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GUIDELINES: ANSWERING QUESTIONS IN POETRY

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE P2

- This Guideline highlights the types of questions found in the Poetry section of an exam paper.
- You need to know and apply these skills to answer the questions set on your current poems.

QUESTION TYPE 3: Critically discuss / discuss... (3 marks)	
LEVEL	• This is a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 question. • You are required to examine an issue from various angles and make a judgement. • 'Critically' requires a deeper examination of the issue than the instruction 'Discuss' does. • This is similar the instruction that asks you to comment on how techniques such as diction, imagery, tone, etc add to the poem. •
STEPS INVOLVED:	• There are three steps involved in answering this question for you to achieve 3 marks. • Step One: Analyse the words in the given lines. • Step Two: Deal with the technique mentioned in the question. • Step Three: Write a balanced view of the way in which this technique adds value to the poem.
APPLICATION Unseen poem: <i>Exodus</i> / Don MacLennan [February 2017] Refer to lines 17-20: 'Skinny little birds of death thrown onto the huge savanna are eating out tonight in twilight crammed with manna.' Critically discuss how these lines convey the speaker's attitude toward the bats. (3) SUGGESTED RESPONSE • Firstly, analyse the words in the lines (lines 17-20). • • Then, deal with the <u>instruction</u> mentioned in the question (in this case, it is <u>attitude</u>). • Finally, write a balanced view about how this instruction (attitude) applies to / conveys the message of the given lines/poem. • In this instance, the descriptions/words show the speaker's negative attitude towards the bats	

PRACTICE EXERCISES QUESTION: TYPE 3

Critically discuss / discuss... (3 marks)

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POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<i>The Zulu Girl</i> / Roy Campbell 'A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder Unslings her child tormented by flies.' Critically discuss how these lines convey the speaker's attitude toward the Zulu girl. (3)	<i>In these lines, the Zulu girl is clearly resentful of the hard, manual labour she is engaged in and the suffering endured by her child who is pestered by the flies. She does not even have someone to look after her child while she works. The fact that the speaker notices this tells us that he feels sorry for her and her hard life filled with poverty.</i> (3)
<i>Remember</i> / C Rossetti ' Yet if you should forget me for a while And afterwards remember, do not grieve' Discuss what the speaker's tone in these lines conveys about her attitude to her beloved. (3)	<i>The speaker has adopted a tone of calm acceptance of the fact that it is natural for one to be forgotten after death. His tone is also one of reassurance towards her beloved not to feel guilty for forgetting her in the future. This tells us that her attitude is one of love and concern for her beloved. She wants him to be happy when she is no longer there.</i> (3)
<i>An African Thunderstorm</i> / D Rubadiri 'Pregnant clouds Ride stately on its back, Gathering to perch on hills Like sinister dark wings.' Discuss the appropriateness of the image in these lines in the context of the poem. (3)	<i>In this image the clouds are depicted as, firstly, being heavy with rain (pregnant), and secondly, as a dangerous winged creature preparing itself to attack the villagers. The image is appropriate as the impending danger it implies reinforces what the poem points out: the imminent arrival of a fierce, destructive storm.</i> (3)

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