

GCSE Unseen Poetry

Booklet

Name _____

How to Close Read a Poem: The Process

STEP 1: Highlight the key word in the question

STEP 2: Read the poem ... twice.

- Who is speaking?
- Who is being addressed?
- What is the speaker talking about?
- Where is the poem set?

STEP 3:

- What is the poem about thematically?
- What attitude does the poem express towards this theme?
 - What idea is the poem about? Does it seem happy, sad or angry about this idea?

STEP 4:

- Highlight the three most important and interesting images in the poem
- Highlight any other interesting words in the poem
- Does the tone shift at any point?
- How does the poem begin and end?
- How does the poem utilise form?
 - I like / I am puzzled by / I am interested in

***What* is the poem doing? *How* is it doing it? *Why* is it doing it in that way?**

Love in the Time of the Coronavirus
by Nikita Gill

Today, we stockpile empathy.
We supply love and good energy.
We sing to each other across buildings.
We said 'I love you' through social distancing.

Do you know that writing letters
to our friends is back in fashion?
And that we finally have time to read more books,
whether historical or fiction?

My cousin told me she hadn't seen
such a blue sky in her city before.
My uncle went on his first walk in the woods.
He heard a bird sing since the first time he went to war.

Even in sickness, this world
is allowed to be beautiful.
And we are still allowed to love it,
for there is always room for hope.

This is just me checking in
sending you the moon as a poem,
praying and wishing for us all
a speedy recovery.

And if nothing else,
There will always be poetry.
We will always have poetry.

**In 'Love in the Time of the Coronavirus', how does the poet
present the effects of the crisis?**

In Oak Terrace

by Tony Connor

Old and alone, she sits at nights,
Nodding before the television.
The house is quiet now. She knits,
rises to put the kettle on,

watches a cowboy's killing, reads
the local Births and Deaths, and falls
asleep at 'Growing stock-piles of war-heads'.
A world that threatens worse ills

fades. She dreams of life spent
in the one house: suffers again
poverty, sickness, abandonment,
a child's death, a brother's brain

melting to madness. Seventy years
of common trouble; the kettle sings.
At midnight she says her silly prayers,
And takes her teeth out, and collects her night-things.

Reading an Unseen Poetry

STEP 1: Read

- Who is speaking?
- Who is being addressed?
- What is the speaker talking about?
- Where is the poem set?

STEP 2: Read

- What is the poem about thematically?
- What attitude does the poem express towards this idea?
- What idea is the poem about? Does it seem happy, sad or angry about this idea?

STEP 3: Annotate

- Highlight the three most important and interesting images in the poem
- Highlight any other interesting words in the poem
- Does the tone shift at any point?
- How does the poem begin and end?
- How does the poem utilise form?
- I like / I am puzzled by / I am interested in

Those Winter Sundays

by Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

Reading an Unseen Poetry

STEP 1: Read

- Who is speaking?
- Who is being addressed?
- What is the speaker talking about?
- Where is the poem set?

STEP 2: Read

- What is the poem about thematically?
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- What idea is the poem about? Does it seem happy, sad or angry about this idea?

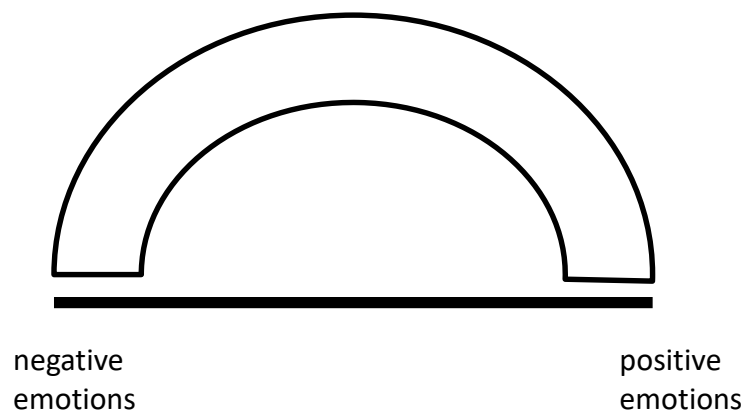
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In both, '*In Oak Terrace*' and '*Those Winter Sundays*' the speakers describe feelings created by memories.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these feelings? [8 marks]

| Similarities | Differences |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both create a tone of sadness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cause of this sadness is different – in IOT the speaker describes how the lady feels sorrow from painful memories. In TWS, the speaker's sadness comes from a tone of longing for his father. |



The Mower
by Philip Larkin

The mower stalled, twice; kneeling, I found
A hedgehog jammed up against the blades,
Killed. It had been in the long grass.

I had seen it before, and even fed it, once.
Now I had mauled its unobtrusive world
Unmendably. Burial was no help:

Next morning I got up and it did not.
The first day after a death, the new absence
Is always the same; we should be careful

Of each other, we should be kind
While there is still time.

STEP 1: Read

- Who is speaking?
- Who is being addressed?
- What is the speaker talking about?
- Where is the poem set?

STEP 2: Read

- What is the poem about thematically?
- What attitude does the poem express towards this idea?
- What idea is the poem about? Does it seem happy, sad or angry about this idea?

STEP 3: Annotate

- Highlight the three most important and interesting images in the poem
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- How does the poem utilise form?
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Use the space below to create a detailed plan in response to the question:

In '*The Mower*', how does the poet present the speaker's feelings of guilt? [24 marks]

STEP 1: Read

[COMPLETE STEP 1 FROM
MEMORY]

Nettles

by Vernon Scannell

My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,
That regiment of spite behind the shed:
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears
The boy came seeking comfort and I saw
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.
At last he offered us a watery grin,
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade
And went outside and slashed in fury with it
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade
Stood upright any more. And then I lit
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain
Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

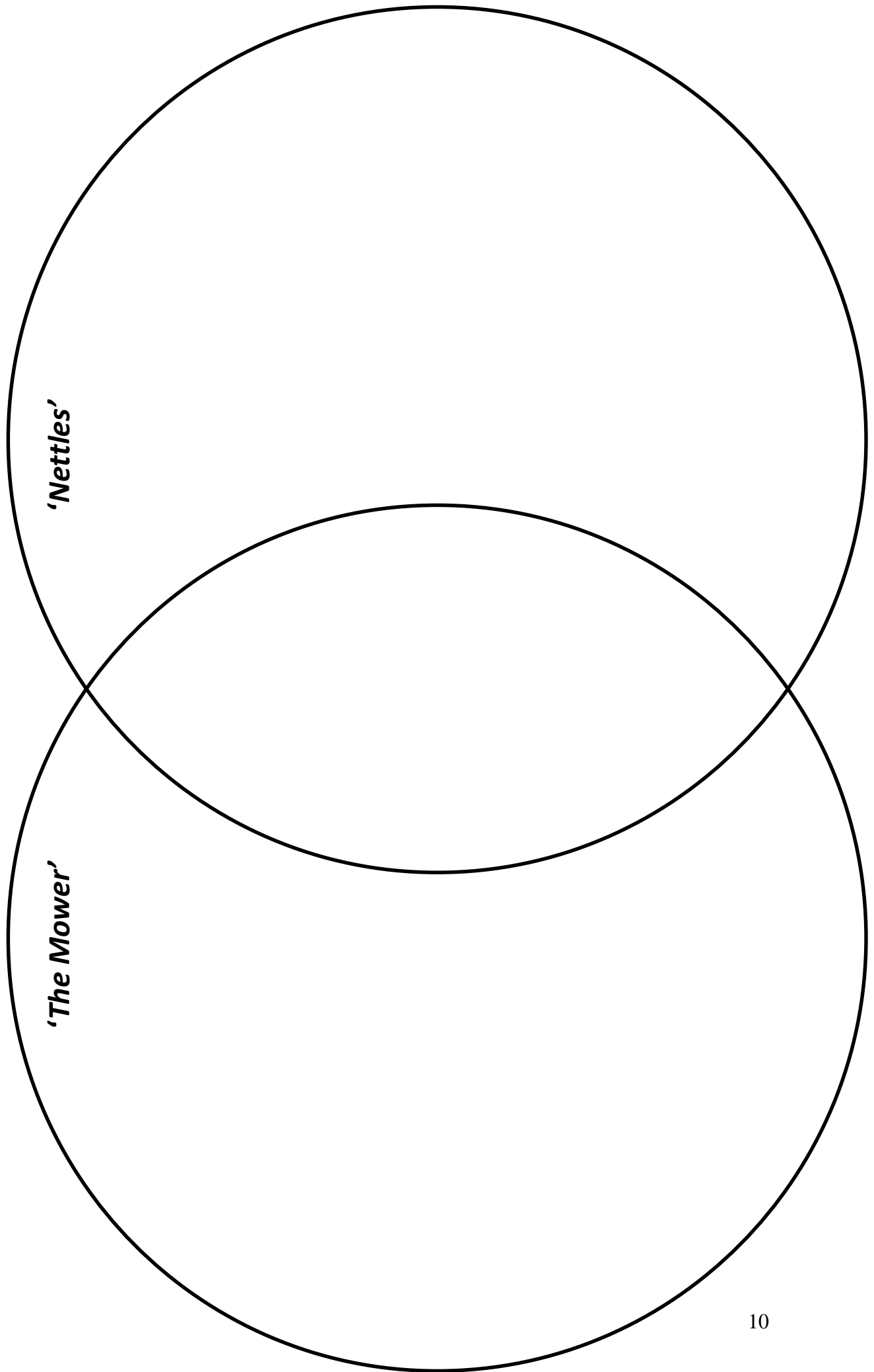
STEP 2: Read

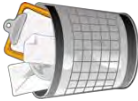
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- Highlight the three most important and interesting images in the poem
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In both *'The Mower'* and *'Nettles'*, compare how the writers explore the relationship between humans and nature. [8 marks]





Quotation: "above the world's junkshop"

Explain what you think the speaker is conveying to us:
The world below the speaker is full of junk and rubbish and needs cleaning up.

Evaluate how this quotation helps to convey these ideas:
By describing the world below them as a 'junkshop', the speaker gives off connotations of unwanted rubbish that is left lying around, unused and unnecessary.



Quotation:

"_____"

Explain what you think the speaker is conveying to us:

Evaluate how this quotation helps to convey these ideas:



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Quotation:

"_____"

Explain what you think the speaker is conveying to us:

Evaluate how this quotation helps to convey these ideas:

Futurama
by Simon Armitage

I crawl out onto the rooftop
above the world's junkshop,
lean against the warm chimney
and eyeball the city.
The vibe is ... let's say *ethereal*,
rows of TV aerials
spelling out HEAVEN,
spelling out ARMAGEDDON.

It's T minus zero
of the Petroleum Era –

all my neighbours
are burning tomorrow's newspapers
in their back-gardens,
getting their alibis sharpened.

As the hours evaporate
I say to my spirit

I can't really pilot
this smouldering twilight

over the scars and crevasses,
but I'll put on my best sunglasses

and steer the cockpit of morning
into the oncoming.

Still I Rise

by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

In '*Still I Rise*', how does Maya Angelou present ideas about identity?

[24 marks]

Revision Section:

The next few pages have copies of other unseen poems for you to use for revision.

You can:

- Close read them without the support prompt.
- Answer the 24 mark questions.
- Answer the 8 mark questions.
- Create detailed plans for 24 mark questions.
- Create a Venn diagram for 8 mark questions.
- Read the poem 'Island Man' and then use the mark scheme to give it a mark out of 24.

I, Too
by Langston Hughes

STEP 1: Read

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

STEP 2: Read

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

STEP 3: Annotate

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

In both '*Still I Rise*' and '*I, Too*', how do the poets present their feelings about equality?

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these feelings? [8 marks]

STEP 1: Read

Still Life

By Thom Gunn

I shall not soon forget
The greyish-yellow skin
To which the face had set:
Lids tights: nothing of his,
No tremor from within,
Played on the surfaces.
He still found breath, and yet
It was an obscure knack.
I shall not soon forget
The angle of his head,
Arrested and reared back
On the crisp field of bed,
Back from what he could neither
Accept, as one opposed,
Nor, as a life-long breather,
Consentingly let go,
The tube his mouth enclosed
In an astonished O.

STEP 2: Read

STEP 3: Annotate

In '*Still Life*', how does the poet present the speaker's grief?

[24 marks]

Dad
by Elaine Feinstein

**Reading an Unseen
Poetry**

STEP 1: Read

Your old hat hurts me, and those black
fat raisins you liked to press into
my palm from your soft heavy hand:
I see you staggering back up the path
with sacks of potatoes from some local farm,
fresh eggs, flowers. Every day I grieve

for your great heart broken and you gone.
You loved to watch the trees. This year
you did not see their Spring.
The sky was freezing over the fen
as on that somewhere secretly appointed day
you beached: cold, white-faced, shivering.

STEP 2: Read

What happened, old bull, my loyal
hoarse-voiced warrior? The hammer
blow that stopped you in your track
and brought you to a hospital monitor
could not destroy your courage
to the end you were
uncowed and unconcerned with pleasing anyone.

STEP 3: Annotate

I think of you now as once again safely
at my mother's side, the earth as
chosen as a bed, and feel most sorrow for
all that was gentle in
my childhood buried there
already forfeit, now forever lost.

In 'Still Life' and 'Dad', how do the poets present the speaker's memories of a loved one.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these feelings?

[8 marks]

The 24 Mark Question: Essay Structure

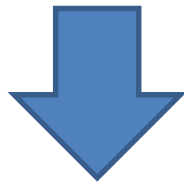
Introduction: Thematically speaking...

This should be a single sentence that refers directly to the precise terms of the question and expresses what the poem's driving theme is as related to that question.



Main Body: Language Analysis

Move through the poem chronologically discussing key images. You should aim for at least three images, saying multiple things about each one. You may also discuss specific words to supplement what you say about the image. You should, when appropriate, discuss form to reinforce something you've said about language.



Conclusion

Step back from the poem and discuss the overall message that the poem is trying to communicate.

The 8 Mark Question

- You need to compare and contrast both texts throughout and discuss the use of methods in each and their effects
- In order to hit the top marks you need to discuss form, language, and structure
- Use the following structure:
 - **Paragraph One:** The two poems include a similar / different use of language. For example... The effect of this is...
 - **Paragraph Two:** The two poems include a similar / different use of structure and form. For example... The effect of this is...
- Discuss language the most, then structure, and finally discuss form the least
- Do not include a conclusion
- Make sure you are exploratory
- Use subject terminology

Island Man
by Grace Nicholls

Morning
And the Island man wakes up
To the sound of blue surf
In his head
The steady breaking and wombing

Wild seabirds
And fisherman pulling out to sea
The sun surfacing defiantly

From the east
Of his small emerald island
He always comes back groggily groggily

Comes back to sands
Of a grey metallic soar
To surge of wheels
To dull North Circular roar

Muffling muffling
His crumpled pillow waves
Island man heaves himself

Another London day

How does the poet present the speaker's feelings about home? (24)

Model Response

Thematically speaking, the poet presents the speaker's feelings about his home as a vehicle through which to explore the way in which it shapes one's identity and its deep emotional significance. The poem begins with a cluster of positive images including 'sound of blue surf'. The adjective 'blue' is typically associated with something very peaceful and tranquil, which is phonetically reinforced by the soft 's' sound. This is further reinforced by the 'surf' being described as 'wombing'. This is reminiscent of a mother and baby and is richly suggestive of the safety that the speaker feels when thinking about the 'blue surf'. However, during this idyllic description the poet concedes that it is 'in his head'. This perhaps indicates that the speaker is not actually experiencing any of the described things, but rather he is dreaming it. This introduces a foreboding tone as it perhaps suggests that the speaker is separated from his home and not where he would like to be.

The poet continues to describe the speaker's home in a highly positive light. For instance, the island is described as being home to 'wild seabirds'. Birds are typically associated with freedom and being unrestricted, which is augmented by Nicholls' adjective 'wild'. The fact that they are specifically 'seabirds' serves to further reinforce this as one imagines a bird soaring over the sea with complete liberty, again evoking a serene and peaceful setting. This is heightened by Nicholls' use of free verse, which typographically mimics the sense of freedom being evoked. The idyllic tone is further compounded by the lexical choice of 'emerald'. In terms of colour, this is richly suggestive of a deep and vibrant green, with green typically being associated with fertility and new life. Furthermore, an 'emerald' is also a highly valuable jewel indicating how beautiful and valuable the island is to the speaker. At the end of this stanza, Nicholls continues the same structural pattern established with 'in his head' by explaining that the speaker 'always comes back groggily groggily'. Here, Nicholls establishes a sense that the speaker is being unwillingly wrenched from his Edenic home, helping to explain its importance for the speaker and the distress caused when no longer there.

This suggestion of the speaker's distress is then made more explicit when Nicholls describes the 'sounds of a grey metallic soar' and 'surge of wheels' of the 'dull North circular roar'. Immediately one notices the juxtaposition between the vibrant colours of the first stanzas and the monotonous and 'dull' 'grey'. This highlights how inferior the city is

compared to the speaker's island and the way in which it causes the speaker to feel depressed and melancholic. Similarly, Nicholls' aggressive verb 'surge' further indicates the unexpected and almost violent way in which the reality of the speaker's life intrudes upon his dreams of home. This is compounded by the equally pejorative verb 'heaves', which suggests the speaker finds each day away from his island an intense struggle. The word implies an action that is very physical and effortful, underlining the speaker's internal conflict as he is forced to tear himself from his dream. The poem concludes by revealing the source of the speaker's dissatisfaction: rather than enjoying the 'blue surf' he must confront 'another London day'. One can almost hear the speaker sighing with deep regret as he swings his feet out of bed, forced to come to terms with 'another' day away from his home and the inevitable pain this will cause. The typographical break in the stanza functions as a physical manifestation of the way in which the speaker is separated from his home and the distance he must endure.

Fundamentally, Nicholls highlights the way in which one's identity is shaped by one's home and the way in which separation from this can cause pain. The poem is a profound meditation on the necessity of feeling as though you belong and the emotional damage that is done when one is stripped of such belonging.

Home (linked to Island Man)

Home is pictures of memories on the wall.
Home is sleeping in my own bed.
Home is waking up to the smell of mom's cooking.
Home is sharing the holidays with family.
Home is playing the piano in the living room.
Home is a warm place to be.
Home is sweet.
Home is the place for me.
Home is filled with love.
Home is blessed from heaven above.
Home is where my heart is.
Home has a strong foundation.
It can weather any storm.
Home is where I belong.
When I go away,
I know I can come back to stay.
Home is a beautiful place.

Jennifer Burns

Both Island Man and Home explore the important role that homes play in people's lives. What are similarities and / or differences in the ways the poets explore feelings about home. (8)

Both *Island Man* and *Home* explore the important role that homes play in people's lives. What are similarities and / or differences in the ways the poets explore feelings about home. (8)

Model Response

When considering how the two poets explore the importance of home, they both make effective use of language. Nicholls begins her poem with a cluster of highly positive images such as evoking the 'blue surf' and the fact that the waves are 'wombing'. This is effective because 'blue' is typically associated with serenity and peace and the connotations of 'womb' are suggestive of maternal protection and safety. Later in the poem, Nicholls also describes the island as being 'emerald' which, like 'blue', is a typically positive colour and is also associated with a precious and valuable jewel. Similarly, Burns describes home in using equally positive imagery. She says it is 'a warm place to be' and 'blessed from heaven above'. The lexical choice of 'warm', like 'wombing', suggests a place of comfort and security whilst the religious imagery in 'blessed from heaven above' highlights just how important home is to Burns in much the same way Nicholls underlines its value through the reference to a jewel.

Both poets also evoke the importance of home through an effective use of structure and form. Both use free verse throughout which helps to cement the freedom and liberty they associate with home, that it is a place without restraint and where one can be oneself. However, Nicholls employs a tonal shift midway through the poem to highlight the pain caused by not being at home whilst Burns maintains a deeply positive tone throughout. This is compounded by Burns' use of anaphora through the repeated use of 'home', suggesting it is always on the speaker's mind and plays a huge role in her life. In contrast, Nicholls concludes with a single line signalling the speaker is away from home and how unwelcome this separation.

Storm on the Island

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees

Which might prove company when it blows full
Blast: you know what I mean - leaves and branches
Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale
So that you listen to the thing you fear
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.

But there are no trees, no natural shelter.
You might think that the sea is company,
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits
The very windows, spits like a tame cat

Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo,
We are bombarded with the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

Storm in The Black Forest (linked to Storm on the Island)

Now it is almost night, from the bronzey soft sky
jugfull after jugfull of pure white liquid fire, bright white
tipples over and spills down,
and is gone
and gold-bronze flutters beat through the thick upper air.

And as the electric liquid pours out, sometimes
a still brighter white snake wriggles among it, spilled
and tumbling wriggling down the sky :
and then the heavens cackle with uncouth sounds.

And the rain won't come, the rain refuses to come!

This is the electricity that man is supposed to have mastered
chained, subjugated to his own use!

supposed to!

In both 'Storm on the Island' and 'Storm in the Black Forest' the speakers describe feelings about storms. What are the similarities of differences between the ways the poets have presented these feelings?

Writing about Poetry – Support Sheet

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>To describe what a poet's intentions are:</p> <p>Portrays Depicts Illustrates Exposes Presents Paints a picture of Represents Demonstrates Embodies - (v) Represent or express in tangible form</p> <p>To give an example or quotation:</p> <p>For example For instance In particular Particularly - Specifically or especially distinguished from others Specifically To illustrate my point</p> | <p>To demonstrate this idea</p> <p>For analysing:</p> <p>This suggests... This links to... Alternatively, it might... This indicates... We can argue that... The audience will... This demonstrates... This reveals...</p> <p>For comparison:</p> <p>If you compare this to {POEM NAME]... Similarly, [AUTHOR] presents [POWER/CONFLICT]... In contrast, [AUTHOR]... Through the use of [TECHNIQUE], [AUTHOR] presents power... however, ...</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Verbs for analysis:</p> <table><tr><td>advises</td><td><i>affects</i></td><td>argues</td><td><i>builds</i></td><td>clarifies</td><td><i>confirms</i></td><td>connotes</td></tr><tr><td></td><td><i>criticises</i></td><td>conveys</td><td><i>denotes</i></td><td>depicts</td><td><i>describes</i></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>determines</td><td><i>demonstrates</i></td><td>displays</td><td><i>encourages</i></td><td>emphasises</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td><i>establishes</i></td><td>explores</td><td><i>foreshadows</i></td><td>foretells</td><td><i>highlights</i></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>hints</td><td><i>illustrates</i></td><td>impacts</td><td><i>implies</i></td><td>manifests</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td><i>narrates</i></td><td>persuades</td><td><i>portrays</i></td><td>presents</td><td><i>refers</i></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>relates</td><td><i>represents</i></td><td>reveals</td><td><i>shows</i></td><td>signifies</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td><i>symbolises</i></td><td>suggests</td><td><i>supports</i></td><td>typifies</td><td><i>underlines</i></td><td></td></tr></table> | | advises | <i>affects</i> | argues | <i>builds</i> | clarifies | <i>confirms</i> | connotes | | <i>criticises</i> | conveys | <i>denotes</i> | depicts | <i>describes</i> | | determines | <i>demonstrates</i> | displays | <i>encourages</i> | emphasises | | | | <i>establishes</i> | explores | <i>foreshadows</i> | foretells | <i>highlights</i> | | hints | <i>illustrates</i> | impacts | <i>implies</i> | manifests | | | | <i>narrates</i> | persuades | <i>portrays</i> | presents | <i>refers</i> | | relates | <i>represents</i> | reveals | <i>shows</i> | signifies | | | | <i>symbolises</i> | suggests | <i>supports</i> | typifies | <i>underlines</i> | |
| advises | <i>affects</i> | argues | <i>builds</i> | clarifies | <i>confirms</i> | connotes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <i>criticises</i> | conveys | <i>denotes</i> | depicts | <i>describes</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| determines | <i>demonstrates</i> | displays | <i>encourages</i> | emphasises | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <i>establishes</i> | explores | <i>foreshadows</i> | foretells | <i>highlights</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| hints | <i>illustrates</i> | impacts | <i>implies</i> | manifests | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <i>narrates</i> | persuades | <i>portrays</i> | presents | <i>refers</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| relates | <i>represents</i> | reveals | <i>shows</i> | signifies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <i>symbolises</i> | suggests | <i>supports</i> | typifies | <i>underlines</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |