- 3.1 This tells us that, although the Zulu had been defeated militarily and subject to colonial and then white minority rule (1), their anger (“heat”) was still alive and could never be extinguished (1).
- 3.2 The phrase suggests that, even though they have been defeated and humiliated, they maintain their dignity and do not forget what has been done to them (1). “Sullen” means that an emotion is being hidden and controlled, but that it is still alive; this therefore reinforces the idea of “unsmotherable” anger (1).



- 4.1 “red acres smoulder”: This refers literally to the extreme heat of the soil in the fields; the connotation is, however that the anger of the Zulu people burns on, even in the soil they work (1).
- 4.2 “looms above him”: The word “looms” has a threatening connotation. It gives the feeling of something extremely large and also very close, as if something powerful is about to take action against you (1).
- 5.1 Your own answer, for example: Yes. The first simile describes the mother’s body as being like a hill, protecting a village from the elements, while the second compares her to a thunder-cloud that is bringing a violent storm, in other words a violent struggle against oppression (1). The mother’s instinct to protect her child is not incompatible with the desire to obtain freedom for him in the future (1).  
OR No, they are not compatible. The first simile shows the mother as protective and nurturing (1) while the second implies that she is part of a violent and destructive force (1).
- 5.2 “The coming harvest” refers to a violent uprising in which the Zulu people take revenge for their years of anger, humiliation and oppression (1). At the moment they are living in apparent peace, working the fields (1), but Stanza 4 makes it clear that they have not forgotten what has been done to them, and that the “harvest” of those years of suffering will be violent and irresistible (1).

#### Sample essay

In this poem, the poet describes a Zulu woman feeding her baby and uses this image to suggest that the Zulu people will rise up in the future.

The diction of the poem starts by referring to heat and the exhaustion of the field workers (“hot red acres”; “sweating gang”; “deep languors”). As the poem continues, the phrases “unquenched unmotherable heat”, “curbed ferocity” and “so terrible and still” give an indication of anger and violence hidden beneath the exhaustion created by the heat. The heat itself could symbolise anger.

The imagery also suggests a hidden menace – the cool shade is “purpled” with “blood” and the mother’s caresses “prowl” and create “sharp electric clicks”. Her baby “imbibes” the historic

anger of his tribe together with his mother’s milk. Her body is simultaneously protecting (“a hill ... rest”) and ominous (“the first ... its breast”).

The tone of the poem is initially fairly matter-of-fact in its description of farm workers in the hot fields, and a young mother feeding her baby in the shade. It soon becomes more emotive, however, as the poet describes the anger and resentment, and desire for revenge, which the young child absorbs at his mother’s breast. The final stanza gives a disturbing hint of violence and destruction to come, as the “harvest” of the suffering that has been imposed on the Zulu.

Campbell seems to empathise with the feelings of the Zulu nation – he speaks of their “dignity” and describes their hidden anger in almost admiring terms. The notion of an infant absorbing this inheritance, of events and emotions he has never experienced, is quite an unusual one. Added to that is the image of the mother’s body, which depicts nurturing protectiveness but also symbolises the coming revenge of the Zulu people. These two ideas could express Campbell’s fear at what the future might bring.

#### **Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho Babang** (page 20)

#### Questions

1. He is alone in his prison cell and wants to find out what is going on outside (1) but as a political prisoner is not allowed to communicate openly with other prisoners (1) so he holds the mirror outside the window, in the corridor, so that he can see what is happening further down the corridor (1).
2. This implies that the bunched fingers representing the “badge” move slowly and carefully up into position on the imaginary “cap” (1). We find ourselves imagining the image as if we are seeing it through the speaker’s eyes – it creates a vivid image of what is being communicated (1).
3. The prisoner knows that the warders must not notice any change in the rhythm or speed of his work (1) but he is so skilled at this method of communicating that he can make the gesture for “Later” without any disruption (1).
4. The warder speaks in an abrupt, disrespectful manner (1) that shows his



power over the prisoners (1). To avoid any conflict the prisoner replies in a respectful manner, using the word “*baas*” (1).

5. The lines on the left side of the page form the narrative in which the speaker explains what he sees (1). On the far right of the page the speaker translates the messages for the reader (1). The warder’s sudden question to the prisoner is placed in the middle of the page, suggesting that it is an unwelcome intrusion in the ‘conversation’ between the two comrades (1).
6. The final message given by the prisoner is one of solidarity and support, reinforcing the idea expressed in the title of the poem (1). It ends the poem with an inspirational image as a “black fist” also represents black power – the determination of the South African people to achieve freedom from oppression (1).

#### Sample essay

The poem begins with an image of complete isolation – a prisoner alone in a cell, not allowed to communicate with other prisoners. To try and make some contact with others, he uses his mirror to see what is going on outside. The prisoner he sees in the corridor begins a silent communication with him by means of gestures.

The speaker gives us a clear picture of the images he observes: the fingers that “Bunch together” to show “An object ... badge” on the “imaginary cap” of a warder; the two fingers making a “vee” and wiggling “like two antennae” to show he is being watched; the moving “watch-hand’s arc”, to show they will speak later; and finally the clenched fist to indicate solidarity and support. All these images are understood perfectly by the speaker and in spite of his solitude he feels supported and comforted; part of a caring community.

The diction used by the poet is simple and informal. The conversation between the two prisoners is confined to silent gestures expressing simple yet powerful ideas (“*A warder.*”; “*Later.*”; “*Strength brother*”). Similarly, the speaker’s narrative uses simple words to describe what he saw (“There’s a person down there”; “He’s being watched”; “In my mirror, / A black fist”) but this was clearly a moving and important experience for him. This suggests that closeness and communication between people does not have to be complicated – we merely have to be understood and supported.

The tone of the poem is also informal and conversational, almost intimate. The speaker tells us every detail of what he sees so that we are drawn into the silent yet satisfying conversation, as if we are participants. He mentions the imaginary badge “Which travels ... forehead” and we find ourselves watching in our imaginations.

The poet thus uses an informal, intimate tone and simple diction to convey a series of powerful images that show us clearly how the prisoners maintained a community that allowed them to feel that they had not been deprived of their humanity.

#### Funeral Blues

(page 24)

#### Questions

1. He feels that these old-fashioned mourning traditions express perfectly his wish to show that for him, the world as he knew it has come to an end (1), and he needs everyone to acknowledge his need for a period of silent grief while he struggles to come to terms with his loss (1).
- 2.1 This word usually describes a sound made in pain or grief (1), so it gives us an idea of the way the speaker is feeling (1).
- 2.2 The capital letter in “He” shows us how important the speaker felt his beloved to be (1); the capital letter in “Dead” suggests the overwhelming effect that death has had on the speaker – it is the all-consuming concept that is filling his mind (1).
- 2.3 These suggestions indicate how enormous his grief is (1) – he wants the whole world to acknowledge this tragic event (1).
- 3.1 “working week” and “Sunday rest” (1); “noon” and “midnight” (1)
- 3.2 This indicates that the relationship was completely satisfying (1) and that they were a part of every aspect of each other’s lives (1).
4. The speaker wants to “put out”, “Pack up”, “pour away” and “sweep up” the world and the planets, which shows us that for him, everything has lost meaning (1); he has lost all faith in the future (1).

#### Sample essay

*This sample answer is longer than you will need to write in the exam, to give you an idea of the different and detailed points you can make.*



The poem describes the immense loss felt by the speaker after the death of his loved one. It is a touching and effective description of his feelings of loss and hopelessness.

The diction used in the poem reinforces the idea that the speaker's world seems to have come to an end. He wants to "Stop" the clocks and "cut off" the telephone; "Prevent" the dog from barking (by giving it a bone) and "Silence" the pianos. He shows his lack of hope for the future by using phrases like "put out" the stars, "Pack up" and "dismantle" the moon and sun; "Pour away" and "sweep up". He also uses words that speak of death and mourning – "coffin" and "mourners", "crêpe bows" and "black cotton gloves".

The imagery in the first and second stanzas shows the speaker's need to tell the world of his enormous loss. Not only does he describe what were fairly standard mourning procedures, like stopping clocks and using muffled drums at the funeral procession, he even wants the policemen to wear "black cotton gloves" and for there to be black bows around the necks of the "public doves". In the third stanza he gives a moving description of the scale of his relationship with his beloved – he is described as "my North, my South, my East and West". The images in the last stanza show the speaker's feelings of despair and lack of will to live. He wants to "Pack up" or "dismantle" the entire universe, because, as he states in the poignant (sad and moving) last line, "nothing now can ever come to any good."

The tone of the poem also reflects this sad and moving mood. In the first stanza, the references to mourning rituals highlight the tone of grief. Stanza 2 reinforces this, especially the simple phrase "He is Dead". The touching descriptions in Stanza 3 lead up to the bleak statement describing his feelings of shock and pain ("I thought ... wrong."). In the final stanza the speaker uses images that give a mood of despair and emotional trauma ("The stars ... one") as he describes how we might as well dismantle and put away the entire world. The final line of the poem reveals the extent of his hopelessness ("For nothing ... good"). Throughout the poem therefore, the tone emphasises the speaker's devastating feelings of grief and loss.

"Funeral Blues" therefore gives us a vivid and moving picture of the enormous pain and suffering that the loss of a loved one can bring.

## A Hard Frost

(page 28)

### Questions

1. The previous day, the countryside had looked just as it always did but in the night there was a dramatic transformation as the frost created beautiful icy patterns (1). The speaker feels annoyed by the way the frost took away the familiar world and replaced it with something else (1).
2. This refers to the belief that spirits could secretly replace a child with another – a changeling (1). This is a negative way of describing the change that has taken place; the speaker mistrusts this sudden, superficially attractive beauty. (1)
3. The effect is disturbing and ominous (1) – we are not sure what will emerge from this primitive mass of "blind tissue" (1).
4. The frost is described as "Mockery spring", that is, pretending to bring the beauty and growth of spring; this gives the impression that the frost is deliberately lying (1). The frost deceives the countryside by giving a few hours of beauty and then, as the sun melts the ice crystals, the countryside or "raw country maid" is left disappointed (1) – the frost is compared to a wicked seducer who deserts the innocent country girl, leaving her with only a few cheap gifts (1).
5. The ice crystals are compared to decorative ornamentation on clothes or jewellery (1) but this beauty is actually harmful to the plants so the reference to death is appropriate (1).
6. Your own response, for example: Yes, the statement is valid because the speaker says (diction) the "image of spring" presented is "too brilliant to be true" (1). In other imagery, he describes the frost as a "Mockery", tricking the countryside with a false and temporary beauty that can cause "death" for the plants (1). He concludes by pointing out that the "real transformation" is happening elsewhere (1).

### Sample essay

The speaker in this poem gives a vivid picture of the beauty of the frost. He refers to its "brilliance" and says as the sun comes up, the fields "blaze with diamonds". However he also uses negative words to describe this beauty – the frost is "precocious"



and a “changeling”, and the lovely “flounce and filigree” actually brings “death”. The diction of the poem therefore leaves no doubt that the frost’s beauty is worthless and harmful.

The images used in the poem also reflect the speaker’s distrust of the frost’s beauty. The frost is a “changeling”, creating false images of flowers and behaving like a “Mockery spring” – giving “bridal gear” for a few hours and then leaving the “raw country maid” “disconsolate”. He also compares the mist to the “amorphous” “blind tissue” from pre-Creation times, an eerie image.

The tone of the poem is disapproving when the speaker talks about the frost’s beauty – he seems resentful that his familiar world has been stolen and replaced by this “changeling”. The contemptuous description in lines 11–14, ending with an exclamation mark, reinforce this tone of disdain.

Towards the end of the poem, the speaker’s tone changes as he describes approvingly how the frost is doing good work underground by breaking up the earth to release the seeds. His diction changes too – he speaks of the “real transformation” that takes place as the frost forces the “stiff clods” to “unclench[es] their/Grip” so the seed is released and “our future [can] breathe”. The image he uses, of the frost forcing the reluctant earth to release the seeds needed for our future to prosper, is clearly a positive one.

The diction, imagery and tone used in the poem thus clearly demonstrate the poet’s belief that what is valuable is not always admired, or even visible.

### An African Thunderstorm

(page 32)

#### Questions

1. It suggests that the storm will cause extensive damage (1) that will lead to human suffering (1).
2. The repeated hard “t” sounds in “toss” and “turn” (1) suggest how the wind violently carries the children’s screams in unpredictable directions, creating chaos and fear (1).
3. This image emphasises the power of the wind (1) and the fact that nothing can stand up to it (1).
4. They emphasise that the storm is irrational (1).
5. Your own opinion, for example: I agree because the poet wrote this poem in the

context of the struggle for the freedom of Malawi from British rule. The image of the storm as a “plague of locusts” signifies the chaos and suffering that colonialism caused (1). We see that the women were helpless in the path of the storm, running “madly”, with their clothes torn from their bodies and “flapping like flags”. This image emphasises how, under colonial rule (1) people lost their dignity (1). OR: I disagree because the images very clearly relate to the physical effects of an actual storm: The “pregnant clouds” are full of rain (1), “The Wind whistles by” shows the power of the wind in a storm (1) and “the smell of fired smoke” suggests the lightning (1).

#### Sample essay

The poet describes the approaching storm as powerful and destructive – “a plague of locusts”, something that is “tossing” things with its tail, and that has “dark sinister wings”. The wind causes chaos and the effects of the storm on the people are devastating.

The poet uses words and images that create a sinister and ominous tone. In Stanza 1, the storm is compared to locusts and a madman. This idea of madness is repeated in Stanza 3, when the women run about “Madly”. The poet compares the storm to a frightening animal, which has “dark sinister wings”. The physical effects of the storm are also frightening, such as the noise, which creates a “din” and the lightning, which comes in “jagged blinding flashes.”

The poet also uses words and images that build an atmosphere of chaos. He uses verbs that emphasise the physical chaos, such as “Turning/ Sharply”, “Whirling” and “Tossing” in Stanza 1. The humans react chaotically in Stanza 3, when the screams of the children “Toss and turn” in the wind and the women “Dart about/In and out/Madly”.

The power and ruthlessness of the storm is emphasised by the images of the helpless women, whose “Clothes wave like tattered flags”, an image that suggests their vulnerability and the ability of the storm to rob them of their dignity. The image in the last line of the poem, of the “pelting march of the storm” underlines its relentlessness and cruelty and seals the serious and devastating tone of the poem.



The tone is ominous: words like “plague” and “madman” in Stanza 1, “dark sinister” in Stanza 2, and “madly”, “jagged blinding”, “Rumble, tremble, and crack” in Stanza 3 all contribute to an uneasy, uncomfortable mood.

The overall effect of the words, images and tone of this poem is of a powerful force that is able to visit destruction on the people in its path.

### An African Elegy

(page 36)

#### Questions

- 1.1 God created Africans to experience suffering (“the bitter fruit”) through the ages.(1). The speaker describes them as “miracles” so he obviously feels that this is a very special destiny (1).
- 1.2 Your own response, for example: The pain that Africans have gone through will transform them into something amazing (1) that others will marvel at and learn from (1).
- 2.1 This shows how the same things can be experienced very differently depending on how strong one is feeling (1). This contrast is very effective because it shows how an experience may be felt as a painful burn (something that is far too hot) or as a golden glow (something pleasant) (1).
- 2.2 The speaker feels it is remarkable and difficult to comprehend (1) that Africans can experience such suffering and still have the ability to find joy and hope (1).
3. The “dead” send a positive message, telling the speaker to treasure his life experience (1), and to live with kindness and passion (1). They remind him that “Destiny” is his “friend” (1).
4. Your own answer, for example: Yes, throughout the poem the speaker mentions the idea of “miracles” and “wonder” to emphasise that we can never understand everything about life (1). He points to the many things we can take pleasure from (1) and concludes that our unknown future (our “Destiny”) should not be viewed as something fearful (1).

#### Sample essay

“An African Elegy” does discuss the intense suffering experienced by the peoples of Africa through the ages, but it is also a joyful poem,

rejoicing in their power to transcend (rise above) their suffering and experience the pleasures of life.

The speaker acknowledges that Africa’s history has been a painful one (for example, “bitter ... Time”; “pain”; “bear poverty”; “curse”). However there are many words that show how African people are still able to enjoy the pleasures of life and keep their optimism about the future, as in: “We are the miracles”; “We are precious” ; “the wonders of the earth”; “golden ... happy”; “sing and dream sweet things”; “warm” ; “bless” (which is repeated); “music ... sweet”; “secret miracles” ; “life is good”; “gently ... here”; “full of songs”; and “Destiny is our friend”.

The speaker uses images that describe the wonderful pleasures and beauty that can still be appreciated, even when there are difficult times, for example: “things ... happy” in Stanza 2; “never ... warm” in Stanza 3; “It makes ... forth” and “I ... singing” in Stanza 4. He also makes reference to things that cannot be easily explained or clearly understood, but which he believes tell of a positive outcome, for example: “We ... made” and “one day ... earth” in Stanza 1; “the mystery of our pain” in Stanza 2; “There ... here” in Stanza 5; “In ... moves” and “Destiny ... friend” in Stanza 6.

The speaker’s tone is one of strength and confidence. The diction and imagery combine to create a mood of elation (excited happiness): “We are ... made”, “We are precious” and “wonders ... earth” in Stanza 1; “sing ... things” in Stanza 2; “We bless ... silence ” in Stanza 3; “Destiny is our friend” in the last line.

In spite of the speaker’s acknowledgement of African suffering, a study of the diction, imagery and tone used in the poem shows an optimistic and joyful side to African people’s experience of life.

### somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond

(page 40)

#### Questions

- 1.1 This tells us that he is experiencing something he has never felt before (1) so he feels that he is on an emotional ‘journey’ (1).
- 1.2 Your own answer, for example: The speaker feels a profound peace and tranquillity (1) when he looks into the eyes of the one he loves (1).
- 1.3 Your own response, for example: His love evokes feelings that make him feel



- vulnerable (1) and he feels he has to protect himself from losing control (1).
2. The speaker feels that the person he loves has such power over him, because of the strength of his feelings, (1) that they can “unclose” him even if he has “closed” himself. (1)
  3. The use of the flower image links to the image of closing and unclosing (1). It symbolises the ‘blossoming’ of his feelings of love (1).
  - 4.1 “frail” (1); “fragility” (1); “small hands” (1)
  - 4.2 The emphasis on physical weakness or delicacy emphasises that it is the speaker’s emotions that are powerful and overwhelming (1) rather than the person he loves (1).

### Sample essay

In this poem, the speaker describes his feelings of overpowering love for someone, while making it clear that he does not understand why he should be feeling this way. He uses unusual word-order, vocabulary, punctuation and imagery to paint a vivid picture.

Words are used in unusual contexts, for example when the speaker says “gladly beyond/ any experience” and mentions his loved one’s “frail gesture” that has such power over him. He speaks of “shut very beautifully”. He even makes up words, such as “unclose”, and changes parts of speech, as when he speaks of “rendering death and forever”, using “forever” as a noun.

The images used in the poem also seem strange. The speaker compares falling in love to a journey to a new place, and that in this place “your eyes have their silence”. In the last stanza he speaks of “the voice of your eyes is deeper than...”, suggesting the calm tranquillity he feels when looking into her eyes, and the unspoken communication they have.

The image of closing and unclosing is used repeatedly. In the loved one’s “frail gesture” are “things which enclose me”, and the loved one can also “unclose” or “close” the speaker. This unusual image shows us how the loved one can open him up to intense, intimate emotions, and also his desire to satisfy their every “wish”. The image of a flower is used to further illustrate this opening/closing theme.

The speaker’s tone is one of wonder, almost bewilderment. He says this love is “beyond/ any experience”. However, he accepts the overwhelming emotions gladly, saying “i and/my

life will shut very beautifully” and “something in me understands”.

The diction, tone and imagery in the poem are unusual, yet we understand intuitively what the speaker means, and a beautiful picture of intense love is created.

## The Garden of Love

(page 44)

### Questions

- 1.1 He says that when he went to the garden he “saw what I never had seen” (1) which implies that this was a surprise to him (1).
- 1.2 For the poet it is a place that represents love, joy and all happy feelings (1). Even if it is not literally a garden, he uses that word because of its connotations of beauty, playfulness and innocence (1).
- 2.1 He sees that the doors are closed, indicating that it is not a welcoming place. Also, the words written over the door (“Thou shalt not”) are off-putting and suggest a Church that supports a mean-spirited and dictatorial religion (1). So he decides to turn away to find the garden (1).
- 2.2 The words “shut” and “Thou shalt not” convey the unpleasant feelings he has about what the chapel represents (1) – a rigid and judgemental philosophy (1). When he speaks of the garden, on the other hand, he uses the words “Love” and “sweet flowers”, which convey his happy, positive feelings about it (1).
- 3.1 By using the word “should” he expresses the opinion that it was *right* for the flowers to be there (1) and the fact that they are no longer there is a bad thing (1).
- 3.2 The priests wear black robes, which gives the impression of gloomy or even evil characters, like bringers of doom or bad luck (1). He also says they are “walking their rounds” which makes them sound like prison guards or schoolteachers checking up on pupils (1).
- 3.3 He means that the priests’ brand of harsh, judgemental religion takes away his happiness and freedom (1) by ‘imprisoning’ him in emotionally painful ‘bonds’ or chains of shame and guilt (1).

### Sample essay

The poem describes the poet’s return to a “Garden of Love” in which he used to play. This could be an



actual place or a mental/emotional state of mind. However we interpret it, the way the poet describes the garden and the way he describes the chapel that has replaced it are very different and clearly show his anger at and disapproval of the Christian Church of his time.

The words chosen by the poet to describe the garden he remembers are very positive. He speaks of how he would “play on the green” and “sweet flowers”. The “joys and desires” he mentions in the last line are also associated with the garden. His description of what has been done to the garden, however, clearly shows his disapproval. He describes the “shut” gates and the words “Thou shalt not” over the door; and he tells of the “graves” and “tombstones” that have replaced the flowers. The priests “in black gowns” are “binding with briars” people’s pleasures. All these words convey his distaste for the chapel that has replaced his garden.

By using the above emotive words Blake creates a mood of nostalgia for the carefree garden of his youth, and of disgust at the petty nastiness of the Church and its ways. As he sees one horrible sight after the other the tone becomes almost despairing, as if he is trapped in a nightmare in which everything good, natural and beautiful has been destroyed by the malignant power of the Church to imprison the individual in bonds of shame and guilt.

Blake uses several powerful images to represent very different things. The chapel and graves represent a prison-like church, locked and forbidding, which asserts its power over the individual and sucks all the joy from their lives. Death and darkness are all it can offer. The garden or “green” represent an innocent, Eden-like state in which people can enjoy the beauty of nature – their own instinctive natures and the loveliness of the natural world.

### Felix Randal

(page 48)

#### Questions

1. As a priest, the speaker’s duty was to visit the sick man and comfort him by reminding him of the Christian belief in eternal life after death (1). Before the man died the priest would anoint him with holy oil and take his last confession (1).
2. The word “pining” tells us that this previously strong and powerful man (1) had wasted away from sickness, becoming thin and weak (1).
3. After his first feelings of anger and fear, Randal was helped by the priest’s message of salvation (1) and the final sacraments he gave him (1).
- 4.1 The speaker is reflecting on how looking after sick people leads one to become fond of them (1), and also causes them to love their carer (1) – a bond of affection is created by the process.
- 4.2 Although Randal was an adult his illness had caused him to become very vulnerable (1) and the affection the speaker had developed for Randal during his illness (1) causes him to feel great pity and compassion (1). It is, therefore, appropriate for the priest to feel fatherly towards Randal.
5. Your own response, for example: Yes, instead of emphasising how weak and sick Randal had become (1), he leaves us with a description of how powerful and capable he had been in his younger days (1). The ending, therefore, leaves us with a positive feeling of admiration for Randal (1).  
OR No, he describes the “boisterous” years when Randal was full of life and strength (1) only to emphasise how different Randal had become during his illness (“How ... of”) (1) so this leaves us with a feeling of sadness (1).

#### Sample essay

The speaker in the poem cared for Randal during his final illness. He watched him become weaker, struggle against his sickness, and finally find spiritual peace before he died.

He repeatedly contrasts the healthy Randal and the sick man to emphasise that physical health and strength does not last forever: “big-boned ... handsome” and “pining ... rambled”; “Sickness ... at first” and “boisterous ... peers”.

Randal’s huge physical strength was powerless against the illness – his “reason rambled” as the “fatal ... disorders” took over his body; the sickness “broke him”. These images emphasise how frail our human bodies are even when we seem strong.

Religious faith brought Randal comfort. He “mended ... anointed” and gained a “heavenlier heart” when the priest offered him spiritual comfort – “our ... ransom”. Line 8 brings a tone of confidence as the speaker expresses his belief that God will “rest him” and forgive him his sins.



The poet's use of diction, imagery and tone does support the validity of the statement. However the speaker was not implying that the worldly life is unimportant – he expresses his personal grief at Randal's death ("child ... Randal") and also his personal feelings of fulfilment caused by his care of Randal ("This seeing ... endears"). Even though he believes in the importance of faith, he still relates to Randal in a very human and loving way.

## Vultures

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### Questions

1. The phrases "nestled close" and "inclined affectionately" give a pleasant impression of the love between the two vultures (1), while "bashed-in" and "a dump of gross feathers" create an ugly, disgusting image (1).
2. "Gorged" means you have eaten too much so this reinforces the unpleasant descriptions of the vulture's feeding habits (1). Not only have they eaten disgusting things, they have enjoyed eating them and stuffed themselves (1).
3. Love is described as "particular", meaning fussy, and the behaviour described here is quite fussy – she carefully selects a corner, tidies it, curls up and manages to fall asleep, but with her face turned to the wall (1). This description emphasises that love manages to find a place even in an evil heart, but has to carefully isolate itself from the rest of the "charnel-house". (1)
4. This is a shocking image because a "roast" is something we eat, like a roast chicken or lamb (1) so to hear the term applied to humans is very upsetting (1).
5. Your own opinion, for example: No, vultures might be ugly and eat unpleasant food but they are not actually evil (1) – in fact they perform a useful ecological function – so the comparison with the Commandant is not really valid but is useful to create the revolted feeling that the poet is trying to evoke in the reader (1).
6. "Encapsulated" means enclosed in a capsule, cut off from the surroundings (1) so this word implies that in order to survive in an evil heart, tenderness has to have a protective covering (1).
7. Your own opinion, for example: Yes, there is cause for thankfulness that every individual has the capacity for love because that may lead to some kind of repentance and healing (1). However, at the same time we all have the capacity for evil and that may lead us to feel hopeless about the future (1) so this description captures the essence of human nature – at the same time wonderful and terrible (1).

### Sample essay

The poem begins with a description of a pair of vultures, using very unpleasant words and images, such as "perching high on broken bone" and having a head "rooted in/a dump of gross/feathers". Their feeding habits are also vividly described – they "picked/the eyes" of a "swollen/corpse" and "ate the ... bowel" until they were "gorged". The tone is one of disgust. At the same time, however, these repulsive creatures are "nestled close" and their heads are "inclined affectionately" together. The description demonstrates that even a repulsive creature is capable of tender feelings.

In the second section the speaker personifies love and describes how she carefully creates a tidy "corner" in the "charnel-house" of an evil, disgusting creature and makes it her home – even if she has to have her "face/turned to the wall" before she can "fall asleep".

In the third section of the poem the speaker continues this theme, using a tone almost of horror, with a description of how the Commandant of the Belsen Camp, surely the personification of evil, buys "a chocolate ... tender offspring" who are awaiting "Daddy's return". There is clearly love between father and children even though he has the "fumes of/human roast" in his "hairy/nostrils" still. Thus even the most evil person imaginable still feels protective love for his children.

In conclusion, the speaker mentions "bounteous/providence" that has allowed "even an ogre" to feel "a tiny ... tenderness". He also points out, however, that there is still reason for "despair" because in the "very germ" of that "kindred love" we will find everlasting evil. Evil and love are seen as two sides of a coin – human beings will always have one, but by the same token they will always have the other.

The powerful diction, vivid imagery and emphatic tone of the poem therefore support the idea that both tenderness and brutality co-exist in the human soul.



## Part

# 5 Glossary

## Literary terms

- Alliteration** the repetition of consonant sounds. For example, the “d” sounds in “dancing daffodils”.
- Antithesis** two contrasting, or opposite ideas, for example: “She moved from shadow into light.”
- Assonance** the repetition of vowel sounds. For example, the “o” sounds in “bones grow slowly”.
- Blank verse** poetry written with a regular beat but unrhymed lines; the term is usually used to refer to iambic pentameters.
- Colloquial** colloquial language is casual and ordinary, it is not formal.
- Connotation (see also Denotation)** the indirect or implied meaning that goes beyond the literal meaning of a word or phrase.
- Contrast** to consider the way in which things differ.
- Couplet** two lines of poetry next to each other. The two lines usually rhyme and are usually the same length. A Shakespearean sonnet always ends with a rhyming couplet.
- Denotation (see also Connotation)** the actual meaning of a word, as given in a dictionary.
- Diction** the choice of words, for example using lots of action verbs like running, shaking, charging, grinding; and the style of writing, for example whether it uses formal or informal language.
- Elegy** a sad poem or song, usually written for someone who has died.
- Enjambment** continuation of a sentence or phrase unit from one line, couplet or stanza of a poem to the next with no pause.
- Extended or sustained metaphor** the use of a comparison through a number of lines, or longer. (See also *Metaphor*.)
- Figurative** (as opposed to literal) words or phrases used in a non-literal way to create a desired effect. Poets use figurative language like similes, personification and metaphor.
- Free verse** poetry that does not have a fixed structure or rhyme scheme.
- Half-rhyme** where only the last consonants of each line sound the same (e.g. bent/ant).
- Hyperbole** a figure of speech in which exaggeration or overstatement is used to emphasise a point: “He got such a fright that he jumped sky high.”
- Iambic** a kind of metre (fixed rhythm, see below) where each foot is made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable (an iamb: “da-daah”).
- Imagery** the pictures created by the poet. (Imagery often refers to figurative language.)
- Internal rhyme** where words inside lines rhyme, not just words at the ends of lines, for example: “And binding with briars my joys and desires”.
- Irony** a figure of speech in which the poet intends something that is in contrast to the words used.
- Juxtaposition** putting two contrasting things next to each other. When a poet puts one image next to another, quite different, image, they are “juxtaposing” the images.
- Literal** when something is absolutely true, there is no comparison being made. For example: if you say “It was literally freezing”, then it must have been below 0 °C. (See *Figurative* above.)
- Metaphor (see also Extended metaphor)** a figure of speech in which one thing is described by comparing it to another thing with which it shares one or some (but not all) characteristics. Metaphor takes the form of a direct statement, without the use of the word “like” or “as”, for example “a ring of shadow pooled/By the thorn tree”. (See *Simile* below.)

- Metre** (*see also* **Tone**) the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in the lines of a poem. These stresses are arranged into sets called "feet" (e.g. iambs).
- Mood** the feeling or atmosphere that is present in a piece of writing, and the often reflects the writer's mental or emotional state.
- Onomatopoeia** a "sound word": the word imitates or sounds similar to the sound it represents; for example, hiss, roar, buzz.
- Pace** whether the line of poetry seems fast or slow when read aloud.
- Paradox** something that seems at first to be a contradiction, but upon examination makes sense.
- Pentameter** a line of poetry containing five pairs of syllables, where one syllable in each pair is stressed, for example: "Better/ by far/you should/forget/and smile."
- Personification** figurative language in which human characteristics are attributed to non-human things, for example "the sun smiled down on the grateful earth".
- Poet Laureate** a poet who is appointed by the government to be the official poet of a country or continent and who composes poetry for special events.
- Quatrain** a stanza of four lines.
- Repetition** when a writer repeats a word or phrase to achieve a particular effect.
- Rhetorical question** a question not really meant to be answered, just there to make you think.
- Rhythm** the pattern of "beats" in a line. (*Also see* Metre.)
- Rhyme** (*see also* **Internal rhyme**) when words at the ends of lines of poetry sound the same. For example: "Hear the beat, Feel the heat, Take a seat."
- Romantic poetry** a style of poetry written mostly in the 1800s, especially by poets like William Blake. Romantic poetry emphasises emotion and individual experience. Romantic poetry often draws on nature for inspiration and metaphors. For Romantic poets, nature represented what was pure and ideal about the world.
- Satire** making fun of something in order to make a point.
- Simile** when two things are compared, using the words "like" or "as". For example, "He is as tall as a giraffe" or "She is like an angel". (*See* Metaphor above.)
- Sonnet** a form of poetry where the poem has fourteen lines and regular rhythm, and usually about ten syllables (five iambs) in each line. There are two kinds of sonnets: (1) the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet has eight lines (an octet) with matching rhyme patterns, and then a shift in ideas and rhyme pattern in the last six lines (a sestet); (2) the Shakespearean (or Elizabethan or English) sonnet has three sections of four lines (quatrains) with matching rhyme patterns, and then two lines that rhyme at the end (a closing couplet). The couplet usually contains the most important idea of the poem.
- Stanza** a section or set of lines in a poem, separated by space from the other sections of the poem.
- Structure** the form of a poem (the overall organisation of lines and/or the rhyme scheme), for example sonnets all have the same structure of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter.
- Style** the way something is written. For example, a poem can be written in formal, chatty, dramatic, informal, poetic styles, etc.
- Symbolism** the use of an object to represent something else, for example in a poem about apartheid, a clenched fist could be a symbol for resistance to oppression.
- Tone** the feeling of the words. The poet can't give expression in his or her voice, so the words have to tell you what expression – what tone – to use.