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ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE [ENGHL] GRADE 12



POETRY GUIDE (January 2023-)

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PREFACE

Dear Colleagues

This Grade 12 ENGH1 Poetry Study Guide was compiled by putting all the resources that were made available on the Resource Portal, 'under one roof'. The primary purpose was to present a range of analyses related to the NSC poems.

It would be truly appreciated if all technical glitches are brought to the light so that corrections could be affected on the master copy.

Finally, in all humility and gratitude, full credit and acknowledgement are given to the following individuals who laid the foundation for this Study Guide:

- Ms Carlien Buss
- Ms ASM Haffejee

With best wishes

N. Morar

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POETIC DEVICES

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Language that is not meant to be taken literally, or word for word

IMAGERY / SENSORY LANGUAGE

- The use of language to create mental images and sensory impressions for emotional effect and intensity

- Example –

He could hear his world crashing down when he heard the news about her.

SIMILE

- a comparison of two things that are essentially different, using the words like or as

- Example

O my love is like a red, red rose

(rom Robert Burn's "A Red, Red Rose")

METAPHOR

- a subtle comparison in which an author describes a person or thing using words that are not meant to be taken literally.

- Examples –

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely
players:*

*They have their exits and their
entrances*

(from As You Like It by William Shakespeare)

EXTENDED METAPHOR

- a metaphor introduced and then further developed throughout all or part of a literary work, especially a poem – comparison can be made to something else not mentioned in the poem

PERSONIFICATION

- figurative language in which non-human things or abstractions are represented as having human qualities

- Example –

o Necessity is the mother of all invention.

HYPERBOLE

- an intentional and extreme exaggeration for emphasis or effect

- Example –

o This book weighs a ton.

IDIOM

Phrases people use in everyday language which do not make sense literally, but the meaning is understood

Examples –

- *Just hold your horses if you think idioms are hard!*
- *I'm here to let the cat out of the bag.*
- *Learning idioms is a piece of cake.*

SOUND DEVICES

Focus on the sound of words, rather than their meaning

REPETITION

Repetition is when an author repeats a word, phrase, sentence, or stanza for effect or emphasis.

RHYME

Rhyme is the repetition of end sounds in two or more words or phrases that appear close to each other in a poem.

ALLITERATION

- Alliteration is the repetition of a sound at the beginning of words.
- Common examples:
Coca-cola, Tiny Tim, Mickey Mouse

ASSONANCE

- Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds
- Often creates near-rhyme

ONOMATOPOEIA

- Onomatopoeia- a word that sounds like the sound it makes
- For example:
pop, crackle, screech, zip, fizz
- Not just sound effects

OTHER LITERARY DEVICES**SYMBOL**

- A symbol is an object, person, place, or action that has a meaning in itself, and that also stands for something larger than itself.

For example:

A dove symbolizes peace.
A black crow or raven symbolizes death.
A wedding ring symbolizes...???

APHORISM

- a concise statement of a general truth or principle; like a truism
 - Example
 - o *A penny saved is a penny earned.* - Ben Franklin

IRONY

- a literary technique used to create meaning that seems to contradict the literal meaning or events

VERBAL IRONY

- use of words in which the intended meaning is contrary to the literal meaning

SITUATIONAL IRONY

- implying through plot or character that a situation is quite different from the way it is presented.
- Example –
 - o *'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz', Scarecrow always had a brain; Tin Man always had a heart; the Cowardly Lion wasn't a coward after all.*

DRAMATIC IRONY

- dramatic device in which a character says or does something that he or she does not fully grasp but which is understood by the audience
 - Example –
 - o *Lois Lane is constantly trying to get an interview with Superman, but she actually sees him every day and doesn't know it (Clark Kent)*

SARCASM

- a bitter form of irony, can be intended to tease or hurt; often insinuated by the tone;
 - Example –
 - o *"I'm proud of you, Mom. You're like Christopher Columbus. You discovered something millions of people knew about before you."* -Lisa Simpson

PARADOX

- a seemingly contradictory statement that on closer analysis reveals a deeper truth
 - Example –
 - o *"I'm nobody."* --anonymous
 - o *"I can resist anything but temptation."* -Oscar Wilde
 - o *"Nobody goes to that restaurant; it's too crowded."*

FOR ANALYSING POETRY

REFRAIN

- a phrase or verse recurring at intervals in a song or poem, especially at the end of each stanza; chorus.

- Example –

*o "All you need is love
Love is all you need"*

--The Beatles

RHYTHM

- the BEAT created by the sounds off the words in a poem
- Rhythm can be created by meter, rhyme scheme, alliteration, assonance, and refrain.

STANZA

- A stanza is a group of related words in a poem, similar to a paragraph of prose but does not have to have complete sentences.
- It's like a poetry paragraph!

STYLE

- Style is a manner or "way" of writing.
- It involves HOW something is said rather than what is actually said.
- A writer's style is determined by the way he/she uses words. Ex: vivid verbs, imagery, sentence structure

tone

- Tone is the writer's attitude toward a subject, character, or audience and is conveyed through the author's choice of diction, imagery, figurative language, details, and syntax.
- (In other words, tone is how the author feels about his subject, character, or audience, and he shows it through the words he chooses, and how he puts them together.

MOOD

- The feeling that the writer creates for the reader.
- This is how the reader is supposed to feel about the subject.
- Descriptive words, imagery, and figurative language all influence the mood of a literary work.

THEME

- Theme is the central message of a literary work, or the idea the author wishes to convey about that subject. It is not the same as the subject, which can be expressed in one or two words. (This is a lot like a truism.)

REFERENCE: LITERARY%20DEVICES.pdf%202%20(2).pdf

SONNET 130 – William Shakespeare

1. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
2. Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
3. If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
4. If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
5. I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
6. But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
7. And in some perfumes is there more delight
8. Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
9. I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
10. That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
11. I grant I never saw a goddess go;
12. My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
13. And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
14. As any she belied with false compare.

BIOGRAPHY: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- Born 1564; Died 1616
- English (born and died in Stratford-upon-Avon)
- He was married to Anne Hathaway, and they had three children.
- He is still known as one of the world's greatest poets, dramatist and playwright. He wrote 37 plays and 375 poems.

SUMMARY: SONNET 130

- In this sonnet, the speaker expresses his admiration for his loved one in what may seem the most uncomplimentary / unflattering / derogatory manner.
- This sonnet compares the speaker's lover to other aspects of beauty, but never ascribes any of these qualities to his loved one: Her eyes are "nothing like the sun," her lips are less red than coral; compared to white snow, her breasts are dun-coloured, and her hairs on her head are like black wires.
- In the second quatrain, the speaker says he has seen the colours red and white, although separated ("damasked") on a rose, but he sees no such colours in his mistress's cheeks. Furthermore, he concedes that her breath stinks ("reeks") and is less delightful than perfume.
- In the third quatrain, he admits that, though he loves her voice, it can never be compared to music which "hath a far more pleasing sound," and that, though he has never seen a goddess, his mistress – unlike a goddesses – walks trudges on the ground.
- In the couplet, however, the speaker declares that, "by heav'n," he thinks his love as rare and valuable "As any she belied with false compare" – that is, any love in which false comparisons were invoked to describe the loved one's beauty.

ADDITIONAL SUMMARY

- Shakespeare uses eight 'anti-compliments' (negative comparisons) to describe the uniqueness and beauty of his beloved.
- However, in the couplet he states that BECAUSE she is normal and 'real', he does not need to exaggerate her looks or his love for her. He loves her just the way she is – perfect in her imperfection. In other words, she is perfect to HIM – he does not need an idealised and superficial woman.
- Although he seems critical and rather rude in the first 12 lines, the reader realises that he is, in fact, sincere in his love for her. He does not need exaggerated and unrealistic comparisons to declare his genuine love for her. In being so brutally honest, he has ironically given her a heightened beauty, simply because he does not dote on her outward appearance

FORM/STRUCTURE

- This is a Shakespearean or Elizabethan sonnet. It consists of three quatrains (4 lines each) and a rhyming couplet (2 lines).
- The rhyme scheme is consistent with this format: abab / cdcd / efef / gg.
- The couplet serves as a final argument to drive home the speaker's point. The rhythm of the point is consistent, too, and follows traditional iambic pentameter. There are 10 syllables in each line.

ANALYSIS

Lines 1-4

1. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
 2. Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
 3. If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
 4. If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
- The poetic persona opens 'Sonnet 130' by mocking beloved's eyes: they are "nothing like the sun". According to Elizabethan tradition, such a comparison would have been almost expected.
 - However, the poetic speaker continues to ridicule his beloved's appearance by slashing any attempt to match her to elements / aspects of nature : if snow is white, her skin is not; her breasts are rather "dun", which is another word for grey-brown and her hair is described as black wires.

Lines 5-8

5. I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
 6. But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
 7. And in some perfumes is there more delight
 8. Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
- The speaker's beloved does not have a pleasant flush to her cheeks.
 - He goes so far as to condemn the smell of her breath and the sound of her voice.
 - The idea behind the Elizabethan tradition of love poetry was for the speaker / poet / persona to elevate the status his loved one, mortal woman, to that of a goddess.
 - However, in Sonnet 130, the poetic speaker, rather than elevating her status, is harshly critical and brings her further down to earth

Lines 9-12

9. I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
10. That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
11. I grant I never saw a goddess go;
12. My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

- The speaker admits that he loves to listen to her voice, but he knows that the sound of music is more soothing (than her voice).
- The speaker further admits that he has never seen a goddess walk, but his mistress's walk is far from that of a goddess.
- That line, in particular, seems an almost openly satire of traditional style of writing that was prevalent during this period for it is well known that many Elizabethan poets would compare their lovers to things that mortals could not achieve, thus leaving the realm of humans to enter the pantheon of the gods.

Lines 13–14

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

- Despite her shortcomings, the poet insists that he loves her, not because she is a goddess, not because she is an unattainable beauty, but because she is his, and because she is who she is- natural and not because he can compare her to beautiful things.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

LINE 1

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

- Mistress – this was a more general reference meaning "my love" or "my darling", and not as would use the term today. When we use the word "mistress," it's usually to refer to a woman who is dating a married man.
- When Shakespeare was writing this sonnet it was all the rage to compare a lover's eyes to the sun and sunlight – Shakespeare completely negates this, using the phrase 'nothing like' to emphasise the fact that this female's eyes are not bright. In this simile, the mistress' eyes are being compared to the sun. The sun creates the image of something bright and shiny. However, since the mistress' eyes are "nothing" like sun, her eyes are the opposite of bright and shiny.
- The speaker's use of the simile indicates that the woman's eyes are just plain and ordinary or nothing special.
-

LINE 2

Coral is far more red, than her lips red:

- Coral – a hard stony substance, typically forming large reefs in warm seas. Known for its bright red or pink colour. This was the perfect colour for the perfect female.
- Her lips are not as red as coral; there is nothing special about the colour of her lips. She has ordinary lips.

LINE 3

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

- Dun – a dull, greyish-brown colour. At that time, it was a huge compliment to have your skin compared to snow. His mistress has a dull complexion. "Dun" is a word

often used to describe the colour of a horse, and not something a woman would be thrilled to hear about. It makes her sound ugly.

LINE 4

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

- Hair was often compared to golden thread. This metaphor compares her hair to black wires. It is not soft and flowing, but hard and spiky. She has frizzy black hair. The W-alliteration emphasises that she is not perfect.

LINES 5-6

*I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;*

- Damasked – a pattern of mixed colours.
- He has seen beautiful roses in damask (pinkish colour), red and white, but his mistress's cheeks don't remind him of them at all. He sees no such roses (colour) in his mistress's cheeks: Her cheeks are pale. This emphasises that his mistress is not the perfect female model.

LINES 7-8

*And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.*

- Reeks – a very strong, unpleasant smell
- Some perfumes are far more fragrant than the smell of her breath. This is deliberately shocking and offensive, to emphasise that she is just an ordinary person, she is human.
- This idea of her being an ordinary person, and not a goddess, is further explained in lines 11-12

LINES 9-10

*I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:*

- He admits that he would love to hear her speak, but the sound of music is better than the sound of her voice.

LINES 11-12

*I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:*

- Treads on the ground – she is not very graceful when she walks.
- He admits that he had never seen a goddess move. She is not a goddess that floats or glides when she walks. She is a very real person who is just an average human being.

LINES 13-14

*And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.*

- 'And' - introduces a change
- yet, by heaven - He denies that she possesses any heavenly qualities, yet he swears by heaven that his love is sincere.
- The speaker thinks that his mistress is as wonderful and unique ("rare") as any woman ("any she") who was ever misrepresented ("belied") by an exaggerated comparison ("false compare").
- The couplet drives home the speaker's main point, that unlike other people who write sonnets, he doesn't need flowery terms or fancy comparisons. He can just tell his mistress, plainly and simply, that he loves her for who she is. He embraces her flaws. He loves her just the way she is.

THEMES

- The main theme of Sonnet 130 is the difference between the conventional way of glorifying a speaker's beloved and how Shakespeare looks at his lady love.
- It is a matter of seeing a woman by her worth in one's life: Shakespeare says they are at a similar level. Their love exists on the same plane. He loves the lady as she already is. She does not have anything sparkling or glorious in her looks, but yet the speaker treats his relationship as rare.
- This sonnet also taps on the themes of love and perception vs reality.

THEME: BEAUTY AND LOVE

- In "Sonnet 130," the speaker unfavourably compares his lover's body to a series of beautiful things (implying that she is less beautiful than the sun, snow, roses, a goddess, etc.).
- Ultimately, the speaker concludes that, even if his mistress cannot be credibly compared to the typical imagery of love poems, his love is still real and valuable, and his mistress is still beautiful.
- In this way, Shakespeare suggests that love and beauty should not be understood through abstract comparisons, but rather should be valued for being real and flawed.
- The poem begins with the speaker comparing parts of his lover's body to beautiful objects, finding, in each case, that her body is less beautiful than the thing to which it's being compared to: he writes that her eyes aren't as bright as the sun, and her breath isn't at all like perfume – in fact, it "reeks."
- These comparisons at first seem to paint a portrait of a woman who is not very appealing. She is lacklustre in comparison to the beauty of roses, snow, or music, which implies that the speaker might be able to find more beauty and pleasure in the everyday things that surround him than in the woman he loves. The comparisons, in other words, seem to degrade her value.

- However, since the comparisons are not often openly negative, it's possible that they are not meant to humiliate the speaker's mistress. For example, the first line notes that the speaker's mistress' eyes are "nothing like the sun," but it does not say what they are like. This leaves open the possibility that her eyes are better than the sun, or are at least beautiful in a different way.
- Similarly, the speaker notes that "if snow be white" then his mistress' "breasts are dun," which seems more like a statement of reality (even the whitest skin is actually tan, or dun) than a criticism. The only truly insulting thing that the speaker says is that her breath "reeks" and, because of this, he finds "more delight" in "some perfumes." But even this is a reasonably mild statement; he's not even saying that all perfumes are more delightful than her reeking breath, so clearly, he doesn't mind it all that much.
- The poem's final two lines cement the interpretation that the comparisons are not meant to be degrading to the speaker's mistress or to the love that they share. When the speaker claims that he finds "his love" as beautiful as any other woman "belied with false compare," he's making the point that no one's eyes are as beautiful as the sun and everyone's breath smells kind of bad, and that, therefore, such comparisons are not actually a useful way to think about beauty or love.

THEME: LOVE, PERSONALITY AND THE SUPERFICIAL

- In Lines 9 and 10, of Sonnet 130, the speaker notes that even though music has a "far more pleasing sound" than his mistress's voice, that he nonetheless "love[s] to hear her speak."
- This comment about his mistress's voice is the only openly positive comment about the speaker's mistress before the poem's final two lines, and it is possible to argue that it points to another broader point about love within the poem: that one should love personality more than looks. After all, if the speaker loves to hear his mistress speak not because the sound of her voice is as beautiful as music (it's not), then it is reasonable to assume that part of the reason that he loves to hear her speak is because of the content of what she says. In other words, the speaker cares about what she is saying, not about the more superficial question of whether her voice is musical enough.
- And yet, overall, even as the poem rejects superficiality and asks the reader to think of love and beauty as inherently imperfect but still rare and valuable, the poem can only be said to be partially successful in this critique. After all, the majority of the poem is still comprised of superficial comparisons, and even if they're included for the humorous and satirical effect of mocking traditional love poetry and its impossible comparisons, readers of Sonnet 130 still don't learn anything about the speaker's mistress that isn't superficial.

THEME: ESCAPE FROM IDEALISM

- Shakespeare does not idealise his beloved. She is unlike the Petrarchan ideal – she is “real”, and he loves her despite her imperfections. He states clearly in the couplet that people who describe their partners with idealised comparisons, are liars. This emphasises the absurdity of Idealism.

THEME: FEMININITY

- This sonnet addresses the problem of stereotyping female beauty by setting unreachable standards for it. The fixed ‘definition’ of beauty is unrealistic and will make females inferior by not achieving the ideal standards of beauty. He questions real love – we should love our partners in spite of their imperfections.

THEME: LOVE

- Love – The speaker expresses his love for his beloved. He describes his values of love. He states that real love is not based on outwards appearances and idealised looks. His love is based on connection and emotion, not the superficial. Real love does not need false attributes. Any woman can be beautiful.

LITERARY DEVICES**SIMILE**

- This can be found in the first two lines: “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;/ Coral is far more red than her lips’ red”.

METAPHOR

- Readers can find an implicit comparison between music and human voice in this line “That music hath a far more pleasing sound”.

HYPERBOLE

- Hyperbole: occurs in the following lines: “If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head” and “Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks”.

IRONY

- Irony: Readers can find the use of irony in the final couplet. Here, Shakespeare ironically comments on the labels used by contemporary poets.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: LITERARY DEVICES

- This sonnet contains various metaphors and similes.
- Lines 1-4 contain a comparison each: He states that her eyes are not as bright as the sun, her lips not as red as coral, her skin is quite dull, and her hair is wiry. Lines 5-12 contain a comparison extended over two lines: her cheeks are quite pale, her breath “reeks” and he would rather listen to music than to her speak. She also walks on the ground like an average human, certainly not a “goddess”. However, these are inverted to become anti-compliments in a way. Some readers might perceive these as insults at

first, until the couplet states so elegantly that he loves her (queue Bruno Mars...) "just the way you are". So, by telling the reader exactly what his beloved is NOT, we see and hear how perfect she is DESPITE her imperfections.

- There are various uses of alliteration and assonance in the poem. Look at the repetition of "w" sound in lines 3-4, "g" in line 11, for example. These poetic devices are generally used to emphasise the words/sounds.
- Repetition occurs in lines 2 ("red") and 4 ("wires"). This, again, emphasises the importance of the colour and texture – the idealised Petrarchan woman had blood-red lips and golden, luscious hair.
- Anastrophe (the natural order of words is inversed) occurs in lines 6 and 7: "But no such roses see I in her cheeks / And in some perfumes is there more delight" – this places the emphasis on the "roses" and "perfumes" – again mocking the Petrarchan ideal.
- Hyperbole abounds in the poem – all of the comparisons are exaggerated. This emphasises the absurdity of the Petrarchan ideals. He exaggerates the imperfections of his beloved to prove his point.

TONE:

- The tone of the poem is satirical in the first 12 lines when he refutes and mocks the Petrarchan ideals. He is sincere and almost complimentary in the couplet when he states that he loves her in spite of her imperfections.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain how the structure and tone of this poem allows the poet to emphasise the central message. (3)
2. Are Shakespeare's observations in the quatrains cynical or not? Explain your answer. (2)
3. Who is the speaker ridiculing in the poem? Why does he do this? (3)
4. Explain what is meant by: "My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground." (2)
5. Refer to line 12. Comment on the effect pace has on the meaning of the line. (3)
6. Show how the last line completes his argument. Refer, in particular, to the word "false". (2)
7. Identify three sensory images in this poem and how they relate to the central theme. (3)
8. Identify the tone in lines 1-12 and how this contrasts with the tone in the last two lines. Is this an effective shift in tone? Justify your answer. (3)
9. Explain the use of "by heaven" in line 13. Why has this phrase been included? (2)

THE CHILD WHO WAS SHOT DEAD BY SOLDIERS IN NYANGA – Ingrid Jonker**THE CHILD WHO WAS SHOT DEAD BY SOLDIERS IN NYANGA – Ingrid Jonker**

1. The child is not dead
2. the child raises his fists against his mother
3. who screams Africa screams the smell
4. of freedom and heather
5. in the locations of the heart under siege
6. The child raises his fists against his father
7. in the march of the generations
8. who scream Africa scream the smell
9. of justice and blood
10. in the streets of his armed pride
11. The child is not dead
12. neither at Langa nor at Nyanga
13. nor at Orlando nor at Sharpeville
14. nor at the police station in Philippi
15. where he lies with a bullet in his head
16. The child is the shadow of the soldiers
17. on guard with guns saracens and batons
18. the child is present at all meetings and legislations
19. the child peeps through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers
20. the child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere
21. the child who became a man treks through all of Africa
22. the child who became a giant travels through the whole world
23. Without a pass

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BIOGRAPHY: Ingrid Jonker

- Born 1933; Died 1965
- (Afrikaans) South African
- She had a traumatic childhood and adulthood. Her poetry often expresses her personal traumas, as well as the societal and familial injustices she perceived around her. She was a member of "Die Sestigers", a group of anti-establishment poets and writers who challenged the conservative literary norms and censorship of the 1950s and 60s in South Africa.
- She posthumously (after her death) received the Order of Ikhamanga for her contribution to literature and commitment to the struggle for human rights.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Ingrid Jonker wrote this protest poem in Afrikaans, in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre. (The Sharpeville massacre occurred on 21 March 1960 at the police station in the township of Sharpeville in the then Transvaal Province of the then Union of South Africa (today part of Gauteng)).
- After demonstrating against pass laws, a crowd of about 7000 protesters went to the police station. Sources disagree as to the behaviour of the crowd; some state that the crowd was peaceful, while others state that the crowd had been hurling stones at the police, and that the mood had turned "ugly". The South African Police opened fire on the crowd when the crowd started advancing toward the fence around the police station, and tear-gas had proved ineffectual.
- There were 249 victims in total, including 29 children, with 69 people killed and 180 injured. Some were shot in the back as they fled.
- It refers to the killing of a young child in Nyanga – see summary.
- Writing in Drum magazine about the poem, Jonker said: "I saw the mother as every mother in the world. I saw her as myself. I saw Simone [Jonker's own child] as the baby. I could not sleep. I thought of what the child might have been had he been allowed to live. I thought what could be reached, what could be gained by death?
- The child wanted no part in the circumstances in which our country is grasped... He only wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga...
- [The poem] grew out of my sense of bereavement."
- Ingrid Jonker had written the poem following a visit to the Philippi police station to see the body of a child who had been shot dead in his mother's arms by the police in the township of Nyanga in Cape Town.
- It happened in the aftermath of the massacre of 69 people in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg, in March 1960. They were marching to the police station to protest against having to carry passbooks.
- Nelson Mandela read this poem in the original Afrikaans, during his address at the opening of the first democratic parliament on May 24, 1994.

SUMMARY

- The child who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga is a protest poem of protest, written in response to the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960.
- This piece speaks on the brutal massacres occurring across South Africa during the Apartheid regime- a system of institutionalized racial segregation that existed from 1948 to the early 1990s.
- The poem focusses on a child who was killed by the police during the anti-pass-laws protests that took place across South Africa.
- These gross violations of human rights, especially the Sharpeville massacre stirred Ingrid Jonker to pen down this poem in resistance of the blatant brutality and barbarism against the innocents.
- This piece describes how the child who was killed during the protest is still alive. He raises his fists against the injustice happening in his country.
- His scream resembles the tone of freedom, identity, and protest.
- According to the speaker, the metaphorical child has grown bigger than the oppressors ever thought of.
- He is present everywhere, regulating the unequal terms that cause South Africans pain.
- Ironically, now he does not need a pass to roam in his own land.

ADDITIONAL SUMMARY

- The poem reflects on the pass laws of Apartheid South Africa. Jonker wrote this poem in reaction to the shooting of a young child in his mother's arms during a protest against the Pass Laws. This happened in Nyanga township, near Cape Town.
- The child was killed while on his way to the doctor with his mother – the senselessness of his death is a result of the senselessness of the Apartheid laws. This child remains nameless to represent all innocent lives taken during Apartheid.
- The poem highlights the idea that violence within a country destroys innocent members of society (women and children) and damages the country and its future.
- This child's death has inspired others to take up the cause of freedom and given new energy to the struggle against Apartheid. Jonker yearns for a time when any child can grow and make his/her impact on the world, without restrictions of the Pass Laws.

FORM/ STRUCTURE

- Although this poem is separated into four sections, it is devoid of a specific rhyme scheme or rhythm. It is, therefore, in free verse. The isolated final line emphasises the poet's message: freedom is needed!
- The fourth stanza develops the idea of this child's wasted life – what he could have become, had he lived. There is a parallel structure in "not at" repeated in the third stanza.
- This rhetorical device gives examples of where police brutality occurred. It gives an historical accuracy to the poem.

ANALYSIS

THE TITLE

- The Child – Symbol of all the innocent children who were killed by soldiers under Apartheid in SA because he only “wanted to play in the sun”.
- Shot Dead by Soldiers – emphasises the extreme brutality of the soldiers
- The title evokes a sympathetic response. A child is vulnerable and helpless against armed soldiers. It shows the cruelty and senselessness of this death. The title makes it clear that this is protest poem against Apartheid. This child's death has inspired others to take up the cause of freedom & given new energy to the struggle against apartheid.

STANZA 1

LINE 1

The child is not dead

- The repetition of “the child” throughout the poem emphasises the age and innocence of the youth and highlights how many children were killed because of the apartheid laws. This repetition is called an anaphora.
- *is not dead* – contradicts the title: metaphorically -he will live on by becoming a symbol. The child is a symbol of the growing sense of freedom in the hearts of people against the Apartheid System. The child becomes a metaphor of resistance, hope and innocence.

LINE 2

the child raises his fists against his mother

- The poet's diction conveys the distress of the child and others during the senseless Apartheid era.
- “screams” and “raises his fists” highlights his anger.
- *fists* – symbol of resistance and revolution: the diction conveys the distress and the anger of the child/the younger generation is rebelling.
- *Against his mother* – the child is not happy with the parents'/the older generations submissive attitude – they did not fight hard enough. The resistance of the younger generation will not be passive.

LINES 3-4

*who screams Africa screams the smell
of freedom and heather*

- The repetition of “screams” emphasises his anger. The mixing of the senses adds emphasis. S-alliteration – emphasises the urgency and desperate cries of the oppressed people.
- The extended space is used instead of punctuation between Africa screams.
- Heather – a plant with small flowers. Jonker connects freedom to the smell of flowers; freedom will be like the sweet scent of flowers.

LINE 5

in the locations of the heart under siege

- *locations* – pun: black townships or where something is located. The child's message (aspirations of the black population) will continue in the heart of the people. heart under siege – people who are oppressed or segregated from the mainstream.

STANZA 2

LINE 6

The child raises his fists against his father

- The younger generation rebels not only against the system but also against the older generation. The reference to a different parent (line 2) emphasises the generation gap; that it is now the time of the youth to take up the fight.

~

LINE 7

in the march of the generations

- *march* – alludes to military action
- *generations* – the younger people were prepared to go further; they were prepared to use violence. Many joined the ANC military arm, uMkhonto we Sizwe.

LINES 8-9

*who scream Africa scream the smell
of justice and blood*

- The repetition of line 3 emphasises their anger, the desperate cries of the oppressed people and urgency to fight of justice and blood – The younger generation is willing to spill blood/sacrifice their lives for their freedom.

LINE 10

in the streets of his armed pride

- *in the streets* – They are prepared to fight against the soldiers who patrolled the townships. Also symbolic of a popular revolt.
- *armed pride* – tone is very passionate and inspiring. Emphasises that they were willing to fight to restore their dignity (pride).

STANZA 3

LINE 11

The child is not dead

- The repetition of line 1 emphasises that the child is physically and medically dead, but not spiritually or poetically.

LINES 12-13

*neither at Langa nor at Nyanga
nor at Orlando nor at Sharpeville*

- Langa , Nyanga – Black townships in the Cape
- Orlando , Sharpeville – Black townships in Gauteng
- These were sites of violent protests against Apartheid. Also shows that protests had spread throughout the country.
- Sharpeville – allusion to the Sharpeville Massacre

LINES 14-15

*nor at the police station in Philippi
where he lies with a bullet in his head*

- Phillippi – Cape Flats township where Jonker saw the body of the child that prompted this poem.
- The paradox highlights the fact that this child died physically, but he is still alive in the hearts of all Africans. He becomes the symbol of innocence, resistance, and hope.

STANZA 4**LINE 16**

The child is the shadow of the soldiers

- The metaphor compares the child to the shadow of soldiers. This is a warning/reminder of the possibility of violence and that hope for change lies with the youth.

LINE 17

on guard with guns saracens and batons

- Saracens – An armoured car that is synonymous with Apartheid in South Africa. The soldiers were fully equipped, showing that they would use force to suppress the Blacks, not caring about who died, be it women or children.
- The authorities wanted to protect the status quo.

LINE 18

the child is present at all meetings and legislations

- The death of the child is discussed by all people, the apartheid government and the Black people. The apartheid government tried to introduce new laws (legislation) while Black people were inspired to fight against the government.

LINE 19

the child peeps through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers

- the child peeps through the windows – people will always remember and were determined that it would not happen again.

LINE 20

the child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere

- Line 20 creates the image of a child was an innocent victim, he simply wanted to enjoy his childhood.

LINE 21

the child who became a man treks through all of Africa

- *became a man* – he grew up too quickly by taking on the responsibility of fighting for freedom.
- As a symbol, the child affects all aspects of life. The child, as a symbol, will become more powerful: will inspire the whole continent.

LINE 22

the child who became a giant travels through the whole world

Giant – the child has become larger than life. The death of the child and others who fought for freedom has had a massive influence on the growing sense of freedom, justice and resistance by all those who are oppressed.

travels through the whole world – What happened to the child will have a global effect: many countries protested against the brutal and unjust system.

STANZA 5**LINE 23**

Without a pass

- The last line of the poem forms the coda. A coda is an epilogue that concludes a story. This could be an entire chapter, a few paragraphs, lines, or a single sentence.) This conveys the final message and irony of the poem: The dead do not require a pass; you first have to die to walk around freely.
- Pass refers to the Apartheid ID document used to restrict movement of the black population. This was the main reason for violent protests at Langa, Nyanga and Sharpeville. The Pass system caused the death of the child, causing him to become a symbol, able to cross borders and continents unrestricted. You cannot control the minds of people.

ADDITIONAL LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION

Lines 1-2

The child is not dead

the child raises his fists against his mother

- Ingrid Jonker's poem begins with an allusion.
- The first line "The child is not dead" alludes to Dylan Thomas' poem "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London". In this poem, Thomas refuses to mourn the child in order to pose his resistance against the impact of World War II.
- While in Jonker's poem, she refutes the fact that the child was killed. According to her, their children cannot die. They are still alive in their hearts.
- The child raises both his fists against his mother. It shows this innocent kid's keen desire for freedom and justice. Besides, the "fist" is a symbol of resistance and revolution. So, through this image, the poet seeks a revolution that can end the pain of Africans.

Lines 3-5

who screams Africa screams the smell

of freedom and heather

in the locations of the heart under siege

- The child screams Africa. He shouts the "smell of freedom" and the "heather". It means one can sense the growing sense of freedom in everyone's heart from his scream.
- His voice resonates with the demand of those who reside in the heather or veld.
- His shrill voice demanding freedom reaches the nooks and corners of the continent. It breaks through the fences set up against his fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters.
- The "heart under siege" is a reference to a person who is oppressed or segregated from the mainstream. Here, Jonker uses synecdoche in the usage of the word "heart".

Lines 6-10

The child raises his fists against his father

in the march of the generations

who scream Africa scream the smell

of justice and blood

in the streets of his armed pride

- The second stanza begins with a repetition of the second line of the poem. This time, the child raises his fists against his father.
- His father is present in the march of generations. It portrays the march of South Africans against the "pass laws". In one of these demonstrations at Sharpeville, several children were killed. The incident moved Jonker to pen down this piece.
- There is another repetition in the third line. Here, the poetic persona talks about the child's scream that depicts his desire for justice and blood.

- The term “blood” symbolizes the anger of all those who were oppressed and denied their rights. It is also a reference to the bloodshed of the demonstrators.
- In the last line, Jonker uses another synecdoche.
- Here, the term “armed pride” is an abstract idea that depicts the concrete term “proud soldiers”. Besides, it is also a personal metaphor. Through this line, the speaker talks about the streets where the proud soldiers were armed against the peacefully protesting Africans.
- According to Jonker, the child is also there and he voices his people’s demands.

Lines 11-12

The child is not dead

neither at Langa nor at Nyanga

- The third stanza begins with a refrain: a repetition of the first line.
- It is meant to reinforce / emphasize the idea concerning the child’s death. He is not dead. The brutal forces cannot kill him or others like him present in the coloured townships such as Langa, Nyanga, Orlando, and Philippi.
- Langa township is located in Cape Town, South Africa. On 21 March 1960, several anti-pass protestors were killed there, the same day as the Sharpeville massacre.
- Nyanga is a township in the Western Cape, South Africa. The residents of Nyanga also joined the national call to protest against the Apartheid laws passed in 1960.
- The title of the poem refers to a child of Nyanga who was killed by the soldiers.
-

Lines 13-15

nor at Orlando nor at Sharpeville

nor at the police station in Philippi

where he lies with a bullet in his head

- Jonker makes reference to Orlando, a township in the urban area of Soweto, South Africa. Some of the most important events of the fight against the apartheid system occurred there.
- Sharpeville is a township in Transvaal, today part of Gauteng. On 21 March 1960, South African police opened fire on the protestors, killing 69 people, including 8 women and 10 children, and injuring 180, including 31 women and 19 children.
- In the following line, Jonker says that the children who were killed at the police station in Philippi were not dead. Philippi is one of the larger townships of Cape Town. In the Apartheid era, it was designated for Coloureds, Black Africans, and whites.
- The last line tells readers that the child lies with a bullet in his head at the Philippi police station. This image depicts the horrific rule of the apartheid regime. They were so heartless that they killed innocent children who could not even understand what Apartheid really meant!

Lines 16-19

The child is the shadow of the soldiers

on guard with guns saracens and batons

the child is present at all meetings and legislations

the child peeps through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers

- All the lines of the fourth stanza begin with the phrase "The child". Jonker uses this device for the sake of emphasizing her ideas. According to her, the dead child is now the "shadow of soldiers". It means he is walking the same brutal path to avenge the deaths of others like him.
- Readers can find the use of the enjambment in the first two lines.
- In the second line, the poet shows readers the image of soldiers on guard with guns, Saracen tanks, and batons. It depicts the soldiers' preparedness in stopping the anti pass protests. After reading this line, it seems as if they were preparing for war. Ironically, they used these instruments against thousands of peaceful protestors.
- According to the poet, the child is omnipresent
- He can easily slip into all the meetings and legislations. It seems as if he is overseeing everything and informing his countrymen about all that they are unaware of.
- He peeps through the windows and into the hearts of mothers. The child does so in order to infuse the spirit of anger inside the mothers who were silent. They cannot remain silent. They have to speak up, stand up, and snatch what they deserve.

Lines 20-23

the child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere

the child who became a man treks through all of Africa

the child who became a giant travel through the whole world

Without a pass

- The child conveys to his people that all he just wanted to play in the sun of Nyanga, nothing else. But, after his death, the whole country has become his playground. Now, he has transformed into a man and treks through Africa.
- There are no forces that can stop him or demand a pass to verify his identity. This metaphorical child of anger has grown to the size of a giant. Now it can roam easily wherever he wishes to. His protest can rage through the world.
- The ending is an important part of the poem. It refers to the pass laws which were a form of internal passport system designed to segregate the population, manage urbanization, and allocate migrant labour.
- According to the poet, the dead does not require a pass. Does it implicitly highlight the fact that one has to die in order to move across his own country?
- The irony is that people of colour could not move about in the apartheid era. Only the dead could.

THEMES

FREEDOM

- Freedom – ultimately the speaker dreams of a time when all people will be free. This freedom includes the freedom of speech, movement and in all human rights. Freedom from Apartheid and its brutal laws.

RESISTANCE

- Resistance – This child stands up for what he knows is right and he (the symbol) can never die. He is not a physical person, but an idea. There is resistance against the blatant brutality and barbarism against the innocents. His raised fist symbolises the yearning for freedom, identity, and protest.

PROTEST AND RESISTANCE

- Jonker's poem taps on the theme of protest and resistance: This piece highlights a child who was shot dead at Nyanga during the anti-pass demonstration.
- Jonker was moved by the death toll at Sharpeville and Nyanga. She could imagine how several innocent children were killed at the peaceful demonstrations.
- In this poem, she presents one such dead child. He voices the anger and agony of his countrymen through his clenched fist. His heart-piercing scream reveals the growing sense of nationalism, freedom, and resistance in the hearts of many. Besides, this poem also showcases the themes of brutality, horrors of apartheid, and freedom.

POETIC DEVICES AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1. REPETITION

- Jonker repeats the line "The child is not dead" at the beginning of the first and third stanzas.
- In the first two stanzas, "the child raises his fists against" and "who screams Africa screams the smell" are repeated.
- Using this device, the poet creates a resonance of ideas and emphasizes her idea present in the quoted lines.

2. ANAPHORA

- It is used for the sake of emphasis. For example, this device can be found in:
- Lines 1-2 (beginning with "The child")
- Lines 13-14 (beginning with "nor at")
- Last stanza (all the lines begin with the phrase "The child")
- The repetition of "the child" throughout the poem emphasises the age and innocence of the youth and highlights how many children were killed because of the apartheid laws.
- The child becomes a symbol of resistance, hope and innocence

3. METAPHOR

- Jonker uses several metaphors in this piece:
- *"The child is not dead"*: Firstly, the child is a symbol of the growing sense of freedom in the South African's hearts against the Apartheid system. Here, the comparison is made between a "child" to a thought of freedom.
"the smell/ of freedom and heather": It metaphorically hints at the feeling associated with freedom. Jonker connects it with the "smell" of "heather".
- *"the locations of the heart under siege"*: In this phrase, individual confinement or segregation is described as the "heart under siege".
- *"the smell/ of justice and blood"*: Like the phrase "the smell/ of freedom and heather", here the comparison is made between the "smell" of blood and the feeling associated with freedom.
- *"the shadow of the soldiers"*: Here, Jonker refers to the child as a soldier. He follows a similar path of violence shown by the brutal soldiers.
- *"a giant travels through the whole world"*: Jonker compares the child to a "giant" in order to portray the growing sense of freedom, justice, and resistance among the Africans.

4. ALLUSION

- In the third stanza, Jonker alludes to the massacre at Sharpeville. She protests against the brutality of the armed forces on the peaceful protestors who were demonstrating against the draconian pass laws.
- Besides, the poet alludes to the protests that occurred in other townships including Langa, Nyanga, Orlando, and Philippi. She describes how innocent children were killed across her country.

5. IRONY

- The last line of the poem "Without a pass" contains irony. Here, Jonker is referring to the child that does not require any pass (a form of internal passport for the colored citizen) to travel in his own country.
- However, in reality, natives required such a pass needed for employment and living. In this line "the child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere", the speaker ironically talks about the fate of children living in the Apartheid regime. If they were alive, they could play in their own land, but white minorities made their families leave their own land and live elsewhere. If they protested, they were brutally oppressed or killed.

6. PARADOX

- Stanza 3 opens with "The child is not dead", but in the last line, the speaker remarks, "where he lies with a bullet in his head".
- It is a use of paradox where two ideas are in conflict. Using this device, Jonker tries to convey that the child died physically, but he is still alive in her heart and the hearts of the Africans.

7. DICTION

- Jonker's diction in "The child who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga" is that of an enraged protestor who adamantly wants an answer for the child's death.
- She uses specific terms, poetic devices, and tone that cumulatively make this piece a manifesto of protest: For example, the first line of the poem "The child is not dead" contains litotes. It portrays that the child is still alive by using double negatives. Besides, this line contains a metaphor. Here, the sense of freedom is compared to a "child", growing inside one's mind. Besides, the terms such as "fists", "freedom", "blood" and "scream" are meant for infusing the spirit of nationalism.
- The poet's diction conveys the distress of the child and all others in the senseless Apartheid time. Her choice of "screams" and "raises his fists" highlights his anger.
- The onomatopoeia in "screams" is repeated to emphasise his anger.
- The alliteration in lines 3 and 8 emphasises the urgency and desperate cries of the oppressed people.
- Enjambment creates a free flow of thought.
- There is an allusion to the Bible (Gospel of Mark 38-43: "38When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.")
- There are also allusions to all the places where protests turned violent, and people were injured/killed.
- The paradox in the third stanza ("the child is not dead ... where he lies with a bullet in his head") highlights the fact that this child died physically, but he is still alive in the hearts of all Africans. He becomes the symbol of innocence, resistance, and hope

TONE AND MOOD

- Throughout this piece, the tone is bold and expressive of firm determination.
- In the first three stanzas, the tone is emotive, nationalistic, and firm. Using it, Jonker highlights the fact that even an innocent child understood the value of freedom and equality.
- After his death, he realized that the long silence had to end. Hence, through the poet's voice, he harks to his countrymen to end their suffering by standing together for the sake of saving other kids like him.
- Defiance and determination. Despite the sadness about the innocent child's death, the tone is not sympathetic or sad. There is a sense of outrage and loss.
- Nationalistic - Jonker highlights the fact that even an innocent child understood the value of freedom and equality.
- The tone in the poem is bold, passionate, inspired and determined. Despite the sadness about the innocent child's death, the tone is not sympathetic or sad. There is a sense of outrage and loss. The speaker remains determined in his/her message and relays it with a clarity of purpose.
- The mood of the text is angry, protesting, and unrelenting.

IMAGERY

- The following types of imagery are used:

VISUAL IMAGERY:

- In the first two stanzas, Jonker uses the image of a child who raises his fists in order to show his resistance towards apartheid. The line "in the march of generations" depicts group of protesters' marches.
The line: "on guard with guns Saracens and batons" presents an image of armed soldiers with guns, batons, and tanks.

AUDITORY IMAGERY:

- The line "who screams Africa screams the smell" resonates with the screaming of a child demanding freedom and revenge.

ORGANIC IMAGERY:

Throughout this poem, Jonker uses this imagery to infuse her anger in readers' minds.

- After reading the lines such as "where he lies with a bullet in his head" readers feel angry and at the same time sorry for the innocent child.

QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the reference to 'the child' in the title of the poem. (2)
2. The title refers to the 'dead' child, yet in line 1 'the child is not dead'. Discuss the contradiction/dichotomy by referring to the rest of the poem. (3)
3. What does the altered repetition of "The child lifts ... mother / father" reveal about the generation gap that is reflected in responding to the laws of apartheid? (2)
4. How does the diction in stanzas 1 and 2 highlight the difference between mothers and fathers? (3)
5. Comment on the effect of the denials in the third stanza. (2)
6. Critically comment how the imagery used in lines 20-23 contributes to the mood. (3)
7. Discuss the effectiveness of the last, short line of the poem. (2)
8. During the Parliamentary address, Nelson Mandela commented that "in the midst of despair, Jonker celebrated hope." Does this poem celebrate hope?
Discuss your answer briefly. (3)
9. "The child" is repeated ten times in the poem. How does this repetition add meaning to the poem? (2)

AT A FUNERAL -- Dennis Brutus

AT A FUNERAL -- Dennis Brutus

(for Valencia Majombozi, who died shortly after qualifying as a doctor)

1. Black, green and gold at sunset: pageantry
2. And stubbled graves: expectant, of eternity,
3. In bride's-white, nun's-white veils the nurses gush their bounty
4. Of red-wine cloaks, frothing the bugled dirging slopes
5. Salute! Then ponder all this hollow panoply
6. For one whose gifts the mud devours, with our hopes.

7. Oh all you frustrate ones, powers tombed in dirt,
8. Aborted, not by Death but carrion books of birth
9. Arise! The brassy shout of Freedom stirs our earth;
10. Not Death but death's-head tyranny scythes our ground
11. And plots our narrow cells of pain defeat and dearth:
12. Better that we should die, than that we should lie down.

Glossary:

Pageantry: ceremonial display

Stubbled: cut ends of stalks/plants ; unshaven ; unkempt

Gush: flow out fast

Bounty: payment/generosity/something given in generous amounts

Bugled: music performed on a bugle, a military instrument used at funerals

Dirging: like a dirge - funeral song

Panoply: display or collection

Carrion: the rotting flesh of a dead animal

Brassy: music performed on a brass instrument like a bugle or trumpet

Death's-head: a human skull / symbol of mortality

Scythes: cuts down violently

Dearth: scarcity or lack of something

**BIOGRAPHY: Dennis Brutus
(1924 – 2009)**

- Dennis Brutus was born in Zimbabwe in 1924. He died in 2009.
- He worked as a teacher in South Africa and was active in the fight against Apartheid. He was shot by the police and imprisoned. His political activism made him very unpopular with the government.
- He left South Africa for the United Kingdom in the 1960s and taught there at various universities

Historical Context:

- Written during Apartheid and shortly after the death of a newly qualified doctor, this poem criticises oppression.
- It can be seen as a “call to arms” – do not surrender to the oppressive powers.
- It is also about the frustration of aborted hopes – Valencia died before she worked as a doctor; Her family had made enormous sacrifices to get her through medical school.- all in vain.

SUMMARY

- The dedication below the title suggests that the poem is a tribute to Valencia Majombozi. The poem is about her funeral ceremony.
- The speaker contrasts the vibrant colours of the scene with the mud in which the coffin is placed. He views the ceremony as ‘hollow’ and a ‘pageant’ in the face of the lost hopes and dreams of this woman and her family.
- Life’s cruelties create further grief for the speaker, and he presents the funeral as an occasion to renew his commitment to the struggle for liberation.
- He extends this idea by comparing the burial to those people whose lives are being smothered by the oppression. Oppressed people cannot live their lives fully!
- He urges active resistance – “Arise!”. He ultimately states that death is a better fate than yielding to “defeat and dearth”.

ADDED SUMMARY

‘It’s about a young woman called Valencia Majombozi, an African woman who managed to qualify as a doctor after enormous hardship and sacrifice by her parents. Her mother took in washing and ironing, did the cleaning of apartment buildings, and put her through University. She got her medical degree and then, by an incredible irony, just after Valencia had completed her internship, she died. I went to her funeral. The poem is about the years of sacrifice that end in nothing, and you could read the poem entirely on that level, as just an expression of frustrated and aborted hopes.

But I am also seeing her as a symbol of the predicament of the Blacks as a whole in South Africa. Eighty percent of the people are voiceless, voteless, generally deprived of education. Their lives are controlled not so much by the police and the army, though those are there all the time, but the lives of Blacks in South Africa are controlled more by a “convention”-

something which people agree on. This is a curious thing called a Pass Book, which every Black must carry from the age of 16, which controls your movement, and even determines where you will be buried when you die.

The poem is about her funeral ceremony. The speaker contrasts the vibrant colours of the scene with the mud in which the coffin is placed. He views the ceremony as 'hollow' and a 'pageant' in the face of the lost hopes and dreams of this woman and her family. Life's cruelties create further grief for the speaker, and he presents the funeral as an occasion to renew his commitment to the struggle for liberation. He extends this idea by comparing the burial to those people whose lives are being smothered by the oppression. Oppressed people cannot live their lives fully! He urges active resistance – "Arise!". He ultimately states that death is a better fate than yielding to "defeat and dearth".

FORM AND STRUCTURE

- There are two equal stanzas and a specific rhyme scheme (aaabab, cccdc) in this poem.
- The formality of the poem mirrors the formal rites and rituals of a funeral ceremony.

Poetic Devices:

- Personification in lines 2 and 6. (Graves expecting their content; hungry mud) – the earth seems hostile.
- Use of various capital letters – draws attention and emphasises the words.
- Exclamation points (Salute! and Arise!) suggest strong emotions – call to arms.

ANALYSIS

THE TITLE

'Usually, my poems don't have titles because I hope that the poem works sufficiently well that it doesn't need a kind of signpost to it. In this case, the poem "At A Funeral" needed a title because I don't think you could have guessed otherwise what it was all about. Also, I do think it needs some explication. '-

- The italics refer to the words of DENNIS BRUTUS: AN INTERVIEW By William E. Thompson
- The dedication below the title suggests that the poem is a tribute to Valencia Majombozi. This makes it personal: he refers to a specific person and has a greater impact on the reader. 'shortly after qualifying' – Emphasises that all her dreams and hopes have been destroyed by death. Conveys a sense of frustration and aborted hopes.

'A' – creates an impersonal tone. This creates a contrast with the dedication.

LINE 1

Black, green and gold at sunset: pageantry

- Black, green and gold – The poem is also operating on a political level, and I'll touch on a few of those things. The resistance movement in South Africa has its own flag, as opposed to the State flag; the resistance movement's flag is black, green and gold. The choice of those colours at the beginning of the poem is not an accident. Also, many of

the colleagues of this doctor attended her funeral wearing their university robes; these were black caps and gowns, but often with a gold hood indicating an arts degree, green indicating a science degree; so again, you have a combination of black, green and gold. at sunset – the end of the day which is symbolic of death. Creates sombre mood. Connotations of darkness and sadness.

- *Pageantry* – the flag is part of a ceremonial display, a formal ceremony with symbolic clothing and rituals. This creates the impression that it is just for the show, because all of that does not matter now as all hopes and dreams are lost with her death.

LINE 2

And stubbled graves: expectant, of eternity,

stubbled graves – stubble is the stalks of crops left sticking out after a harvest, or the remains of a person's beard left on their face after shaving.

- This implies that the graves were in a state of neglect and they looked untidy/unkept as they are covered in dead grass stalks. *expectant*, – the graveyard is portrayed as being hungry (Personification) for more bodies as death is inevitable. This emphasises that we all have to die. *of eternity* – ambiguous: either dead will remain in their graves for an eternity, or the belief that the afterlife will not end.

LINES 3-4

In bride's-white, nun's-white veils the nurses gush their bounty / Of red-wine cloaks, frothing the bugled dirging slopes

- In bride's-white, nun's-white veils the nurses gush their bounty / Of red-wine cloaks – Nurses from the hospital attended the funeral. In South Africa the nurses wear cloaks which are lined with bright red - the "red-wine." Other nurses at the funeral wore white, which echo the nuns in their habits "In bride'-white, nun 's-white veils."
- The old-fashioned nurse's outfit was a white dress, with a short white veil and a red cloak. The connotations of "brides" and "nuns" implies innocence, purity, holiness and a new life.

Gush – flow out fast

Bounty – refers to something in abundance. Many people are showing their grief.

"bounty/ of red-wine cloaks frothing" – the nurses in their red cloaks and white dresses look like frothing red wine surrounding the graveyard.

- *Frothing the bugled dirging slopes* – And away back behind the hill in the cemetery, on the edge of the ghetto, there's a Boy Scout with a trumpet, blowing the last Post, "the bugled dirging." This suggests that it was a military funeral.
- *Frothing* means to bubble over.
- *Dirge* refers to a funeral song.
- *Slopes* – means going up / down. This could be the sound of the bugle. The slopes around the graveyard are also personified, as though the land itself is mourning the young doctor.

LINE 5

Salute! "Then ponder all this hollow panoply

- *Salute!* – means to honour, or literally salute the dead, as one would a soldier.
- *Then '!' emphasises that this is a command.*
- *Ponder* – to think about something deeply. Also an instruction.
- *Hollow* – literally empty but implies meaninglessness;
- *Panoply* – a splendid display
- .
- The speaker asks the reader to contemplate the implications of this funeral, and death in general. He encourages the reader to look further than the display (funeral flowers, all the people, the sad music etc), which lacks sincerity.

LINE 6

For one whose gifts the mud devours, with our hopes.

- For one whose gifts the mud devours, with our hopes – 'one' refers to Valencia Majombozi. 'Gifts' refers to her ability as a doctor to heal and bring comfort to others.
- *Devour* - eat greedily, hungrily or quickly. The mud of a graveyard is compared to a hungry mouth. The personification emphasises that all her hopes and those of her people are now buried in the earth.
- TONE of despair/sadness.

LINE 7

Oh all you frustrate ones, powers tombed in dirt,

- The poet uses Apostrophe (Figure of Speech) as he addresses the dead directly.
- *Frustrate* – to prevent the success of something or to cause irritation and anger by preventing things from happening.
- The dead are described as "powers tombed in dirt" and as "frustrate" (a verb) NOT "frustrated" (an adjective) because they are powerful enough to cause frustration (to the government) rather than being passively frustrated.

LINE 8

Aborted, not by Death but carrion books of birth

- *Aborted, not by Death but carrion books of birth* – 'I talk of "carrion books of birth," saying that the life of the Black begins as a kind of death. From the moment of birth, you're given this Pass Book, so that you cease to be a human being from the point of birth. You are devoured. You become carrion. (dead flesh). And this ties in with the notion of abortion.'
- The poet regards the Black people as being dead, not because they died, but because their freedom is taken away due to oppression and the pass books. The apartheid government is even more cruel and deadly than death itself - it is not Death that kills people, but the passbook ("books of birth") which symbolises the cruel apartheid laws.

- Aborted – abortion is the deliberate ending of pregnancy by killing an unborn foetus. The dead are described as being “aborted” (i.e. killed before they could live), not by Death but by “books of birth” (a reference/allusion to the dompas or passbooks).
- “Death” with a capital letter - Death is personified.

LINE 9

Arise! The brassy shout of Freedom stirs our earth;

- Arise! The brassy shout of freedom stirs our earth – the dead are addressed directly and told to rebel or “Arise!” against the government.
- Arise! - literally - Stand up but also a reference to “rise up!” which means “Start a revolution!” – another command, defiant tone.
- Freedom is capitalised to show that it is important, as it is personified as shouting to wake the dead. Describing Freedom’s shout as “brassy” refers to the bugle in line 4, which was used to play the “dirge”/Last Post. Here, music does not send the dead to their rest, but awakens them.

LINE 10

Not death but death’s-head tyranny scythes our ground

- Not death but death’s-head tyranny scythes our ground – It's helpful to know the symbol of "death's-head tyranny." I saw a film in South Africa called "Judgement at Nuremburg." It begins with the tanks rolling through the streets of Berlin with the Panzer Divisions whose insignia was skull and crossbones - the death's-head being wildly cheered by the audience. The Nazis are regarded as great heroes by the South African regime and people imitate them; the Nazis are the model for how one should behave if you are a white in South Africa.
- *Death* – is personified as the Grim Reaper with his scythe (a harvesting tool, used to “harvest” or collect the dead). The poet compares the South African apartheid government to the death-head wearing Nazis in World War Two.
- *Tyrant* – a ruthless and cruel dictator. According to the poet, Death is not destroying South Africa, but “death-head tyranny”.
- *Scythes* – to cut something violently
- *Our ground* – is a reference to the land, where the Group Areas act excluded people of colour.

LINE 11

And plots our narrow cells of pain defeat and dearth –

- *Plots* – pun: a small piece of land (e.g. a plot where a grave is dug) or to “plot” - to plan something, often something evil. cell – a very small room, a prison
- *Narrow cells of pain* – could be the graves in a graveyard, the prison cells where prisoners of the apartheid government had been jailed, or the small houses in disadvantaged areas that people of colour had been forced to live in, as a result of the Group Areas Act.

- *Dearth* – things that are in short supply (e.g., food or basic necessities). The poet implies that pain, suffering and death was deliberately caused by the apartheid government.

LINE 12

Better that we should die, than that we should lie down –

- *lie down* – if a person “lies down” when attacked or arrested, they show that they are surrendering or submitting. The poet implies that it is better that the people resisting apartheid should choose to die, rather than give up or surrender. There is no full stop after “we should lie down”. This implies that there is no end to resistance and no surrender.
- This line also implies that the poet has come to terms with the tragedy of the young doctor’s death - she died, rather than choosing to “lie down” or surrender to apartheid, and the poet sees this as “better”.
- The poet uses “we” and therefore identifies with the struggle against apartheid.

THEMES

- Criticises oppression.
- Call to arms: people should get up and fight
- frustrated and aborted hopes

TONE

- Anger
- Dismay
- Frustration
- Disappointment

QUESTIONS

1. To what does “pageantry” refer in line 1? Discuss the effectiveness of this choice of word. (2)
2. What do the words “Black, green and gold” suggest? How does this shift the reading of the poem? (2)
3. Why would the graves be expectant of ‘eternity’ (line 2)? (2)
4. Explain the reference to “hope” as it is used in line 6. (2)
5. What are “carrion books of birth”? (2)
6. Comment on the tone in “Arise!” and “Salute!”. (3)
7. Why does the speaker call on the reader to “ponder” (line 5)? (2)
8. What is the difference between “Death” and “death’s head” and why is “scythes our ground” then an appropriate metaphor? (3)

9. Discuss the pun in the word “plots” in line 11. (3)
10. Describe the tone in and the effectiveness of the last line of the poem. (3)
11. How does the reader know that this poem is more than a tribute to Valencia Majombozi? Discuss the effectiveness of this added message/theme.

POEM OF RETURN – Jofre Rocha

POEM OF RETURN – Jofre Rocha

1 When I return from the land of exile and silence

2 do not bring me flowers.

3 Bring me rather all the dews,

4 tears of dawns which witnessed dramas.

5 Bring me the immense hunger for love

6 and the plaint of tumid sexes in star-studded night.

7 Bring me the long night of sleeplessness

8 with mothers mourning, their arms bereft of sons.

9 When I return from the land of exile and silence,

10 no, do not bring me flowers ...

11 Bring me only, just this

12 the last wish of heroes fallen at day-break

13 with a wingless stone in hand

14 and a thread of anger snaking from their eyes

Glossary:

Exile: banishment/expulsion/deportation

Plaint: plea

Tumid: large/swollen

Bereft: deprived

BIOGRAPHY: Jofre Rocha

- Angolan writer, poet and journalist, Jofre Rocha, is the literary pseudonym of Roberto António Victor Francisco de Almeida, was born in February 1941, in Kaxikana, municipality of Icolo e Bengo. Angola.
- In June 1961, Rocha left Angola for Lisbon, Portugal.
- A Nationalist, fighting for the independence of Angola, Rocha is detained in Aljube prison and returned to Luanda.
- His political activity saw him sentenced to eighteen months in jail.
- A member of the MPLA, after the country's independence in 1975, he was called to hold various positions both in the government and in his party.
- He has been President of the Angolan Parliament since 1996.
- Rocha speaks about the colonial experience and focuses on the theme of war and the social and economic degradation that emerges from it.

ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

He was an activist in the liberation movement, and he was arrested twice.

- When Angola gained independence from Portugal, he was appointed as the Director-General and then Deputy Minister of External Relations.
- He later became the Minister of External Trade.
-

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- This poem can be viewed as a protest poem. The speaker mentions his return from exile and the anguish associated

FORM/STRUCTURE

- The poem has 14 lines and but does not conform to the strict Italian Sonnet form. (Although there is a distinct division between stanzas 3 and 4, separating the 'octave' from the 'sestet'.)
- It does not have a rhyme scheme and is not written in iambic pentameter, common to the Sonnet form.
- It is written in free verse, more typical of contemporary poetry.

SUMMARY

- The speaker is contemplating his upcoming return to his home country. The speaker mentions his return from exile and the anguish associated with those who died whilst oppressed.
- The poem is written from the perspective of an exile, someone who has had to flee their country of birth.
- The poem captures the sentiment of loss, lost opportunity and lost experience. He describes his 'host country' as "land of exile and silence" – this suggests that he was not happy there. He lists the things he missed while he was away and it is clear that he feels guilty about 'escaping' whilst his countrymen/women suffered.
- He makes it clear that he is not a hero and should not be welcomed or treated as one. He asserts that the real heroes are the ones who stayed and fought against oppression.
- The poet is writing about the lost opportunities, mourning and sadness brought about by colonialism, exile and war.

ANALYSIS

THE TITLE

- The speaker is returning to his country. At this stage he does not know whether it is a voluntary or forceful return.
-

STANZA 1

LINE 1

When I return from the land of exile and silence

- *When* – He is absolutely certain that he is going to return to his country. He has not yet returned, but it is inevitable that he will return.
- *land of exile* – the country to which he fled
- *the land of exile and silence* – is the place he is in now. A foreign place where there is no communication “silence”. He has no contact with his family and friends. This emphasises the pain and suffering he had to endure while in exile as he was isolated.

LINE 2

do not bring me flowers.

- *do not* – commanding tone
- He does not want the customary gifts and celebrations that are normally associated with the return of an exile.
- This emphasises that the speaker feels guilty about fleeing his country while other people stayed behind to fight the system.
- He does not see himself as a hero deserving flowers. Flowers are usually associated with a celebration, and he feels that this is definitely not a time of celebration: He fled and left the others to fight. Hence, he feels guilty.

STANZA 2 –

- the poet gives suggestions as to what can be brought to “celebrate” his return: tears, hunger and mourning, he wants us to remember the reason for his exile.

LINES 3-4

*Bring me rather all the dews,
tears of dawns which witnessed dramas.*

- *Bring me* – imperative/commanding tone.
- *all the dews* – an impossible demand. He knows that he cannot atone for leaving his people.
- *dawns which witnessed dramas* – dawn is personified as a weeping witness to the tragedy that took place as a result of colonisation, exile and loss.
- D-alliteration – emphasises the fact that Nature, too, was horrified and sad at the oppression of her people

LINES 5-6

*Bring me the immense hunger for love
and the plaint of tumid sexes in star-studded night.*

- *Bring me* – Anaphora(repetition)
- *Immense* – huge
- *hunger for love* – natural human connection that he has missed
- *Plaint* – plea
- *Tumid* – large / swollen
- *Tumid sexes in start-studded night* – romance / intimacy
- In these lines, the speaker emphasises the sense of separation from loved ones and the need for companionship; the poet highlights the losses experienced due to oppression.

LINES 7-8

*Bring me the long night of sleeplessness
with mothers mourning, their arms bereft of sons.*

- *long* – emphasises that their pain and suffering continued for a quite some time
- *Bereft* – to be deprived. Many young men (the sons) were imprisoned or killed. Some young men also went into exile. They were missed by their mothers.
- *night of sleeplessness* – people were worried/concerned about the safety of their loved ones. Mothers were troubled by the death of their sons and family members. Therefore, they could not sleep.
- He wants to share the grief from mothers who have lost their sons to the conflict,

STANZA 3**LINES 9-10**

*When I return from the land of exile and silence,
no, do not bring me flowers ...*

- The repetition of the first two lines of the poem, emphasises that his return must not be seen as a celebration. Exile was was not a pleasant experience for him, but he did not suffer as much as those who had been left behind.
- *no, do not* – forceful tone of the double negative emphasises that he does not regard himself as a hero. He feels guilty, he needs to for acknowledge their suffering and pain.

LINE 11

Bring me only, just this

- *Bring me* – another command (imperative mood) shows his insistence. *only, just this* – the redundancy is used to emphasize that he wants just one thing. Also emphasises his insistence.

LINE 12

the last wish of heroes fallen at day-break

- *the last wish* – Their last wish would have been to see a changed South Africa. day-break – the start of a new day.
- This is symbolic of change that the people wanted. In the political context of the time, executions were carried out at dawn and the men who were executed were those who had been fighting against an oppressive system. He sees these fighters as heroes for the cause and they “fall at day-break”, at the beginning of their lives.
- These heroes could not see the change because they died at the brink of change.

LINES 13-14

*with a wingless stone in hand
and a thread of anger snaking from their eyes.*

- *wingless stone* – a paradox. A stone cannot fly; it is too heavy. These men never got the chance to “cast their stone”, but paid the ultimate sacrifice by dying fighting for freedom, and Rocha wants to remember them and the lost opportunities of those who were forced into exile.
- *snaking* – connotation of something dangerous and poisonous. This contributes to a tone of anger and bitterness. and a thread of anger snaking from their eyes – He demands justice for all the oppressed people
- *Their eyes* – reflect only a small part of the anger at the colonists who had stolen their land from them. He does not want to be rewarded with flowers but rather with what he was fighting for.
- Their sacrifice needs to be remembered. That which made them angry enough to fight needs to be remembered, and that is the only “gift” he wants when he returns, because he is able to return.

THEMES

- The poet captures the sentiment of loss, lost opportunity and lost experience.
- A poignant poem about the return from exile and what should be celebrated is sadness, mourning and inevitably, anger.
- Rocha ends with a parting shock of anger at the lost opportunities and experiences that some young people suffered as a result of colonisation, civil war and exile.

TONE

- Regret, sadness, sombre, loss
- sadness initially, building up to anger “snaking from their eyes.
- Militant

POETIC DEVICES**• PERSONIFICATION**

- The personification of dawn (stanza 2) shows that even Nature was upset by the suffering it witnessed.

IMAGERY

- The imagery in the final stanza refers to the heroes who died at the brink of change ("day-break"). Those people never saw the freedom of change they fought for so relentlessly.

REPETITION

- The repetition of the first two lines emphasises his insistence that he is not a hero.

ALLITERATION

- The alliteration in "dews", "dawns" and "dramas" emphasises that Nature, too, was horrified and sad at the oppression of her people

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the speaker not want flowers upon his return? (3)
2. What does the speaker want instead of flowers? Why? (3)
3. Comment on the description of the speaker's "host country" as the "land of exile and silence". (2)
4. Identify and comment on the effectiveness of the figure of speech in "tears of dawns". (3)
5. Why are the mothers "bereft of sons" (line 8)? (2)
6. Comment on the figurative interpretation of the "day-break" in line 12. (2)
7. Comment on the effectiveness of the anaphora ("When I return..."). (3)
8. Discuss the change in tone from stanza 2 to 3. Quote in support of your answer. (3)
9. How does the last stanza successfully convey the speaker's intention? (3)

TALK TO THE PEACH TREE – Sipho Sepamla

1. Let's talk to the swallows visiting us in summer
2. ask how it is in other countries
3. Let's talk to the afternoon shadow
4. ask how the day has been so far
5. Let's raise our pets to our level
6. ask them what they don't know of us
7. words have lost meaning
8. like all notations they've been misused
9. most people will admit
10. a whining woman can overstate her case
11. Talk to the paralysing heat in the air
12. inquire how long the mercilessness will last
13. Let's pick out items from the rubbish heap
14. ask how the stench is like down there
15. Let's talk to the peach tree
16. find out how it feels to be in the ground
17. Let's talk to the moon going down
18. ask if it isn't enough eyeing what's been going on
19. come on
20. let's talk to the devil himself
21. it's about time

Glossary:

Notations: systems of writing

Inquire: ask

Stench: stink

Eyeing: watching closely

BIOGRAPHY: Sipho Sepamla
(1932 – 2007)

- He is one of South Africa's most prolific protest poets – he was vehemently opposed to Apartheid.
- Known as Bra Sid, Sipho Sepamla was born in a township near Krugersdorp into a family of educators. He became a teacher but, after experiencing Sharpeville (1960) first-hand when teaching there, he left the profession.
- He founded FUBA – the Federated Union of Black Artists which gave voice to black artists of all disciplines. It functioned successfully until 1997.
- He also edited both a literary and a theatre magazine. Sepamla has an individual voice. His poems work on irony, satire and humour, qualities not often found in the poets of the era who were politically loud and emotionally consciousness-raising.
- This poem was written during the Apartheid years. Sepamla uses it to voice his opinion on the political talks that took place between various parties before the formalised end of Apartheid.
- The negotiations between the various parties were ultimately successful and South Africa became a democratic state in 1994.
- With the fall of Apartheid, Sepamla served on the government's Arts and Culture Task Group
- The speaker's peace-making/peaceful attitude is clear in "it's about time", in the last line.

BACKGROUND

THE TITLE

- The peach tree appears in several of Sepamla's poems.
- The Peach Tree is about the tree in his garden and in The Will.
- It is one of his possessions which he wittily bequeaths to his children, while making subtle comments about life under the apartheid system.

FORM AND STRUCTURE

- Free verse – no recognisable poetic form. There is, however, a pattern in stanzas 3,7,8 and 9. They all have the same pattern of word choice, length and content.
- The indents in the fourth and fifth stanzas alerts the reader to the fact that these stanzas are, in fact, commentary on the overall situation.

SUMMARY

- The speaker wittily makes a series of rather odd (absurd, even) suggestions about with whom to discuss politics – from the birds, shadows, pets, the peach tree and the air itself.
- He ends the poem on a serious note and states that the "devil himself" should be addressed. This refers to the leaders of the Apartheid government.

ANALYSIS

LINES 1-6

Let's talk to the swallows visiting us in summer / ask how it is in other countries / Let's talk to the afternoon shadow / ask how the day has been so far / Let's raise our pets to our level / ask them what they don't know of us

- The literal actions are quite absurd: talking to pets, the afternoon shadow and pets. It is amusing to expect 'our pets' who have been raised to human level to be able to answer the serious question: what do you know of us? The absurdity creates humour.
- However, the underlying message is serious: what do you (especially the whites) know about us? During Apartheid there was little or no opportunity to understand or communicate with people from other races. One group of people was always superior and had a 'voice', whilst the other had to remain silent.

LINES 7-10

words have lost meaning / like all notations they've been misused / most people will admit / a whining woman can overstate her case

- The lines are indented to show that these stanzas are commentaries and indicates a different. Also, the casual sounding repetitive 'Let's talk' of the previous lines has been dropped. These words must be taken seriously.
- He states that 'words have lost their meaning' – this means that talking has become useless. Attempts to negotiate change with the apartheid government had failed. Instead, more repressive measures had been introduced to suppress the Blacks.
- 'Misused notations' refers to communication tools which have become so warped that their original intentions have become lost. Words have literally lost their meaning. Language has been twisted and used to convey lies, propaganda and cannot be trusted.
- 'Whining' has negative connotations of high-pitched complaining, without valid reason. The words of line 10 are a reminder of the saying: 'the lady doth protest too much'. By emotionally overdoing a statement ('overstate her case') the real meaning is lost and the words are felt to be insincere.

LINES 11-12

Talk to the paralysing heat in the air / inquire how long the mercilessness will last paralysing –

- implies that the oppression (the heat) renders a person unable to do anything. Also refers to their pain and suffering.
- Merciless – emphasises the effects of apartheid: no empathy/mercy/compassion for the oppressed people.
- This is symbolic of the position Black people were in during apartheid. They were prisoners in a harsh and unforgiving situation.

LINES 13-14

Let's pick out items from the rubbish heap / ask how the stench is like down there

- The words 'rubbish heap', 'stench' and 'down there' relate to the way Black people were regarded by the authorities: rubbish that was to be thrown away, something that created a bad smell or 'stench'.
- The tone is serious and the intention is to describe the reality of the situation of Black people.

LINES 15-16

Let's talk to the peach tree / find out how it feels to be in the ground

- The peach tree is rooted in a permanent place in the garden, unlike the other items/things he proposed with which to have a conversation.
- The tree will tell him how it feels to be rooted and fruitful in a place you can call your own.
- The connotation of rooted is permanence and fruitful implies productive and successful.
- The peach tree has land that it belongs to. Blacks did not have land; they were not even regarded as citizens. They have no sense of belonging.

LINES 17-18

Let's talk to the moon going down / ask if it isn't enough eyeing what's been going on

- *moon going down* – the light of the moon will disappear as it 'goes down'. This is symbolic of them losing hope.
- The moon is personified. It is aware of their situation (eyeing). The setting of the moon will lead to daylight. Daylight is associated with a new day, new hope. Their situation is visible to the whole world but nobody has done anything to effectively change their situation. The new day does not bring new hope for them.

LINES 19-21

come on / let's talk to the devil himself / it's about time

- The lines are indented, just as lines 7-10 are, in order to make them stand out.
- The indents alert the reader to the fact that these lines are commentary on the overall situation.
- *come on* – he is encouraging himself and others
- *devil* – the oppressors / the Apartheid System
- *it's about time* – The time has come to speak directly to the powers who have been oppressing the Black people for too long.

- There is a change in the tone in the last three lines. There is a sense of reluctance and helplessness – for so long there has been no communication.
- He knows that this conversation is long overdue and needs to happen to facilitate change. This could relate to the announcement that Nelson Mandela was going to be released.
- Talking was a way to work for change, without physical injury. It was time for negotiations.

THEMES

- Life under apartheid
- The desire for change
- People must see everything from different perspectives

TONE

- Absurd, cynical
- Despair
- Frustration
- conversational

POETIC DEVICES

- The poet uses casual and conversational diction and register throughout.
- Given the absurdities of the speaker's suggestions, there is a great use of personification throughout the poem.
- This emphasises how useless/futile the suggestions are. However, this also highlights the speaker's wish for all situations to be seen from BOTH perspectives.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the underlying meaning of the actions/instructions in lines 1-6. (2)
2. Why would swallows be a good source of information about 'other countries'? (2)
3. Discuss what the speaker is saying in stanza 4. (3)
4. Discuss the connotations of the word "whining" (line 10). (2)
5. Why does the speaker describe the heat as "paralysing" and "merciless" (stanza 6)? (2)
6. Although similar in style to stanzas 1-3, how do lines 11-14 differ in tone and intent from lines 1-6? (3)
7. Discuss why the speaker chooses to "talk to the peach tree". Consider the other 'things' or concepts he talk to n the poem. (3)
8. Identify and comment on the tone in the last stanza. (3)
9. Who is the 'devil' in the last stanza? (1)
10. How is the register of the poem appropriate and effective in delivering its message? (2)

Prayer to Masks Léopold Sédar Senghor**Prayer to Masks Léopold Sédar Senghor**

1. Black mask, red mask, you black and white masks,
2. Rectangular masks through whom the spirit breathes,
3. I greet you in silence!
4. And you too, my lionheaded ancestor.
5. You guard this place, that is closed to any feminine laughter, to any mortal smile.
6. You purify the air of eternity, here where I breathe the air of my fathers.
7. Masks of maskless faces, free from dimples and wrinkles.
8. You have composed this image, this my face that bends over the altar of white paper.
9. In the name of your image, listen to me!
10. Now while the Africa of despotism is dying – it is the agony of a pitiable princess, 1
11. Like that of Europe to whom she is connected through the navel –
12. Now fix your immobile eyes upon your children who have been called
13. And who sacrifice their lives like the poor man his last garment
14. So that hereafter we may cry 'here' at the rebirth of the world being the leaven that the white flour needs.
15. For who else would teach rhythm to the world that has died of machines and cannons?
16. For who else should ejaculate the cry of joy, that arouses the dead and the wise in a new dawn?
17. Say, who else could return the memory of life to men with a torn hope?
18. They call us cotton heads, and coffee men, and oily men.
19. They call us men of death.
20. But we are the men of the dance whose feet only gain power when they beat the hard soil.

A LITERAL TRANSLATION OF PRAYER TO MASKS**PRAYER TO MASKS – Leopold Sedar Senghor**

1. Mask! Mask!
2. Black mask red mask, you white and black masks,
3. Mask of the four points from which the Spirit blows,
4. In silence I salute you!
5. Nor you the least, the Lion headed Ancestor.
6. You guard this place forbidden to all laughter of women, to all smiles that fade.
7. You distil this air of eternity in which I breathe the air of my Fathers.
8. Masks of unmasked faces, stripped of the marks of illness and the lines of age.
9. You who have fashioned this portrait, this is my face bent over the alter of white paper.
10. In your own image, hear me!
11. The Africa of the empires is dying, see, the agony of a pitiful princess,
12. And Europe too where we are joined by the navel.
13. Fix your unchanging eyes upon your children, who are given orders
14. Who give away their lives like the poor their last clothes.
15. Let us report present at the rebirth of the World
16. Like the yeast which white flour needs.
17. For who would teach rhythm to a dead world of machines and guns?
18. Who would give the cry of joy to wake the dead and the bereaved at dawn?
19. Say, who would give back the memory of life to the man whose hopes are smashed?
20. They call us men of coffee, cotton and oil.
21. They call us men of death.
22. We are the men of the dance, whose feet draw new strength pounding the hardened earth.

REFERENCE:

- https://nanopdf.com/download/prayer-to-masks_pdf

OVERVIEW

- "Prayer to the Masks" is a poem by influential Senegalese poet and politician Léopold Sédar Senghor, published in 1945 in his collection *Chants d'ombre* (Songs of Shadow).
- Senghor often used his work to illuminate African history and contemplate the consequences of colonialism. Educated in Paris, Senghor was a founding member of the artistic and political movement *Négritude*, which emphasized pride in African and Black identity and history, which he practiced through his poetry.
- With "Prayer to the Masks," Senghor looks back on the history of his people and its troubled state.
- Turmoil and exploitation dominate sections of the poem, but Senghor ends with an optimistic message.
- Despite hardship, and the prejudices to which they're subjected, his people are strong and capable, able to create new beauty and prosperity.

ANALYSIS

Lines 1-4

1. *Masks! Oh Masks!*
2. *Black mask, red mask, you black and white masks,*
3. *Rectangular masks through whom the spirit breathes,*
4. *I greet you in silence!*

- The poem begins with an "apostrophe," an address to an object or spirit. Here, as the title indicates, this address is a prayer to the masks, which appear in the poem both as works of African art and as more general spirits of African culture, society, and history.
- The poet lists the colours of the masks as black, red, black-and-white, thus also suggesting the reference of the masks as symbols of race and skin colour.
- In the third line, Senghor suggests that these masks are also spirits of nature, linked to the winds that blow from the four directions of north, south, east, and west.
- As spirits that blow, they also imply that the masks are related to the poet's breath and poetic inspiration.
- As the fourth line indicates, he greets them with silence, as if listening to what the mask-spirits will whisper to him on the wind.

Lines 5-7

5. *And you too, my lionheaded ancestor.*
6. *You guard this place, that is closed to any feminine laughter, to any mortal smile.*
7. *You purify the air of eternity, here where I breathe the air of my fathers.*

- The poet introduces his family's guardian animal, the lion, symbol of aristocratic virtue and courage. Traditionally these animals were thought to be the first ancestor and the protector of the family line. I
- In mentioning his lion-headed ancestor, Senghor refers to the name of his father, Diogoye, which in his native Serer language means lion.

- In ceremonies where masks would be used, the family might be represented by a lion mask.
- In lines 6 and 7, Senghor further reinforces the implications of long tradition and patriarchal power. The lion guards the ground that is forbidden to women and to passing things, in favour of values, memories, and customs that stretch back into mythic antiquity.

Lines 8-10

8. *Masks of maskless faces, free from dimples and wrinkles.*
 9. *You have composed this image, this my face that bends over the altar of white paper.*
 10. *In the name of your image, listen to me!*

- These lines develop a complex relation between the faces of the ancestors, the poet's face, and the masks.
- Line 8 speaks of the masks as idealized representations of previously living faces. The masks eliminate the mobile features and signs of age in the faces of the living ancestors, but in doing so outlive their death.
- In turn, they are able to give shape to the face of the poet bent over the page and writing his prayer to the masks.
- He appeals to them to listen to him, for he is the living image of those masks to whom he is writing a prayer.

Lines 11-12

11. *Now while the Africa of despotism is dying – it is the agony of a pitiable princess,*
 12. *Just like Europe to whom she is connected through the naval.*

- These lines contrast the glorious past of Africa, when vast black-ruled empires spanned the continent, and the present, in which the peoples of Africa have been subjugated by the imperial conquests of European nations.
- The "pitiable princess" symbolizes the nobility of traditional Africa, and her death represents both the general suffering and decline of traditional African culture and the loss of political power of blacks to rule themselves. Yet the relation to Europe is not presented solely in a negative way.

Lines 13-14

13. *Fix your unchanging eyes upon your children, who are given orders*
 14. *Who give away their lives like the poor their last clothes.*

- The masks are called to witness the sad history of modern Africa, and they look on, god-like with their changeless faces. Yet Senghor also suggests that the traditional customs and values have apparently not been able to respond to the great changes that history has brought about.
- The poem implicitly comes to a question and a turning point: do the masks represent a valuable long view from which the present can be seen in its proper perspective, or are they merely relics of a past that have nothing to say to those who are exploited and suffering in the present

Lines 15-16

15. *So that hereafter we may cry 'here' at the rebirth of the world being the leaven that the white flour needs.*
16. *For who else would teach rhythm to the world that has died of machines and cannons?*

- The poet prays to the magic spirits of the masks to help speed the rebirth suggested by the image of the umbilical cord connecting Africa to Europe in line 12.
- Implicitly, reviving the ancestral spirits of the masks will help sever the ties of dependence. In turn, a reborn African creativity can help Europe to a more life-affirming use of its material and scientific wealth, just as the brown yeast is necessary for making bread from white flour.

Lines 17-18

17. *For who else should ejaculate the cry of joy, that arouses the dead and the wise in a new dawn?*
18. *Say, who else could return the memory of life to men with a torn hope?*

- These lines further develop the idea that Africa will provide the life-impulse to a Europe that is oriented toward mechanical values, materialist gain, and war.
- It is the rhythm of African music and dance that can change the thud of machines into something better.
- A reborn Africa will lend its youthful energy to a senile Europe, bringing joy and hope where there has been isolation, exhaustion, despair, and death.

Lines 19-21

19. *They call us cotton heads, and coffee men, and oily men.*
20. *They call us men of death.*
21. *But we are the men of the dance whose feet only gain power when they beat the hard soil.*

- In the imagery of "men of cotton, of coffee, of oil," Senghor refers to the exploitation of Africa for its raw materials and to European conceptions of black Africans as merely a source of cheap labour and economic profit.
- Looking back to the figures of death and rebirth in the previous lines, he ironically notes how "they," the Europeans, view the black African as a fearful image of death, "the waking dead."
- But rather than allowing their humanity to be reduced to the economic value of the agricultural goods, the African of the future will have a different, creative relation to the soil and the natural world.
- Like the participants in a traditional ceremony in which masks are used, these new Africans absorb the powers of the natural spirits through the rhythm of dance, music, and poetry.

THEMES

HONORING OUR ANCESTORS STRENGTHENS US

- Senghor uses “Prayer to the Masks” to look back at his ancestors and history.
- The poem concludes with a renewed sense of vigour, signifying that honouring the past helps us in the present.
- Early in the poem, as the narrator prays to the masks – the spirits of the dead – the spirits are portrayed as powerful and meaningful: “You guard this place, that is closed to any feminine laughter, to any / mortal smile. / You purify the air of eternity, here where I breathe the air of my / fathers.” (Lines 6-9). The spirits of the past guard and purify, imbuing them with positive attributes that the narrator acknowledges and admires.
- In their eternal state, the spirits of the dead are smooth and perfect, and the narrator’s very existence is indebted to them: “Masks of maskless faces, free from dimples and wrinkles. / You have composed this image, this my face that bends” (Lines 10-11). Again, the narrator’s ancestors are beautiful in their eternity and aspects of their admirable traits are impressed on the narrator’s appearance, showing a deep appreciation for one’s ancestry.
- Throughout the first half of the poem, Senghor allows the narrator to engage and praise their ancestors’ spirits. The spirits have positive attributes, agency, and beauty, and they pass these traits onto the living, showing the beneficial relationship that can flourish when a person honours the past.
- One of Senghor’s theme in this poem is how Africans can adapt to the westernized world after the Post Colonialism of France while trying to understand and continue their African traditions.

POETIC TECHNIQUES / DEVICES

SYMBOL

- “Prayer to Masks” by Leopold Sédar Senghor uses masks as a symbol to the African Ancestors.
- The Speaker of this poem wants his ancestors to listen to him as he is in a scared place to honour his ancestors.

SIMILE

- Senghor uses a simile to compare “the rebirth of the world” to “the yeast which white flour needs” and “give away their lives” to “the poor their last clothes”.

PERSONIFICATION

- Senghor uses personification, “The Africa of the empires is dying” is compared to a human being dying. The Speaker wants to tell his ancestors how the French Imperialism has changed their society and culture.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. What do the masks represent in Prayer to the Masks?
 - Masks appear frequently in the first half of Senghor's poem, becoming a physical representation of history, culture, and the dead. In the opening lines, Senghor establishes the masks as vessels spirits live through Masks!
2. What is a negritude poem?
 - Negritude has been defined by Léopold Sédar Senghor as “the sum of the cultural values of the black world as they are expressed in the life, the institutions, and the works of black men.” Sylvia Washington Bâ analyzes Senghor's poetry to show how the concept of negritude infuses it at every level.

REFERENCE:

- The Concept of Negritude in the Poetry of Leopold Sedar Senghor
<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691645902/the-concept-of-negritude-in-the-poetry-of-leopold-sedar-senghor>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

- Léopold Sédar Senghor was born in Senegal in 1906. He died in 2001. He studied and lived in France for many years. He developed and was a proponent of the idea of “Negritude” – a culture that is shared by all Africans. He believed that Africans should be proud of their culture but should also incorporate the best elements of other cultures into it
- . He was elected as the president of Senegal in 1960. He established a multi-party state and a strong educational system. At times a controversial figure, Senghor is viewed by some as symbolic of peace between France and its colonies while others think he encapsulates neo-colonialism.
- He believed strongly that union between all was possible.
- Senghor wrote this poem at a time when Africa was shaking off its colonial rule. The process was lengthy and difficult. In many instances there were violent protests and fights. He calls colonial rule the “Africa of despotism”, referring to the fact that African people lacked any political power

FORM/STRUCTURE FORM/STRUCTURE

- The poem is structured with no breaks for stanzas. The line lengths are varied. The short sentences emphasise the speaker's intent.
- The speaker, at first, addresses the masks and then expands the message of the poem. The (rhetorical) questions are answered by the speaker at the end of the poem.
- The direct speech allows the reader to "eavesdrop" on the conversation the speaker is having with the masks. The speaker uses the 1st person pronoun "you" to engage the reader.

SUMMARY

- The speaker addresses this poem to African masks – this affirms the element of African culture. The poem celebrates the role of African people and outlines the speaker's belief that it is Africans who will 'return the memory of life to men with a torn hope'. The speaker prays for a saviour in the community to help them face their struggles.
- The poem describes the relationship between Africa and Europe – it states that Africa does not need to conform to European ideals. He contemplates the consequences of colonialism. However, he ends the poem with an optimistic message: despite hardships and prejudice, the African people are strong and capable. They will be able to create new beauty and prosperity.

ANALYSIS

THE TITLE

- *prayers* – appeal to a higher power / ancestors – positive connotation.
- *masks* – traditional masks as worn in African culture / to hide real emotions / hide true intentions.
- The title implies a 'thank you' to those who have been wearing the masks and to the masks themselves for being able to hide true feelings.
- In "Prayer to Masks", the carved masks collectively represent the culture of the Fathers: "You distil this air of eternity in which I breathe the air of my Fathers". The living is connected to the past by the masks. It is these masks and the glorious culture that represent the poet's appeals in the face of colonialism and the death of contemporary Africa and Europe.

LINE 1

Masks! Oh Masks!

The poem begins with an "apostrophe," an address to an object or spirit. Here, as the title indicates, this address is a prayer to the masks, which appear in the poem both as works of African art and as more general spirits of African culture, society, and history.

LINE 2

Black mask, red mask, you black and white masks,

- Senghor pays homage to the spirits for their eternal greatness. He allows each one their due respect by acknowledging the colour of their masks, including the colours of black, red and white. The masks are prominently displayed at this place of worship.
- The poem begins by speaking of masks of different colours and implying how one can hide their true self behind them. The use of masks is a strong symbol of colour and cultural identity, due to the connection of masks to African culture. The poet's use of colours, such as black and white, carries a racial connotation that can be associated with the slave trade and oppression.
- Senghor believes "masks of the four cardinal points where the Spirit blows" have a forceful presence that protects all corners of the world. These spirits come together at this sacred place to be honoured and praised in silent prayer.

LINE 3

Rectangular masks through whom the spirit breathes,

- *Spirit* – reference to ancestors. The poet communicates with the spirits of his ancestors through the mask.
- In African culture, the wearer of the mask is often believed to be able to communicate with the being symbolised by it, or to be possessed by who or what the mask represents breathes – the ancestors are alive in the spiritual world.
- Senghor suggests that these masks are also spirits of nature, linked to the winds that blow from the four directions of north, south, east, and west. As spirits that blow, they also imply that the masks are related to the poet's breath and poetic inspiration.

LINE 4

I greet you in silence!

- *I* – uses the first person. This makes it personal, intimate and sincere. *I greet you in silence!* – there is no need to use words, a slight gesture will suffice. The speaker is familiar with the ancestor. They have communicated before.
- *!* – emphasises the absolute silence.

LINE 5

And you too, my lionheaded ancestor.

- *Lionheaded* – This refers to a traditional African mask in the shape of a lion's head. It could also be symbolic of strength, boldness and bravery. The Senegalese national anthem is also entitled "The Red Lion". Also praising the strength, boldness and bravery of the ancestor.
- Senghor introduces his family's guardian animal, the lion. His father's name was Diogoye which means lion. The family is represented by a lion mask.

LINE 6

You guard this place, that is closed to any feminine laughter, to any mortal smile.

- *This place* – refers to the after life
- *is closed to any feminine laughter* – women are not allowed there.
- *to any mortal smile* – the living cannot enter the world of the ancestors.
- The ancestor with the lion head is called upon to maintain an aura of peace at the altar while Senghor prays.
- He reinforces patriarchal power: the lion guards the ground that is forbidden to women and to passing things, in favour of values, memories, and customs that stretch back into mythic antiquity.

LINE 7

You purify the air of eternity, here where I breathe the air of my fathers.

- *Fathers* - ancestors
- Senghor acknowledged the impact of the ancestors of the Senegalese people, and how their hardships and oppression have affected current day culture and life.

LINE 8

Masks of maskless faces, free from dimples and wrinkles.

- *free from dimples and wrinkles* – free from impurities, free of worries and troubles
- *maskless faces* – the masks are idealised representations of previously living faces. The masks eliminate the mobile features and signs of age in the faces of the living ancestors, but in doing so outlive their death.

LINE 9

You have composed this image, this my face that bends over the altar of white paper.

- *altar* – is usually associated a church; a place of worship. This implies that something that is being revered or worshipped.
- *white paper* – Figuratively, refers to laws made by the government and all the paperwork involved in creating laws or setting up political alliances.
- Literally refers to a page. The ancestors are able to give shape to the face of the poet bent over the page and writing his prayer to the masks.

LINE 10

In the name of your image, listen to me!

- *listen to me!* – pleading tone conveys desperation. He appeals to them to listen to him, for he is the living image of those masks to whom he is writing a prayer.

LINES 11-12

*Now while the Africa of despotism is dying – it is the agony of a pitiable princess,
Like that of Europe to whom she is connected through the navel –*

- These lines contrast the glorious past of Africa, when vast black-ruled empires spanned the continent, and the present, in which the peoples of Africa have been subjugated by the imperial conquests of European nations.
- *despotism is dying* – colonial rule is coming to an end. Some countries had already gained their freedom.
- *pitiable princess* – someone who has been spoilt. Conveys the idea that the European countries were forced to grant independence to their colonies.
- *pitiable princess* also symbolizes the nobility of traditional Africa, and her death represents both the general suffering and decline of traditional African culture and the loss of political power of blacks to rule themselves.
- *connected through the navel* – This image reminds the reader of the connection of Africa to Europe, much like a baby is connected to its mother via the umbilical cord – nourishment, blood flow etc. The colonial powers in Europe were referred to as the 'mother country'. However, they did not act like a mother should: there was mass exploitation of people, resources and land. Greed and corruption by the colonisers left Africa damaged. The severing of the connection is necessary but difficult. Colonisers would not want to sever this connection – then they lose their wealth/resources/land/labour force etc.

LINE 13

Now fix your immobile eyes upon your children who have been called

- *immobile eyes* – the eyes on the masks cannot move.
- *Who have been called* – refers to the next generation that has to fight for their freedom. Implies that the fight for their freedom has been a very long one.
- The masks are called to witness the sad history of modern Africa, and they look on, god-like with their changeless faces. Yet Senghor also suggests that the traditional customs and values have apparently not been able to respond to the great changes that history has brought about.
- The poem implicitly comes to a question and a turning point: do the masks represent a valuable long view from which the present can be seen in its proper perspective, or are they merely relics of a past that have nothing to say to those who are exploited and suffering in the present?

LINE 14

And who sacrifice their lives like the poor man his last garment

- The simile compares those who fought for their freed to a poor person who gives up his last garment. This implies that they gave everything that they had in order to gain their freedom.

LINE 15

So that hereafter we may cry 'here' at the rebirth of the world being the leaven that the white flour needs.

- Personification –the colonisers have left. They no longer have any power over the country which now has the chance to be reborn, to start afresh. It can now create its own government, rules and direction for its future.
- *leaven* – yeast is necessary for bread to rise as it is being baked. It can therefore symbolically make this new country 'rise' up and be strong.
- The poet prays to the magic spirits of the masks to help speed the rebirth suggested by the image of the umbilical cord connecting Africa to Europe in line 12. Reviving the ancestral spirits of the masks will help sever the ties of dependence. In turn, a reborn African creativity can help Europe to a more life-affirming use of its material and scientific wealth, just as the brown yeast is necessary for making bread from white flour.

LINE 16

For who else would teach rhythm to the world that has died of machines and cannons?

- *world that has died* – the end of colonialism; the old reality is now dead.
- *machines and cannons* – industry and warfare. Our over-reliance on technology and machinery has caused the spiritual soul to wither and die. The world has lost its ability to feel deeply and give expression to joy. Warfare has also contributed to the destruction of the world.
- Black people are the fruits of life and are needed in order to breathe life back into a world that has died of machines and cannons.

LINE 17

For who else should ejaculate the cry of joy, that arouses the dead and the wise in a new dawn?

- *Ejaculate* – To cry out / shout
- *new dawn* – refers to a new day: a new phase in their lives. A reborn Africa will lend its youthful energy to a senile Europe, bringing joy and hope where there has been isolation, exhaustion, despair, and death.
- The rhetorical question conveys doubt, but it also suggests that the reader will be part of the new era. It is like a challenge to the citizens of the country, to come forward and to co-operate in this new phase, under a new political dispensation.
- Africa will provide the life-impulse to a Europe that is oriented toward mechanical values, materialist gain, and war.

LINE 18

Say, who else could return the memory of life to men with a torn hope?

- *who else* – referring to the youth; hope lies with them.

There is still hope. 'torn hope' suggests that there has been damage, destruction, violence but there is still some small element of optimism.

LINE 19

They call us cotton heads, and coffee men, and oily men.

- *they* – the colonists
- The theme of oppression in this poem is further supported by Senghor's referencing of stereotypical, prejudice and racist comments and terms black people are often labelled with, such as "cotton heads" and "coffee men", according to their physical trades. Lack of identity creates an impersonal tone.

LINES 20-21

They call us men of death.

But we are the men of the dance whose feet only gain power when they beat the hard soil.

- *They call us men of death* – the Europeans, view the black African as a fearful image of death.
- These lines are emphatic and strongly connected to the earth. The people are involved in a traditional dance and they appear strong and resilient. This dance symbolises their new-found freedom and how they will regain their identity and take pride in their culture. They will share this culture and pride with the rest of the world.
- Senghor writes with tones hope for a brighter future in which black people, the Senegalese in particular, can be recognise for their beauty and value as human beings. Their future will have a different, creative relation to the soil and the natural world.
- Like the participants in a traditional ceremony in which masks are used, these new Africans absorb the powers of the natural spirits through the rhythm of dance, music, and poetry.

THEMES

- The oppression and discrimination of the black people.
- Role of the Ancestor
- Honouring our ancestors
- The desire for freedom
- New beginnings
- How Africans can adapt to the westernized world after the Post Colonialism of France while trying to understand and continue their African traditions.

TONE

- Oppression
- Suffering
- Hope

QUESTIONS

1. Briefly explain the connotations of the words "Prayer" and "masks" as used in the title. (3)
2. Why does the speaker greet the masks "in silence"? (2)
3. Why does the speaker use the first person "I"? (2)
4. How could an ancestor be "lionheaded" (line 4)? (2)
5. Discuss the choice in diction in metaphor "altar of white paper" (line 8). (3)
6. Identify the tone in "In the name of your image, listen to me!" (1)
7. What does the speaker mean when he states that Europe and Africa are "connected through the navel"? (3)
8. Identify the figure of speech and explain the effectiveness thereof in the phrase "rebirth of the world" (line 14). (3)
9. How has the world "died of machines and cannons"? (2)
10. Is there any optimism in this poem? Quote in support of your answer. (2)
11. Discuss the effectiveness of the last two lines of the poem as a conclusion. (3)

THIS WINTER COMING – Karen Press

THIS WINTER COMING – Karen Press

1. walking in the thick rain
2. of this winter we have only just entered,
3. who is not frightened?
4. the sea is swollen, churning in broken waves (violent continual motion)
5. around the rocks, the sand is sinking away
6. the seagulls will not land
7. under this sky, this shroud falling (something that covers or conceals)
8. who is not frightened?
9. in every part of the city, sad women climbing onto buses,
10. dogs barking in the street, and the children
11. in every doorway crying,
12. the world is so hungry, madam's house is clean
13. and the women return with slow steps
14. to the children, the street, the sky tolling like a black bell;
15. these women are a tide of sadness
16. they will drown the world,
17. who is not frightened?
18. on every corner men standing
19. old stumps in the rain, tombstones
20. engraved with open eyes
21. watching the bright cars full of sated faces (more than satisfied)
22. pass them, pass them, pass them,
23. who is not frightened?
24. into the rain the children are running
25. thin as the barest twigs they kindle a fire
26. to fight the winter, the bare bodies
27. a raging fire of dead children
28. and the sky collapsing under centuries of rain
29. the wind like a mountain crying,
30. who is not frightened of this winter
31. coming upon us now?

BACKGROUND

- This poem was published in 1986, a tumultuous time in South Africa under the Apartheid regime.
- This poem, on its surface level, seems to be about the people's fear about the impending Winter. However, upon closer inspection, it is clear that this poem is an extended metaphor for the current and coming violence in the country.

FORM/STRUCTURE

- This poem consists of 5 stanzas of differing lengths. Each stanza deals with a different aspect of the situation.
- Each section is linked by the refrain: "who is not frightened?" This repetition/anaphora highlights the point that everyone fears what might happen.

SUMMARY

- The speaker in this poem is concerned about the world she occupies and believes that she is justified to feel fear for how matters will evolve.
- She states that we have "only just entered", implying that worse times are to come. The descriptions of the "churning", "broken" and "sinking" sky further highlight her fear and Nature's hostility.
- The misery of the people is made clear in stanza 3.
- People are hungry and suffering. The distinction between the haves and the have-nots, is clear: "madam's house is clean" while men stand on the street corners, jobless and hungry. The "bright cars full of sated faces" drive passed the people most affected by poverty and hunger.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

THE TITLE

- The use of the pronoun this suggests that something is going to happen very soon.
- Winter could be read literally. However, in the poem, it can be interpreted as an extended metaphor for transition and social change that marks the death of an old order, and the emergence of a new order coming – suggests that the looming arrival of this season and what it represents, cannot be averted.

STANZA 1

LINES 1-3

walking in the thick rain / of this winter we have only just entered, / who is not frightened?

- The poem begins with somebody walking in the rain. The poet does not mention a specific person.
- *thick* -relates to the rain, very heavy rain. Poet does not use the word 'heavy' because this links with the cold that is normally associated with winter; it is thick, like a blanket.
- *thick* reinforces not just the heaviness of the rain, but is also suggestive of an oppressive atmosphere.
- *this winter* – specific reference to the winter that is approaching, not winter in general. *only just entered* create an ominous tone, suggesting that the experience of fear will increase as the season progresses.

- Things will get far worse before they get better. There is an allusion to possible violence / uprising against the oppression.
- *who is not frightened?* – The rhetorical question does not provide an explanation for the cause of the fear. This suggests a universality to the experience of fear. The poet is referring to all South Africans. Everybody should be afraid as there will be violence in response to oppression.

STANZA 2

LINES 4-5

the sea is swollen, churning in broken waves (violent continual motion) / around the rocks, the sand is sinking away

- At first glance, that stanza is describing the speaker's observation of the natural environment. However; the imagery, sound devices and diction suggest an atmosphere of hostility and destructiveness that is broader than the literal reading of the lines.
- The sea is described as swollen, churning in broken waves – this is a destructive ocean, not a peaceful and serene ocean. This emphasises that it is dangerous.
- The sinking of the sand is symbolic of a world which is disappearing; in which one's sense of security and stability is eroded. Therefore, there reason to be afraid.

LINES 6-8

the seagulls will not land / under this sky, this shroud falling (something that covers or conceals) / who is not frightened?

- *seagulls will not land* – even the birds (symbolic of the natural element) can sense the impending danger and violence, adding to the ominous mood.
- *under this sky* – the present conditions
- *this shroud falling* – A shroud is a cloth traditionally used to cover dead bodies in preparation for a funeral. The word intensifies the feelings of fear, anger and helplessness in the face of the weather conditions. This rain (the violence that is soon going to follow) and cold can kill those unprotected from it.
- *who is not frightened?* – anaphora; repetition of the line emphasises the fear caused by the impending violence amongst the people. The figurative element compares winter to a time of political and social hardship in South Africa. Those left unprotected (non-whites) will be exposed to hardship and possibly death.
- There is also a literal meaning: homeless people or people living in shacks would fear winter because they are exposed to the elements all the time. It is cold and wet. They can fall ill and possibly die.

STANZA 3

LINES 9-11

*in every part of the city, sad women climbing onto buses,
dogs barking in the street, and the children / in every doorway crying,*

- In this stanza, the speaker moves from an observation of nature, to an analysis of the social texture of the city.

- The stanza describes the return of domestic workers to their families, at the end of their work day.
- The stanza emphasises the inequality created by the apartheid policy which also segregated the areas where people could live.
- *sad women* – The women work in the city in the homes of the whites. They are going home to their families in the townships which are in stark contrast to the suburbs where they work: ‘children/In every doorway crying’,

LINES 12-14

the world is so hungry, madam's house is clean/ and the women return with slow steps/ to the children, the street, the sky/ tolling like a black bell;

- *the world is so hungry* – their ‘world is so hungry’ (both literally and figuratively). They suffer from poverty, do not have sufficient food. Also, they are deprived of their rights.
- *madam's house is clean* – they do everything for their employers. They do not have time to take care of their own homes and families. *return with slow steps* – they are exhausted. Also, they do not have anything to look forward to in their homes because of their desperate plight.
- *the sky tolling like a black bell* – The simile compares the sky to a black bell. The sky is not only black but is also ‘tolling’. A bell is rung at funerals, to announce a death or a sad event.

LINES 15-17

these women are a tide of sadness/ they will drown the world,/ who is not frightened?

- Metaphor – the extent of their sadness is so great that it can be compared to a sea. Just as a sea can drown anything, their tiredness will drown anything in its path. This emphasises how tired they were.
- The women’s heavy sadness is a high tide coming in, so high it will drown their world and that of others. This continues the extended metaphor of a sea that is swollen and dangerous. The danger arises, not from anger, but sadness. The women are seemingly helpless to make a change in their situation, but the words suggest that this is not true: this sadness is so overwhelming it will drown (cause death) to many.
- *who is not frightened?* – the anaphora (repetition of the rhetorical question) provides an explanation for people to be afraid of this winter.

STANZA 4

LINES 18-23

on every corner men standing/ old stumps in the rain, tombstones/ engraved with open eyes/ watching the bright cars full of sated faces (more than satisfied)/ pass them, pass them, pass them,/ who is not frightened?

- *on every corner men standing* – The men have no jobs and are standing at street corners, waiting for someone to come along and offer them work for the day.
- *old stumps in the rain, tombstones/ engraved with open eyes* – the double metaphor compares the men to tree stumps which are compared to tombstones. They are more

dead than alive. The living trees are now 'dead stumps' and resemble 'tombstones'. watching the bright cars full of sated faces (more than satisfied).

- They are able to see the reality of their situation. This is in contrast to the sadness of the women. These men cannot get jobs.
- They seem stuck in their place, not moving like the tide of the women's sadness.
- The stanza continues with the idea of social breakdown, and describes the despair and dehumanization of the men. The stanza reinforces a social divide, in which the lives of the privileged few is juxtaposed alongside the hunger and deprivation of the masses. *watching the bright cars full of sated faces (more than satisfied)* – they look at the wealthy who drive past them in 'bright' cars and have 'sated' faces.
- The people they see are well fed, actually overfed, unlike the townships' hunger so dominant in Stanza 3. But the owners of these passing cars are not interested in offering them jobs. *pass them, pass them, pass them* – They just 'pass them, pass them, pass them'. This repetition stresses how terrible the situation is for the half dead men and their families and how invisible they have become to those passing them by each day.
- The repetition of *pass them* is suggestive not just of fear – but also of guilt and a refusal to confront the visible reality of social inequality. The sense of urgency conveyed in the repetition is ironic: one may pass "them", but one is unable to escape the all-pervading sense of fear.
- *who is not frightened?* – the repetition of the rhetorical question (anaphora) is a reminder that something has to change.

STANZA 5

LINES 24-31

into the rain the children are running / thin as the barest twigs they kindle a fire / to fight the winter, the bare bodies / a raging fire of dead children

- *into the rain the children are running* – The reaction of the children differs from that of the adults who are fearful. The children run freely, they are active and alive. Children are symbolic of innocence, but they are also victims of apartheid. The children enjoy the rain (literal meaning). The rain, in this stanza, is related to something life-giving, while the rest of the poem presents its negative connotations.
- *thin as the barest twigs they kindle a fire / to fight the winter* – The children are extremely thin, emphasising their extreme poverty. The simile compares them to twigs. They use a fire to warm themselves, because they are so thin. *to fight the winter, the bare bodies* – *fight* conveys a struggle to survive the cold of winter. They do not have sufficient clothing to keep themselves warm. This is the result of their poor living conditions.
- *raging fire of dead children* – This seems to refer to the children who died in violent uprisings (like Sharpeville, Soweto etc.).
- The word '*raging*' suggests the passion of the children and the ugliness of the system oppressing them. Children died when trying to bring about change during the Apartheid era.

LINES 28-29

and the sky collapsing under centuries of rain / the wind like a mountain crying,

- *collapsing under centuries of rain* – Figurative meaning: The sky is symbolic of their oppression. It is now falling. The people sense that their oppression is going to end soon.
- *centuries of rain* – emphasises their pain and suffering that they had to endure for so long. The system of apartheid, legalised or not, has become untenable. The system has been operating for many centuries but in South Africa the time for change has arrived. The time for change has arrived, however things are going to get worse before they get better.

LINES 30-31

who is not frightened of this winter / coming upon us now?

- The single repeated line ending each stanza becomes two lines with the addition of the idea that ‘this winter’ is on the verge of arriving. It is imminent and frightening for everyone.
- The purpose is to conclude with a strong warning of what seems to lie ahead.

THEMES

- The effects of apartheid
- The desire for change
- Impending danger - social upheaval, and a foreshadowing of the writer’s view of change, accompanied by violence, death and destruction

QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the poet’s choice of the word “thick” in line 1. (2)
2. How does line 2 create an ominous tone? Refer to the extended metaphor in your answer. (3)
3. Who is the speaker addressing in line 3? What is the effect of this address? (2)
4. How is a sense of violence portrayed in lines 4-5? (2)
5. Comment on the inclusion of the word “shroud” in line 7. (2)
6. Suggest a reason why people would fear winter? Refer to the literal and figurative meanings of the word. (3)
7. Identify and explain the figure of speech in “these women are a tide of sadness”. (3)
8. Explain the effectiveness of the metaphor, “tombstones/engraved with open eyes”. (2)
9. How does the reaction of the children to the rain differ from the adults? (2)
10. To what does the “raging fire of dead children” (line 27) refer? (3)
11. Discuss how the “sky” has changed throughout the poem. What is the implication of it in line 28? (3)

12. Comment on the effectiveness of the anaphora ("who is not frightened?") in the poem. (2)
13. The last two lines of the poem breaks the 'pattern' of the rest of the poem. Why did the poet write these lines differently to the anaphora in the rest of the poem? (3)

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SOLITUDE – Ella Wheeler Wilcox**SOLITUDE – Ella Wheeler Wilcox**

1. Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
2. Weep, and you weep alone.
3. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth
4. But has trouble enough of its own.
5. Sing, and the hills will answer;
6. Sigh, it is lost on the air.
7. The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
8. But shrink from voicing care.

9. Rejoice, and men will seek you;
10. Grieve, and they turn and go.
11. They want full measure of all your pleasure,
12. But they do not need your woe.
13. Be glad, and your friends are many;
14. Be sad, and you lose them all.
15. There are none to decline your nectared wine,
16. But alone you must drink life's gall.

17. Feast, and your halls are crowded;
18. Fast, and the world goes by.
19. Succeed and give, and it helps you live
20. But no man can help you die.
21. There is room in the halls of pleasure
22. For a long and lordly train,
23. But one by one we must all file on
24. Through the narrow aisles of pain.

GLOSSARY

- Mirth: humour/delight/joy
- Nectared: sweet/tasty
- Gall: a bitter substance
- Fast: a purposeful decision to abstain from food or drink for a period

BIOGRAPHY: ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox was born in the USA in 1850. She died in 1919.
- She started writing poetry at a young age and her works highlight her belief that the world needs more kindness and compassion.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- This poem, much like Wilcox's other works, contains her observation about the world around her.
- Her interest in spiritualism reflects effectively in this poem.

BACKGROUND**THE TITLE**

- "Solitude" means a lonely place/being alone or away from other people.
- The tone of the title ("Solitude") is not obvious. "Solitude" can imply a state of being alone by choice and is not automatically negative. It can also have connotations of isolation and loneliness.

SUMMARY

- The speaker addresses the reader directly. She states certain universal truths – "laugh, and the world laughs with / Weep, and you weep alone".
- The poem speaks of the universal human condition in sharing joys and 'good times' but that a person is alone/solitary in their tough times/sadness.
- In the first stanza the speaker states that one must face one's problems instead of seeking happiness through others.

FORM/STRUCTURE

- This poem follows a strict structure. The three stanzas consist of 8 lines each and the same rhyming pattern is used throughout.
- The first two stanzas focus on attitude, behaviour and actions. The last stanza focuses on the end of one's life and suggests a particular approach to deal with this inevitability.

STANZA 1**LINES 1-2**

Laugh, and the world laughs with you; / Weep, and you weep alone.

- *World* – synecdoche (a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa) for people.
- The first line tells a reader that if one were to laugh then the world would laugh with you. Happiness within oneself creates happiness in others.
- The second line adds a more complicated dimension to the relationship between humans and society. Here she describes the opposite emotion, sadness displayed through weeping. If you were to Weep, you would happen alone. People do not flock

to the side of someone who is upset, human beings are not attracted to negativity, perhaps for fear it too may be shared.

LINES 3-4

For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth, / But has trouble enough of its own.

- *mirth* – laughter caused by happiness.
- The poet argues that the earth (which is personified) has so much trouble and sadness that it has enough of its own.
- However, happiness mirth is rare, so the earth must borrow happiness from elsewhere. Wilcox implies that sadness is the natural state of the world.

LINES 5-8

Sing, and the hills will answer; / Sigh, it is lost on the air. / The echoes bound to a joyful sound, / But shrink from voicing care.

- These line convey the same idea as lines 1-4.
- If you were to “sing” then the “hills” would “answer.” You will receive a response from the world or society, and happiness would be multiplied.
- *Bound* – big, bouncing movements.
- *echoes* – are personified as being happy, to bounce or skip in response to happy sounds, In contrast, if you were to “Sigh” (symbolic of problems) it would be “lost on the air.” The sound and the emotion dissipate without anyone acknowledging, or certainly repeating it.
- *shrink* – pull back
- *shrink from voicing care* – to avoid expressing sadness; the world will not share your problems/issues/cares
- The first stanza concludes with the two emotions being translated into sounds. The sound of singing will “bound” like a joyful echo while the sigh will be ignored.
- Wilcox implies that people share joy happily but prefer that suffering is not shared.

STANZA 2

LINES 9-12

Rejoice, and men will seek you; / Grieve, and they turn and go. / They want full measure of all your pleasure, / But they do not need your woe.

- The speaker presents another five statements that outline how the world at large reacts to positivity and negativity. The first line says that if you rejoice then others will “seek you” out and want to spend time with you.
- *full measure* – complete/all
- She once again presents a contrast, that if you “Grieve” then the same people will “turn and go.” These people do not want “your woe” but are happy to take on “your pleasure.”

LINES 13-16

Be glad, and your friends are many; / Be sad, and you lose them all. / There are none to decline your nectared wine, / But alone you must drink life's gall.

- The speaker gives the reader some advice in the next lines that if you want to have friends, then you need to be "glad." If you are not, then you are going to "lose them all."
- *life's gall* – sadness, poverty, loneliness – all things that make us bitter.
- In the last two lines of this stanza, happiness is compared to "nectared wine" and sadness is compared to "life's gall".
- The poet uses this extended metaphor to explain how everyone wants to share as much of a person's happiness as possible (a "full measure" of "nectared wine") but they will be forced to experience their sadness ("*life's gall*") alone.

STANZA 3

LINES 17-18

Feast, and your halls are crowded; / Fast, and the world goes by.

- The speaker presents her final set of comparisons between a happy life and a sad one and the reactions they provoke.
- She uses another comparison: a *feast* (celebration) can bring people together.
- *halls are crowded* – emphasises that everyone will join in the celebrations.
- *Fast* – fasting is private. People may not be aware that you are fasting, therefore the whole world would not take notice or join you.
- These two examples are metaphors for everyday life. Welcoming community, companionship, and happiness are going to inspire even more of the same. The poet argues that if you do not participate in life and happiness (if you "fast"), people will ignore you, they will not want to spend time with you. ("Fast, and the world goes by").

LINES 19-20

Succeed and give, and it helps you live, / But no man can help you die.

- The speaker refers to life and death and the way that humans deal with pain.
- If you are successful and give generously to others (not only material goods, but also if you give of yourself emotionally), you will live a good life ("it helps you live").
- *no man* – nobody. The poet says that literally, we all go through the process of death alone, but also implies that withdrawing from others is a metaphorical death and one that we always go through alone.

LINES 21-24

There is room in the halls of pleasure / For a long and lordly train, / But one by one we must all file on / Through the narrow aisles of pain.

- *the halls of pleasure* – metaphorically, the spaces in your life that are filled with joy and happiness.

- *a large and lordly train* – the procession of people that follow an aristocrat or royalty.
- Happiness is metaphorically compared to a house with big rooms (“roomy halls”) that can hold many guests (“a large and lordly train”), where people enjoy having parties (“halls of pleasure”) while pain is compared to a “narrow aisle” which implies a corridor that people have to move through alone.
- In these lines, the poet says that happy people attract others and have large and loyal groups of followers. This contrasts with the next two lines.
- *file on* – walk into a place in a line, one behind the other.
- *aisles* – a narrow passage between rows of seats.
- The poet describes pain as a “narrow” aisle. This metaphor implies that people can only survive pain on their own. Others can only watch them, but cannot experience their pain with them. *we must all* – implies that everyone will suffer pain, and that the journey through pain is ultimately one that everyone will have to make on their own.

THEMES

HAPPINESS / PAIN –

- throughout the poem the speaker states that one must face one’s problems head-on and not seek comfort in others in lieu of addressing one’s problems/issues. She states that we cannot run from our problems forever.

INDIVIDUAL vs OUTSIDE WORLD

- the relationship between these two concepts is clear in this poem. This poem acts as a ‘map’ to the individual and how to create your own happiness and face the realities of the world.
- Wilcox makes it clear that she believes that all people exist in a state of solitude. Life needs to be tackled with practicality and self-reliance.
- This poem is about how people respond to the emotional state of others: happy people tend to attract the company and friendship of many others; sad people tend to become isolated and lonely because people tend to shy away from negative emotions.
- In the final stanza, the poet explains how everyone must ultimately go through pain and suffering alone - although others can bear witness, this experience is inevitably a solitary one. The poet is not necessarily saying that people are selfish - just that a person can observe others’ deepest feelings but cannot actually experience them.

CONTRASTS

- in this poem it is clear that happiness will draw people to you and sadness will isolate you from others. Although the poem suggests we must bear our hardships alone, we should realise that happiness and grief are part of the human condition, and we must remain steadfast and resilient in the face of that.

TONE

- On the whole, the tone is melancholy/sad/depressed. Although the poet reminds us that happiness is possible (this is the connotations of words and phrases like “laugh”, “sing”, “rejoice”, “nectared wine” and “halls of pleasure”) the poet contrasts these words and phrases with their opposites (“weep”, “sigh”, “be sad”, “life’s gall” and “narrow aisles of pain”).

POETIC DEVICES

- The SYNECDOCHE ('world' implying people) is sustained throughout the poem.
- Extensive use of PERSONIFICATION gives the poem a personal and intimate feel. "Sing, and the hills will answer".
- The poem is built on OPPOSITES - "laugh and weep", "rejoice and grieve", "pleasure and woe", "feast and fast".
- This emphasises her message.
- The regular rhythm in the poem creates necessary and dramatic pauses in the reading of the poem.

SOLITUDE -- ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

AN ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS 1

SOLITUDE -- Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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2. Weep, and you weep alone.
3. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
4. But has trouble enough of its own.
5. Sing, and the hills will answer;
6. Sigh, it is lost on the air.
7. The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
8. But shrink from voicing care.
9. Rejoice, and men will seek you;
10. Grieve, and they turn and go.
11. They want full measure of all your pleasure,
12. But they do not need your woe.
13. Be glad, and your friends are many;
14. Be sad, and you lose them all.
15. There are none to decline your nectared wine,
16. But alone you must drink life's gall.
17. Feast, and your halls are crowded;
18. Fast, and the world goes by.
19. Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
20. But no man can help you die.
21. There is room in the halls of pleasure
22. For a long and lordly train,
23. But one by one we must all file on
24. Through the narrow aisles of pain.

ABOUT THE POET

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox was an American author and poet. She is well known for her works that are full of social criticism, in her poems she expresses sentiments of cheer and optimism in plainly written, rhyming verse.
- Her popular works include Poems of Passion (1883) and Solitude (1883)

INTRODUCTION

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox's "Solitude" is about the relationship between the individual and the outside world.
- Wilcox wrote this poem after encountering a grieving woman on her way to Madison, Wisconsin. Despite her efforts, Wilcox was not able to comfort the woman over her loss.
- Distraught, Wilcox returned to her hotel and after looking at her lonely face in the mirror, began to write this poem.
- The context of the poem suggests that what follows is not a parade of moral platitudes but a series of choices: If you laugh, sing, rejoice, or feast, the world will be drawn to you. If you weep, sigh, fast, or grieve, the world will abandon you.
- The poem is neither an anthem of positive thinking nor a dour account of existential loneliness. It is an invitation to move through the world with practicality and self-reliance.

THEMES

- Solitude means loneliness and it is the hard reality of life that a man has to live alone and die alone.
- In this poem, the Poetess reveals the real face of the people. This poem is a great satire on us, our thoughts, and our level of thinking. The Poetess points out a social evil. We cannot decline what the Poetess says to us in this poem.
- We should think deeply about this poem

STANZA 1

1. Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
2. Weep, and you weep alone.
3. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
4. But has trouble enough of its own.
5. Sing, and the hills will answer;
6. Sigh, it is lost on the air.
7. The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
8. But shrink from voicing care.

- In the first stanza, Wilcox tells the reader that if one were to laugh then the world would laugh with you. This statement is meant to appeal on multiple levels in that happiness within oneself creates happiness in others.
- Then she describes the opposite emotion, sadness displayed through weeping. If one were to Weep, it would happen alone. People do not flock to the side of someone upset; human beings are not attracted to negativity, perhaps for fear it too may be shared
- The earth is described as being sad and old. It does not have a well of happiness to draw from so it must seek mirth somewhere else. This is why it laughs with you.
- In regards to sadness, the speaker says that the earth has enough sadness without taking in other people's troubles.
- This is a very perceptive generalized statement about how many people view the problems of others. No one wants the burden of someone else's unhappiness if it can

be avoided.

- The speaker says that one would receive a response from the world or society, and happiness would be multiplied.

In contrast, the sound and the emotion dissipate without anyone acknowledging, or certainly repeating it.

- The first stanza concludes with the two emotions being translated into sounds. The
- sound of singing will bound like a joyful echo while the sigh will be ignored

Stanza 2

9. Rejoice, and men will seek you;
10. Grieve, and they turn and go.
11. They want full measure of all your pleasure,
12. But they do not need your woe.
13. Be glad, and your friends are many;
14. Be sad, and you lose them all.
15. There are none to decline your nectared wine,
16. But alone you must drink life's gall.

- In the next set of eight lines of 'Solitude,' the speaker presents another five statements that outline how the world at large reacts to positivity and negativity.
- The first line says that if you are to spend your days rejoicing then others will seek you out and want to spend time with you.
- She once again presents a contrast, that if you Grieve then the same men will turn and go. These people do not want your woe but are happy to take on your pleasure.
- The speaker gives the reader some advice in the next lines: if you want to have friends, then you need to be glad. If you are not, then you are going to lose them all.
- In the last two lines of this stanza, the speaker describes how if you are happy and drink 'nectared' wine then you are never going to be short on a friend to drink it with.
- Continuing the metaphor of drinking, she states that life's gall must be consumed alone.

Stanza 3

17. Feast, and your halls are crowded;
18. Fast, and the world goes by.
19. Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
20. But no man can help you die.
21. There is room in the halls of pleasure
22. For a long and lordly train,
23. But one by one we must all file on
24. Through the narrow aisles of pain.

- In the final stanza of 'Solitude,' the speaker presents her final set of comparisons between what a happy life and a sad one is like and the reactions they provoke.
- She begins by utilizing another comparison to the way meals can bring people together. If one was to hold a Feast then their halls would be crowded. Just as if one Fasted then the whole world would pass by.

- These two examples are meant as metaphors for a larger way of being in everyday life.
- A welcoming community, companionship, and happiness are going to inspire even more of the same.
- The following lines are different than those which proceeded them. In the last section, she makes larger statements about life and death and the way that humans deal with pain.
- She describes how success and a willingness to give will help one live a longer life but there will be no one there when you die. Similarly, the pain has to be faced alone. No one wants to pile onto a train that is headed for that kind of unhappiness. The world would much rather gather in a "hall...of pleasure."

REFERENCE:

- <https://englishsummary.com/lesson/solitude-poem-summary-notes-and-line-by-line-explanation-in-english-class-8th/>

SOLITUDE -- ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

AN ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS 2

SOLITUDE --Ella Wheeler Wilcox

1. Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
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4. But has trouble enough of its own.
5. Sing, and the hills will answer;
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7. The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
8. But shrink from voicing care.
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10. Grieve, and they turn and go.
11. They want full measure of all your pleasure,
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22. For a long and lordly train,
23. But one by one we must all file on
24. Through the narrow aisles of pain.

ANALYSIS

First Stanza: The Pairs of Opposites

1. Laugh, and the world laughs with you
2. Weep, and you weep alone.
3. For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
2. But has trouble enough of its own.
3. Sing, and the hills will answer;
4. Sigh, it is lost on the air.
5. The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
6. But shrink from voicing care.

- The speaker begins with two lines that have become a widely quoted catchphrase, so much so that many inaccurately attribute it to Shakespeare, Mark Twain, or any number of other famous, profound writers.

- The poem focuses throughout on pairs of opposites that have profound effects on the lives, minds, and hearts of human beings. The mayic world would not exist without such pairs of opposites.
- Wilcox's speaker is thus dramatizing her observation of certain of those pairs and how those pairs have affected the people she has met and with whom she has interacted.
- The first stanza deals with the following pairs: laughing/weeping, mirth/trouble, singing/sighing, joy/sorrow.

Second Stanza: Attraction and Repulsion

7. Rejoice, and men will seek you;
8. Grieve, and they turn and go.
9. They want full measure of all your pleasure,
10. But they do not need your woe.
11. Be glad, and your friends are many;
12. Be sad, and you lose them all.
13. There are none to decline your nectared wine,
14. But alone you must drink life's gall.

- The speaker continues her dance of the pairs with rejoicing/grieving; she has determined that if one rejoices, one will be sought out by others, but if one grieves, that grief may cause others to turn away because it is natural to seek "pleasure" not "woe."
- The speaker continues with glad/sad, stating that gladness will bring you many friends, while sadness will cause a loss in friendship. She emphasizes her claim by stating that although you may offer a sweet beverage, the sadness of your disposition will cause you to "drink life's gall" alone.

Third Stanza: Pleasure and Pain

15. Feast, and your halls are crowded;
16. Fast, and the world goes by.
17. Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
18. But no man can help you die.
19. There is room in the halls of pleasure
20. For a long and lordly train,
21. But one by one we must all file on
22. Through the narrow aisles of pain.

- The final movement includes the pair of opposites: feast/fast, success/failure, pleasure/pain. If one is feasting, one will be joined in "crowded" "halls." But while fasting, one will be passed by to fast alone.
- When one is successful and giving of one's bounty, others will want to be part of your circle, but one must face one's failures without outside comfort. The speaker exaggerates failure by metaphorically likening it to death: "no man can help you die."

- Pleasure will afford a "long and lordly train," again suggesting that pleasure attracts. Pleasure's opposite "pain" has "narrow aisles" which each human being "one by one" must travel through without company.

THEME(S)

1. The Role of Empathy

- This poem may at first seem to make cold and heartless robots out of human beings and their selfish behaviour. One might ask: must one really suffer all these indignities alone? What about empathy? Do not certain human beings have an abundance of that quality?
- Certainly, human suffering is addressed in the culture through charitable societies, and by individual empathetic acts. But no matter how much empathy and even sympathy a suffering mind/heart receives from others, ultimately that mind/heart must come to its equilibrium itself and alone.
- Thus, the poem is offering a profound truth that society's charitable acts simply cannot lessen. It is the mind/heart itself that suffers these indignities, and it is the mind/heart alone that must find its way to the light that cures all, and no outside force can do that work for each mind/heart.

REFERENCE:

- <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Ella-Wheeler-Wilcox-Solitude>

QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the personification in stanza 1. (3)
2. Describe the reaction of the 'echoes' (line 7) to the prompts given. (2)
3. What does "shrink" mean as used in line 8? (2)
4. Suggest a possible example of "life's gall". (2)
5. Why does the speaker suggest that "pain" is travelled through "narrow aisles"? (2)
6. Paraphrase and explain the line: "Succeed and give, and it helps you live." (3)
7. Discuss the effectiveness of the title of the poem in relation to its contents. (3)
8. Is the speaker in this overly cynical? Discuss your opinion. (3)
9. Would "Loneliness" have been a better title for the poem? Discuss your answer and make reference to the connotations/denotations of both words (solitude and loneliness) in your answer. (3)

THE MORNING SUN IS SHINING – Olive Schreiner

The Morning Sun is Shining Olive Schreiner

1. The morning sun is shining on
2. The green, green willow tree,
3. And sends a golden sunbeam
4. To dance upon my knee.
5. The fountain bubbles merrily,
6. The yellow locusts spring,
7. Of life and light and sunshine
8. The happy brown birds sing.

9. The earth is clothed with beauty,
10. The air is filled with song,
11. The yellow thorn trees load the wind
12. With odours sweet and strong.
13. There is a hand I never touch
14. And a face I never see;
15. Now what is sunshine, what is song,
16. Now what is light to me?

ANALYSIS

- The title and the first 12 lines of 'The Morning Sun is Shining' invite the reader to see the beauty of Olive Schreiner's Karoo, blessed with green willow trees, golden sunshine, bubbling fountains, springing locusts, birdsong and the scent of the thorn trees' yellow flowers.
- We realise in line 13, however, that the speaker is mourning someone's death: 'There is a hand I never touch/And a face I never see'.
- Because of this, she writes, 'Now what is sunshine, what is song, /Now what is light to me'.
- What begins as a lyrical celebration of nature ends up as a lament for the loss of a loved one.

LINES 1-4

1. The morning sun is shining on
2. The green, green willow tree,
3. And sends a golden sunbeam
4. To dance upon my knee.

- Lines 1-2 set the scene: it's a beautiful morning and the speaker reflects on the beauty of the morning.
- The repetition of 'green' reinforces the beauty of nature (the intensity of the colour of the willow tree).

Poetic device:

- PERSONIFICATION (lines 3-4): the 'sun sends a golden sunbeam' which 'dances' upon the speaker's knee.
- This reinforces the beauty of the morning and helps create a mood of joy / enjoyment / happiness/ cheerfulness.

Lines 5-8

5. The fountain bubbles merrily,
6. The yellow locusts spring,
7. Of life and light and sunshine
8. The happy brown birds sing.

- Lines 5-6 expand on the beauty of nature
- The word 'spring' possibly comments on the energy inherent in and adds vibrancy to elements of nature. This notion could also be amplified by the speaker's description of 'brown birds' in line 8.
- Poetic technique: Personification: 'merrily' gives the fountain the human quality of being joyful and reinforces the mood of happiness / cheerfulness.
- Poetic technique:
REPETITION of 'and' (line 7)- could possibly allude to the spontaneous expression of emotions and reinforces the beauty of the speaker's surroundings.

Lines 9-12

9. The earth is clothed with beauty,
10. The air is filled with song,
11. The yellow thorn trees load the wind
12. With odours sweet and strong.

- This quatrain further underpins the beauty of the poet / speaker's environment.

Poetic techniques / devices:

- METAPHOR / IMAGE of dressing ('the earth is clothed with beauty,' / line 9)- reflects the bounty of nature / the Divine.
- ALLITERATION ('sweet and strong' / line 12) alludes to the intensity of the fragrance.

Lines 13-16

13. There is a hand I never touch
14. And a face I never see;
15. Now what is sunshine, what is song,
16. Now what is light to me?

- This quatrain reflects a stark contrast in both tone and mood in comparison to the first three quatrains:
- The speaker now switches to a tone of despondency / sadness / grief / dejection / hopelessness when reflecting on the loss he / she has suffered.
- The use of the present tense implies that despite the passage of time, the speaker still grieves. This could possibly describe the extent of the speaker's pain at the loss of a loved one.
- Lines 15-16 suggest that the beauty of the morning / the beauty of nature cannot overshadow the pain / emotional trauma the speaker experiences.

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THE MORNING SUN IS SHINING -- Olive Schreiner

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS 1

The Morning Sun is Shining Olive Schreiner

1. The morning sun is shining on
2. The green, green willow tree,
3. And sends a golden sunbeam
4. To dance upon my knee.
5. The fountain bubbles merrily,
6. The yellow locusts spring,
7. Of life and light and sunshine
8. The happy brown birds sing.

9. The earth is clothed with beauty,
10. The air is filled with song,
11. The yellow thorn trees load the wind
12. With odours sweet and strong.
13. There is a hand I never touch
14. And a face I never see;
15. Now what is sunshine, what is song,
16. Now what is light to me?

BACKGROUND

- Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) was born at a mission station called Wittebergen near Herschel in the Eastern Cape.
- She is best known for her critically acclaimed novel *The Story of an African Farm*, initially published under the pseudonym Ralph Iron because of a contemporary prejudice against women authors. After achieving recognition as a writer, Schreiner wrote extensively on a range of political and social issues as an opponent of racism and an early feminist.
- Her book *Women and Labour*, written in 1911, was considered the bible of the women's emancipation movement in England and America. She was also a pacifist and did not agree with British imperialism in South Africa or with the South African (Anglo-Boer) War that was fought to achieve it.
- This poem conveys a strong sense of place and the natural environment, as often found in Schreiner's works.

THE TITLE

- The title introduces a positive image – we associate a bright, sunny morning with warmth and happiness. However, there is a figurative irony: Her sun (child) is no longer shining (has died).
- The title and the first 12 lines of 'The Morning Sun is Shining' invite the reader to see the beauty of Olive Schreiner's Karoo, blessed with green willow trees, golden sunshine, bubbling fountains, springing locusts, birdsong and the scent of the thorn trees' yellow flowers.

- We realise in line 13, however, that the speaker is mourning someone's death: 'There is a hand I never touch/And a face I never see'. Because of this, she writes, 'Now what is sunshine, what is song,/Now what is light to me'. What begins as a lyrical celebration of nature ends up as a lament for the loss of a loved one.

SUMMARY

- The speaker praises the beauty of Nature around her. She describes various aspects and uses many auditory 'images' to engage the reader. The last four lines step away from the natural scene. The sadness in these lines (to do with loss) are surprising, given the tone and content of the preceding lines.
- Happiness is real when shared". The poet comments on the beauty of a morning in which the sun is shining. She highlights the various elements that make the morning so beautiful, but then she changes track/ direction and asks, rhetorically, what is the purpose of a beautiful morning if it cannot be shared with anyone. A nature poem that shows the beauty of nature, but highlights her loneliness as she has no one with whom to share it.
- Olive Schreiner's only child, a daughter, died within a day of being born. The juxtaposition between the beauty and abundance of Nature, and the immense loss suffered by the speaker, is poignant and incredibly sad.

FORM/STRUCTURE

- A 16-line poem made up of 4 distinct parts. In line 1-4 she discusses the sense of sight, 5-8 hearing and 9-12 smell. All these senses enjoy the morning with the sun shining. There is a regular rhyme scheme and rhythm throughout lines 1-12. The last four lines deviate from this pattern. This 'break' in pattern increases the impact of the unexpected contents of the last four lines.

LINES 1-2

The morning sun is shining on/ The green, green willow tree,

- Lines 1-2 set the scene: it's a beautiful morning and the speaker reflects on the beauty of the morning.
- The repetition of 'green' reinforces the beauty of nature, emphasising the intensity of the colour of the willow tree. Green is a colour that is associated with life, synonymous to freshness, lush vegetation and health. The sun is also symbolic of life.

LINES 3-4

And sends a golden sunbeam/ To dance upon my knee.

- The personification of how the sun blesses the earth and provides joy and entertainment reinforces the beauty of the morning and helps create a mood of joy / enjoyment/ happiness/ cheerfulness.
- It is a benevolent sun "golden" that causes happiness and has connotations of riches and wealth and beauty.

LINES 5-8

The fountain bubbles merrily, / The yellow locusts spring, / Of life and light and sunshine / The happy brown birds sing.

- These lines expand on the beauty of nature on a sensory level.
- The personification in line 5 gives the fountain the human quality of being joyful and reinforces the mood of happiness / cheerfulness. The personification succeeds in providing an idyllic view of the beautiful morning which emphasises the sense of well-being and happiness.
- The various hues of the colour yellow continue with the “yellow locust”, just like the “golden sun” in line 3.
- The word ‘spring’ relate to the energy inherent in and adds vibrancy to elements of nature. This idea is amplified by the description of ‘brown birds’ in line 8. The onomatopoeic word “bubbles” is a happy sound.
- The repetition of ‘and’ (line 7) alludes to the spontaneous expression of emotions and reinforces the beauty of the speaker’s surroundings.
- The alliteration in line 7 (The repetition of the “l” sound: life and light) gives a sense of freedom and unburdened life in the happy morning.
- The singing of the bird is joyous “...happy brown bird sing...” The birds as singing about ‘life and light and sunshine’. This contributes to the idea that the natural world is celebrating life. It is as if the plants, insects and birds are all rejoicing in the morning sunshine.

LINES 9-12

The earth is clothed with beauty, / The air is filled with song / The yellow thorn trees load the wind / With odours sweet and strong.

- *clothed* – the earth is personified wearing the beautiful clothing. Every part of the world is covered (clothed) and “filled” with a beauty that makes the poet happy.
- *load the wind with odours sweet and strong* – Schreiner was a South African poet, so her reference to the “thorn trees” contextualizes the poem. The trees are also full of flowers and the sense of smell is used to show how their smell is pervasive.
- *sweet and strong* – the alliteration is used to reinforce the strength of the smell.
- The sibilant ‘s’ in “song”, “sweet” and “strong” contribute to the lyrical quality of the poem. This poem celebrates the beauty and sounds and smells of Nature.

LINES 13-16

There is a hand I never touch / And a face I never see; / Now what is sunshine, what is song, / Now what is light to me?

- The poet’s tone/attitude changes in these lines. This quatrain reflects a stark contrast in both tone and mood in comparison to the first three quatrains.
- The word “never” indicates that there is absolutely no possibility of her being able to touch or see her child. The speaker changes to a tone of despondency / sadness / grief / dejection / hopelessness when reflecting on the loss that she has suffered.
- The speaker is filled with despair because she has lost someone important to her. ‘Touch’ suggests a very close relationship with this person. It is someone she believes

she will never see again, and this thought makes her so unhappy she cannot appreciate the natural beauty around her.

- The use of the present tense implies that despite the passage of time, the speaker still grieves. This could possibly describe the extent of the speaker's pain at the loss of a loved one.
- She ends the poem with a rhetorical question, asking what is the point of experiencing a beautiful, natural morning if there is no one to share it with. The rhetorical question engages the reader to consider her situation; a beautiful day all alone, with no hope of company. She finds no solace in her beautiful surroundings.
- It implies that the beauty of the morning / the beauty of nature cannot overshadow the pain / emotional trauma the speaker experiences.

THEMES

- "Happiness is real when shared". The poet comments on the beauty of a morning in which the sun is shining. She highlights the various elements that make the morning so beautiful, but then she changes track / direction and asks, rhetorically, what is the purpose of a beautiful morning if it cannot be shared with anyone.
- A nature poem that shows the beauty of nature, but highlights her loneliness as she has no one to share it with.

TONE

- The tone of the first 12 lines is cheerful/happy/positive/joyful. Nature is beautiful and celebrated.
- The last 4 lines change to a tone of despair, negativity, sadness, hopeless. She is describing her sorrow and how the beautiful morning makes her sadness even greater, more poignant.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the mood of the first four lines of the poem. Pay attention to imagery and diction in your answer. (3)
2. Identify the tone in the first 12 lines. Now state the tone in the last 4 lines. Why does it change? (3)
3. How does the poet use colour to create the mood of the first stanza? (2)
4. What figure of speech is used in "And sends a golden sunbeam / To dance upon my knee"? Explain the effectiveness of this figure of speech. (3)
5. Discuss the effectiveness of the personification in lines 5-8. (3)
6. Comment on how the poet's use of sound contributes to the impact of the poem. (3)
7. Lines 13-14 bring forth a change in tone and mood. Discuss this change. (3)
8. Discuss the effectiveness of the poem's final question as a conclusion to the poem. (3)
9. What, do you think, was the poet's intention in the writing of this poem? (2)

IT IS A BEAUTEIOUS EVENING CALM AND FREE – William Wordsworth

IT IS A BEAUTEIOUS EVENING CALM AND FREE – William Wordsworth

1. It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
2. The holy time is quiet as a Nun
3. Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
4. Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
5. The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;
6. Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
7. And doth with his eternal motion make
8. A sound like thunder – everlastingly.
9. Dear child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
10. If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
11. Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
12. Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
13. And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
14. God being with thee when we know it not.

SUMMARY

- On a beautiful evening; the speaker thinks that the time is “quiet as a Nun,” and as the sun sinks down on the horizon, “the gentleness of heaven broods o’er the sea.”
- The sound of the ocean makes the speaker think that “the mighty Being is awake,” and, with his eternal motion, raising an everlasting “sound like thunder.”
- The speaker then addresses the young girl who walks with him by the sea, and tells her that though she appears untouched by the “solemn thought” that he himself is gripped by, her nature is still divine.
- He says that she worships in the “Temple’s inner shrine” merely by being, and that “God is with thee when we know it not.”
- This poem is thought to have originated from a real moment in Wordsworth’s life, when he walked on the beach with the daughter he had not known for a decade.
- William Wordsworth was fascinated by the innocence of children, and their natural connection to nature; he viewed it as an expression of their deeper innocence that they were not affected by the beauty of the natural surroundings the same way that he was, were not moved to tears the same way that he was.
- Thus, he came to the conclusion that nature – to Wordsworth akin to the divine – was lost when men grew older

SUMMARY

LINE	QUOTED TEXT	MODERN ENGLISH
1.	It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;	It's a beautiful, peaceful, leisurely night.
2.	The holy time is quiet as a Nun	The hour of evening prayer services is as hushed as a nun whose love of God takes her breath away. The giant sun is setting calmly
3.	Breathless with adoration; the broad sun	
4.	Is sinking down in its tranquillity;	
5.	The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:	Heaven (the sky or God) seems to watch tenderly over the ocean.
6.	Listen! the mighty Being is awake,	Pay attention: God is at work here
7.	And doth with his eternal motion make	and his movements make an eternal, thundering sound (i.e., the sound of the sea)
8.	A sound like thunder – everlastingly.	
9.	Dear child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,	Oh, beloved little girl walking beside me:
10.	If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,	If you don't seem awestruck in this setting, it doesn't mean you're any less spiritual by nature.
11.	Thy nature is not therefore less divine:	
12.	Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;	It's just that you feel divine comfort all the time,
13.	And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,	and (as a child) have special access to the holiest experiences;
14.	God being with thee when we know it not.	you feel God's presence even when we adults aren't aware of it.

ANALYSIS

- William Wordsworth's poem captures the power of a tranquil moment in nature and reflects the importance of elements of nature.
- The poem focuses on the speaker's simple moment in walking by the ocean with a child (who is assumed to be Wordsworth's own daughter, whom he had not seen in a decade). Therefore, the poem also is thought to capture an actual moment from Wordsworth's life instead of an imaginary moment via a fictitious narrator.
- Wordsworth describes the calming influence of the sea and likens it to a "holy time." Because the child with him is so innocent in her thoughts, she is also part of God's wonderfully divine nature.
- Wordsworth's description of the sea, the child, and the evening itself as being part of a holy experience shows the Romanticism that is woven throughout much of his poetry.
- The poem is woven with religious imagery and terminology:
- the evening is described as being "quiet as a Nun," a simile that underpins the pious beauty of Wordsworth's experience on this evening.

- He notes that the "heaven broods o'er the Sea," choosing to focus on God's creation in the use of "heaven" instead of "sky."
- He gives a poetic affirmation to the Creator's power in being able to create eternal thunder via the tide that relentlessly beats on the shore, an "eternal motion" of wonder. And because the child is so innocent in her thoughts, she "lieth in Abraham's bosom all year," noting that God is with her even when she is not aware of it.

THEMES

1. THE HOLINESS OF NATURE.

- The speaker celebrates the majestic, even holy beauty of the natural world. Out for a walk at sunset, the speaker describes the evening's beauty in worshipful terms, comparing its quiet to that of an awestruck "Nun" and sensing the presence of "the mighty Being" (that is, God) behind the vast sky and sea.
- The poem urges an appreciation for the beauty and power of nature, and also for the divine "Being" that makes such beauty possible.
- As the poem's opening line reveals, the speaker is struck by the world's peace and quiet during an evening stroll by the sea. The night is "beauteous" and "calm," the sun "sinking down" over the horizon in utter "tranquillity" as the sky hangs gently over the ocean.
- The speaker compares this "holy time" of day (a reference to evening vespers/prayers) to "a Nun / Breathless with adoration." In other words, it's so quiet, it's as though the world itself is holding its breath out of respect for nature's beauty, just as a nun is made breathless by her love for God.
- The speaker's descriptions of nature are, in fact, filled with religious imagery that links the beauty of the evening, and of nature more generally, to God (and thus presents this beauty as worthy of reverence). For example, the speaker calls the sky above the ocean the "gentleness of heaven," suggesting that it's the place where God calmly watches over the world. The thunderous sound of the ocean, meanwhile, is the "eternal motion" of "the mighty Being." That is, God is the one making the waves move and is also the powerful "mover" and shaker behind all things.
- Overall, the speaker's language portrays the natural world as a divine creation capable of admiring its own handiwork.
- Struck by this spectacle, the speaker encourages greater awareness of, and appreciation for, both nature and the divine spirit behind it.
- The speaker suddenly tells a companion to "Listen!" — a command that turns out to be addressed to the speaker's daughter, but initially seems to be addressed to the reader. On one level, it directs the daughter's (and reader's) attention to the "thunder"-like

sound of the sea. On another, it urges the reader to appreciate natural beauty as an expression of God's power – to pay attention to the work of "the mighty Being."

- The speaker also emphasizes the "divine" element present in the girl's own "nature." This language implies that human beings are themselves a part of nature and thus part of the divine.
- The poem therefore implies that people should be more closely in tune with both.

2. CHILDHOOD AND FAITH

- Toward the end of this sonnet, the speaker addresses a "Dear child" (Wordsworth's young daughter). When she doesn't seem especially awestruck by the evening's beauty, the speaker reasons that this is because, for children, feeling close to God is an everyday occurrence-- kids maintain a natural sense of faith and wonder at all times, so they don't necessarily react with solemn awe to what adults would consider sacred moments.
- At the same time, the speaker believes that children feel God's presence in moments that might not seem especially sacred to adults. Implicitly, then, the speaker's awe during this beautiful sunset is a rediscovery of what children feel all the time
- The speaker notes that the young girl doesn't seem to appreciate this "holy" evening as much as he does, but insists that this is only a deceptive outward appearance. To the speaker, the fact that she seems "untouched by solemn thought" during this sunset doesn't mean her "nature" is any "less divine" than the speaker's own. That is, her outward lack of reverence doesn't mean she's any less pious or capable of reverenc
- In fact, the speaker claims that children are the most holy and reverent of God's creatures and have a kind of access to a divinity that adults have lost.
- The speaker believes that this child (along with children in general) lies in "Abraham's bosom all the year": she's everlastingly in God's presence. (Abraham is a central patriarch and prophet in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths; the "bosom of Abraham" usually means a place of comfort in the afterlife, but here it suggests the comforting presence of God in one's regular life.) Her child-like faith and wonder are a constant and she has special, direct access to God and the sacred, and experiences God's presence "when we [adults] know it not."
- Thus, the reverence that the speaker feels (and wants to share with the reader) during the "beauteous evening" represents a kind of tuning back into the wavelength that kids are always on.
- The girl may not seem especially full of faith and wonder now, but that's only because she's full of faith and wonder all the time – including in moments when it's much harder for adults to experience these feelings

3. SUNSET

- Wordsworth praises the calmness of evening. He also likes the fact that it is free, a time of leisure.
- He compares sunset to worship. The image of the nun shows how sacred the evening is. It is like a Temple, as he suggests later in the poem.
- It is a time when heaven touches the earth

4. A FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

- The poem shows Wordsworth's love for his daughter, Caroline.
- He repeats the word 'dear' and praises her natural quality: 'Thy nature is not, therefore, less divine'. He suggests that in her innocent and natural state she is close to God.

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5. GOD IS REVEALED BY THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

- Wordsworth believes the sunset is so beautiful because heaven is present in the sky at this time. The force behind the sea is a 'mighty Being', or God. Gazing at a sunset is the same as being present in the Temple to adore God.

6. CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED TO NATURE

- The poet states his child is no less divine than the sunset. She is part of nature and is in the 'inner shrine', maybe without knowing it.

FORM

- "It Is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free" is a sonnet.
- It has 14 lines grouped into two parts: the octave (first eight lines) and the sestet (last six lines).
- A thematic shift – called the turn or volta – marks the transition between these two parts of the poem. The rhyme pattern shifts in line 9 as well.
- These are all conventional features of the sonnet, but the rhyme scheme here is a bit unconventional: it's close to, but doesn't quite follow, the Italian sonnet form
- The rhyme scheme of the octave of a conventional Italian sonnet is ABBA ABBA, while rhyme scheme of the sestet is CDE CDE or CDC DCD (though variations are allowed).
- However, in Wordsworth's sonnet, the first eight lines rhyme ABBA ACCA, while the last six lines use an unusual DEF DFE variation.
- In the context of this sonnet, the speaker is following a formal tradition but with a variation.

- This is a fitting choice for a poem that's traditionally pious in some ways but would have been considered, at the time, unorthodox in its expression of religious sentiment. (For example, the poem's claim that children have a special connection with God is more characteristic of Wordsworth's private beliefs than the standard Christian doctrine of his era.)
- The sonnet form is also associated with love, so Wordsworth may have seen it as a fitting choice for a poem about love of God and nature.

SETTING

- The poem is set beside (or near) the "Sea" on a beautiful "evening."
- The speaker remarks on the loveliness of this setting, pointing out its seemingly "Breathless" hush, tranquil "sun[set]," and gentle sky over ocean waters.
- The speaker also urges an accompanying "Girl" (and/or the reader) to "Listen" to a "sound like thunder" – probably the crashing of the ocean waves, which the speaker attributes to the "eternal motion" of God.
- The setting is, in fact, the inspiration for the whole poem.
- The scenic atmosphere stirs the speaker's reverence toward God and nature, and it also prompts the speaker's reflections about the "Girl" coming along for this evening stroll.

TONE AND/ MOOD

OCTAVE: Peaceful Atmosphere

- The speaker dramatizes the peaceful atmosphere surrounding the characters in the sonnet by comparing the evening to "the holy time" that is "quiet as a Nun." This special "Nun" is "breathless with adoration," that is, deep in a meditative state worshipping the Divine Beloved.
- The countryside through which the speaker and his companion stroll exudes a calm feeling that spreads its sway to become to the very heart and soul of peace; thus the speaker describes it as, "calm and free."
- The speaker reflects on the setting sun- "sinking down in its tranquillity." It is the poet who is tranquil as well as his surroundings as he remembers them.
- The speaker then remembers the "gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea." This special recollection calls him to avow, "the mighty Being is awake / And doth with his eternal motion make / A sound like thunder everlastingly."

SESTET: A Spiritually Inspiring Evening

- The poem then switches from mere description of the spiritually inspiring evening to the direct address by the speaker to his companion, "Dear child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here." The little girl is a young, uncomplicated child who would not be concerning herself with the presence of the tranquillity as her father does.
- However, the father avers that in spite of her lack of awareness to the "solemn thought" that infuses his mind, she is still a vital part of the divine plan as anyone or anything else is. The child's "nature is not therefore less divine."
- The little girl, like all children, is a descendent of "Abraham," founding father of the Judeo-Christian spiritual tradition. She, therefore, "lie[s] in Abraham's bosom all the year."

POETIC DEVICES (with examples)

1. "The holy time is as quiet as a Nun," (line 2)
 - poetic device: a simile.
 - It is very effective because Wordsworth is saying that the precious time he got with his daughter was quiet and peaceful, just like a Nun would be.
 - A Nun is being compared to the moment.
2. "The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:" (line 5).
 - Poetic device: personification.
 - It suggests that while the sun is setting, the heavens above are nesting into the ocean- not literally, but figuratively.
3. "Listen! the mighty being is awake," (line 6)
 - Poetic device: personification
 - The speaker refers to the noise created by the ocean.
 - Personification is used in this instance because it gives the ocean a sense of greatness and strength
4. "A sound like thunder-everlasting,"
 - Poetic device: simile
 - Links the sounds that the ocean makes with the noise of thunder.

5. "And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine," (line 14)

- Poetic device: metaphor.
- The "temple" in the line is referring to Caroline, Wordsworth's daughter and is comparing her closeness to nature and overall wholesomeness.
- In his eyes, she is the "inner shrine" of the temple which is a very special position, representing her importance and uniqueness in his mind.

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ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS 2

IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING CALM AND FREE – William Wordsworth

1. It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
2. The holy time is quiet as a Nun
3. Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
4. Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
5. The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;
6. Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
7. And doth with his eternal motion make
8. A sound like thunder – everlastingly.
9. Dear child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
10. If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
11. Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
12. Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
13. And worshipping at the Temple's inner shrine,
14. God being with thee when we know it not.

Glossary:

Beauteous: beautiful

Tranquillity: serenity/calmness

Doth: does

Solemn: serious

Abraham's bosom: Heaven

Shrine: place of worship

BIOGRAPHY: William Wordsworth

- William Wordsworth was born in the United Kingdom in 1770. He died in 1850.
- He was one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in poetry.
- He had a great love for Nature.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- As many of Wordsworth's other poems, this poem is a reflection on Nature and a (sort of) conversation with (presumably) his daughter. It is suffused with religious overtones.

SUMMARY

- The speaker in this poem is awestruck by the beauty of Nature, specifically the evening time. He expresses his appreciation for the feeling of tranquillity he experiences in Nature. He views the scene through a (Christian) religious lens and assures his companion (presumably his young daughter) that God's presence is omnipotent.

- He states that even if/when she does not express devotion to God, or spend time in a physical place of worship, God is always present. (This reaction stems from her being seemingly unaffected by the incredible scene in front of them.)
- He ultimately praises God for the creation of Nature.

FORM / STRUCTURE

- This is a Petrarchan (or Italian) sonnet consisting of 14 lines.
- The octave (first 8 lines) describes the beauty of the scene.
- The sestet (last 6 lines) serves as the speaker's comment on the beauty and spirituality of the scene.
- He addresses his companion (his daughter) directly in the sestet.
- It is a lyrical poem.

POETIC DEVICES

- The poet chose specific words to highlight the spiritual theme: 'holy', 'nun', 'adoration', 'heaven'. This establishes the sacred tone of the poem.
- The personification in "the mighty Being is awake" and "gentleness of heaven" enforce the spiritual theme.
- The similes ("quiet as a nun" - her adoration has taken her breath away - and "sound like thunder") are effective in engaging the senses.
- "Being" and "Temple" are purposefully capitalised to convey importance
- The contrast between silence and loud noise is effective in conveying meaning and engaging the senses.
- The tone is one of tranquillity and awe.

THEMES

The Holiness of Nature -

- the speaker celebrates the majestic and holy beauty of Nature. He describes Nature in reverent terms. The poem urges an appreciation for the beauty and power of Nature and God. The poem 'takes place' during "holy time" - the time of evening prayers. The speaker's language portrays the world as a divine creation capable of admiring its own handiwork. Human beings are a part of Nature and thus part of the Divine.

Childhood and Faith -

- the speaker addresses his "Dear child" directly when she does not seem as awestruck as he is. He reasons that it is due to her age and innocence. Children are always close to God; they maintain a natural sense of faith and wonder at all times, so they do not react with the same solemn awe as adults do. So, he ultimately states that through her reaction, he rediscovers what children feel all the time.
- Her outward lack of reverence does not mean that she is any less holy or pious or capable of reverence. The speaker states categorically that children are the most holy and reverent of God's creatures and we lose this as we grow/mature. Children are perpetually in "Abraham's bosom" - in God's presence. (Abraham is a central patriarch and prophet.)

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS 3

IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING CALM AND FREE – William Wordsworth

1. It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
2. The holy time is quiet as a Nun
3. Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
4. Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
5. The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;
6. Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
7. And doth with his eternal motion make
8. A sound like thunder – everlastingly.
9. Dear child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
10. If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
11. Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
12. Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
13. And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
14. God being with thee when we know it not.

BACKGROUND

William Wordsworth was born in the United Kingdom in 1770. He died in 1850. He was one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in poetry. He had a great love for Nature. As many of Wordsworth's other poems, this poem is a reflection on Nature and a (sort of) conversation with (presumably) his daughter. It is suffused with religious overtones.

THE TITLE

The speaker is struck by the physical beauty of the evening and the mood it creates. The speaker views the scene through a spiritual lens and assures his young companion (believed to be his daughter, Caroline) that God's presence is everywhere, even if we are not fully conscious of it.

SUMMARY

- The speaker in this poem is awestruck by the beauty of Nature, specifically the evening time. He expresses his appreciation for the feeling of tranquillity he experiences in Nature.
- He views the scene through a (Christian) religious lens and assures his companion (presumably his young daughter) that God's presence is omnipotent. He states that even if/when she does not express devotion to God, or spend time in a physical place of worship, God is always present. (This reaction stems from her being seemingly unaffected by the incredible scene in front of them.) He ultimately praises God for the creation of Nature.

FORM/STRUCTURE

- This is a Petrarchan (or Italian) sonnet consisting of 14 lines.
- The octave (first 8 lines) describes the breath-taking beauty of the scene.
- The sestet (last 6 lines) serves as the speaker's comment on the beauty and spirituality of the scene.
- He addresses his companion (his daughter) directly in the sestet and acts as a commentary of the speaker's understanding of the spirituality of life in general.

ANALYSIS

LINE 1

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,

- *beauteous* – beautiful
- The atmosphere is very peaceful and tranquil. A person is completely at ease; no worries or stress.
- *evening* – is often the most gentle and quiet time of day.
- *calm* – suggests a mood that is peaceful, tranquil and utterly quiet.
- *free* – implies free of stress/worries/pain.

LINE 2

The holy time is quiet as a Nun

- Personification and simile add a religious element to the poem.: "holy time" (the evening) is compared to a Nun that is quiet as she is in prayer. She is close to God. She loves God.

LINES 3-4

Breathless with adoration; the broad sun/ Is sinking down in its tranquility;

- *Breathless* – cannot even hear her breathe. This emphasises the silence. Just as the nun is 'breathless with adoration' so does the feeling of this time and place take away the poet's breath with awe at the beauty of God's creation.
- The speaker links the beauty of Nature to God, the creator of Earth and its beauty.
- *the broad sun* – As the sun sets it seems to become a large orange-red ball and the colours of sunset stretch out across the
- *horizon*. This adds to the serene, peaceful atmosphere.

LINE 5

The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;

- Personification – heaven is described as being gentle. This adds to the peaceful atmosphere.
- *The gentleness of heaven* – The sea is reflecting the skies/Heaven. It is calm and gentle. It is beautiful and Godly.
- *Broods* – Contemplates deeply: heaven seems to watch over the sea below. Figuratively God is watching over the world.

LINE 6

Listen! the mighty Being is awake,

- *Listen* – is a command and the exclamation mark intensifies it and indicates the excitement of the speaker. A very quiet moment is broken by this imperative order. The poet wants his companion to be an active participant in the scene.
- *mighty Being* – Literally refers to the sea. Figuratively refers to God. The capital letter in *Being* implies that although the speaker is referring to the sea, the capital letter links the sea to God, the Almighty Being. Both the sea and God are 'awake' and 'eternal' and neither stop moving.

LINE 7

And doth with his eternal motion make

- *doth* – does
- *eternal motion* – God and the sea are eternal and will go on for ever
- *motion make* – the alliteration emphasizes the thunderous sound of the sea

LINE 8

- *A sound like thunder – everlastingly.*
- Simile: breaking waves sound like thunder. Indicates power of nature and God. The thunderous sound of waves contrasts with the calm and quiet of lines 1-3.
- The dash creates a pause and emphasises the word which follows – *everlastingly*. Without the pause there would not be such a strong emphasis. It is the end of the octave but it indicates that God's creation, and, by inference, God, is forever.

LINE 9

Dear child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,

- *Dear child! dear Girl!* – is said in a loving tone. He expresses his love and adoration for his daughter.

LINES 10-11

If thou appear untouched by solemn thought, / Thy nature is not therefore less divine:

- *untouched by solemn thought* – She seems oblivious to the beauty around her.
- Wordsworth tells his daughter that although she doesn't seem to have been affected by the depth of feeling in the scene, he can assure her that it makes no difference to what is true. Even if she doesn't know or understand it now, she is still made of the same 'divine' material as all creation. Even if she is not touched by the beauty of the scene, it does not mean she is removed from God or less spiritual.

LINE 12

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;

- *in Abraham's bosom* – Metaphor – refers to heaven: Like a father holds a baby to protect it, the girl is unknowingly protected by God.

- *all the year* – at all times. God is always present to protect her.

LINE 13

And worshipping'st at the Temple's inner shrine,

- *the Temple's inner shrine* – Reference to nature: even if she does not express devotion to God or spend time in a physical place of worship (like a church), God is always present in nature.

LINE 14

God being with thee when we know it not.

- Assonance (repetition of the 'e' sound in being, thee, we) emphasises God's presence.
- God is with you, even if you are not aware of it.

THEMES

The Holiness of Nature

- – the speaker celebrates the majestic and holy beauty of Nature. He describes Nature in reverent terms. The poem urges an appreciation for the beauty and power of Nature and God. The poem 'takes place' during "holy time" – the time of evening prayers.
- The speaker's language portrays the world as a divine creation capable of admiring its own handiwork. Human beings are a part of Nature and thus part of the Divine.

Childhood and Faith

- The speaker addresses his "Dear child" directly when she does not seem as awestruck as he is.
- He reasons that it is due to her age and innocence. Children are always close to God; they maintain a natural sense of faith and wonder at all times, so they do not react with the same solemn awe as adults do. So, he ultimately states that through her reaction, he rediscovers what children feel all the time. Her outward lack of reverence does not mean that she is any less holy or pious or capable of reverence. The speaker states categorically that children are the most holy and reverent of God's creatures and we lose this as we grow/mature. Children are perpetually in
- "Abraham's bosom" – in God's presence. (Abraham is a central patriarch and prophet.)
- The beauty of nature reveals God. Wordsworth believes the sunset is so beautiful because heaven is present in the sky at this time.

TONE

- Amazed / awe / tranquility
- Respect

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the mood in the opening line of the poem. Use your own words. (2)
2. Why is the simile “quiet as a nun” a particularly effective figure of speech? (2)
3. How can the sea have “the gentleness of heaven” on it? (2)
4. How and why does the beginning of line 6 change the atmosphere? (3)
5. What is the purpose of the capital letter in “Being” (line 6)? (3)
6. What is the function of the dash in line 8? (2)
7. How does the tone of “Dear child!” differ from “Listen!”? (2)
8. Explain the comparison used in the metaphor “Abraham’s bosom”. (3)
9. Discuss how the structure/form of the poem supports its contents. (3)

FERN HILL – Dylan Thomas

FERN HILL – Dylan Thomas

1. Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
2. About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
3. The night above the dingle starry,
4. Time let me hail and climb
5. Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
6. And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
7. And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
8. Trail with daisies and barley
9. Down the rivers of the windfall light.
10. And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
11. About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
12. In the sun that is young once only,
13. Time let me play and be
14. Golden in the mercy of his means,
15. And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
16. Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
17. And the sabbath rang slowly
18. In the pebbles of the holy streams.
19. All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
20. Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
21. And playing, lovely and watery
22. And fire green as grass.
23. And nightly under the simple stars
24. As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
25. All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
26. Flying with the ricks, and the horses
27. Flashing into the dark.
28. And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
29. With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
30. Shining, it was Adam and maiden,
31. The sky gathered again
32. And the sun grew round that very day.
33. So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
34. In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
35. Out of the whinnying green stable
36. On to the fields of praise.
37. And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
38. Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
39. In the sun born over and over,
40. I ran my heedless ways,
41. My wishes raced through the house high hay

42. And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
43. In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
44. Before the children green and golden
45. Follow him out of grace,
46. Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
47. Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
48. In the moon that is always rising,
49. Nor that riding to sleep
50. I should hear him fly with the high fields
51. And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
52. Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
53. Time held me green and dying
54. Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

SOURCE:

<https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/dylan-thomas/fern-hill>

SUMMARY**STANZA 1**

- Well, when I was young and relaxed under the branches of the apple trees that surrounded the happy house, and my happiness was as vivid as the intense green of the grass – as vivid as the night's stars over the valley's trees – time himself let me live, call out, and climb, watching as I thrived and flourished in the best days of my life. I was highly respected among the wagons and was the prince of the local towns full of apple orchards. Back then, I was like a king who made the trees and their leaves spread trails of daisy flowers and barley grass on the fields behind them, where the apples blown down by the wind were like a river of light.

STANZA 2

- And I was young, inexperienced, and had no responsibilities, I was a celebrity around the barns and in the joyful yard, and I sang all over the farm because it felt like home. Under the sun, which is young only once, time allowed me to play and feel golden – at least as far as his mercy and resources allowed. Young, inexperienced, and thriving, I was like a hunter or shepherd. When I blew my trumpet, the young cows sang back to me and foxes on the nearby hill barked sharply. The sabbath – the holy day – seemed to ring out slowly from the pebbles in the streams, which seemed holy as well.

STANZA 3

- I'd spend the whole, lovely day running about. Farmers had stacks of hay as high as the house's roof, and the smoke from the chimneys was like a song. The days were full of fresh air and play, beautiful and flowing. The fire was as green as the grass. Every night under the stars I didn't just fall to sleep, I rode to sleep, and the owls seemed to carry the farm away with them as they took flight. All the moonlit night I could hear the blessed nightjars – nocturnal birds – near the horse stables, flying around the

stacks of hay. Light gleamed on the horses' hair before they disappeared into darkness.

STANZA 4

- And then I would wake up. The farm seemed to return in that moment, like a wandering person shining with morning dew, a rooster on his shoulder. Everything was shining, in fact; it was like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The sky returned and the sun rose again, right then and there. This is what it must have been like when God created the world, making the first light over the spinning earth. The first horses would have been mesmerized by what had happened, walking out of their green stables, which were full of their neighing, and into the warmth, into the fields where everything was praising God.

STANZA 5

- I was also a celebrity among the foxes and the pheasants (a type of bird) near the happy house under the newly-formed clouds. My heart was filled with happiness, in the light of that sun that rose again and again. I ran without a care, all my desires running with me between the tall stacks of hay. And I didn't care at all – as I went about my tasks, which were blue as the sky – that time, with all his beautiful music, doesn't allow people to have very many songs of childhood. Soon, children, inexperienced and full of joy, have to follow time out of their innocence.

STANZA 6

- But I didn't care, in those days when I was innocent as a lamb, that time would lead me to the attic that was full of swallows (a type of bird), guiding me by my hand's shadow – all in the light of the moon that seems to keep rising and rising. And I didn't care that as I went to sleep, I would hear time flying over the fields, and that when I woke up the farm would be gone and there would be no more children. Oh! When I was young and happy in the short childhood that I was granted, time embraced me, still young and inexperienced but already dying, even though I was locked in chains, singing like the sea.

THEMES

1. THE JOY AND INNOCENCE OF CHILDHOOD.

"Fern Hill" is first and foremost a celebration of childhood. The speaker's rich descriptions center around childhood's happy innocence, the way children feel like a unique part of a harmonious world – a world in which everything is special yet works together. The speaker suggests that to be a kid is to experience such specialness and harmony, such feelings of simultaneous freedom and security.

The poem brims with positive descriptions of the speaker's childhood at Fern Hill (an aunt's farm that Thomas often visited as a child), indicating how the speaker looks back on these experiences as a time of joy and innocence. For instance, the speaker begins the poem by describing how "easy" life felt as a child, saying "I was young and easy under the apple

boughs." This doesn't necessarily mean that the speaker had it easy, so to speak. Rather, the speaker felt at ease at Fern Hill. In other words, there was no friction between the speaker and the rest of world.

The speaker compares this feeling of harmony to being "prince of the apple towns." This might suggest that the speaker felt like the ruler of the local towns that produce apples. More to the point, however, it captures how the speaker felt special, "famous among the barns," as a child, as though the entire world itself was paying attention to him.

Such a feeling conveys the speaker's joyful, innocent attitude; there was nothing to fear or dread, and instead days were filled with excitement and wonder. The speaker saw only good in the surrounding world, describing how "my wishes raced through the house high hay." In other words, the whole farm seemed to grant the speaker's wishes. To the young speaker, everything was sweet and fun, fulfilling all the speaker's desires. The speaker was free from all worries and cares, instead allowed to simply enjoy the splendor of the world.

By recollecting childhood in such vivid terms, the speaker reveals how it shines forth in memory as a truly wonderful time. As a child, the speaker felt harmonious in a world where a kid could be "famous among the barns." Everything was special, and the speaker had all that could be asked for.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

Lines 1-46

2. THE HARMONY AND ORDER OF NATURE

The speaker's childhood joy is closely connected to his experiences playing outside. Childhood happiness, the poem suggests, comes in part from feeling a strong sense of connection with the natural world. To be young and innocent is to be one with nature, the poem suggests—and the natural world itself is presented as a place filled with wonder, peace, and harmony.

Throughout the poem, the speaker emphasizes how close he felt to nature as a child. "I was green and carefree," the speaker says, for example. The word "green" refers to being young and inexperienced, but it's also a metaphor here, comparing someone to a green shoot or stick (i.e., young plant growth). As a child, the speaker was like a young plant that didn't have a care in the world because it was just so excited to be alive. The speaker returns to the word "green" throughout the poem, repeatedly suggesting that children are as much a part of nature as leaves or newly sprouted plants.

The speaker also describes this time as "lovely" and full of "playing." "All the sun long it was running," says the speaker, making it sound as though the day itself would run along with him, like a friend might. The speaker also evokes "tunes from the chimneys" and calls the surrounding air "lovely and watery." As the young speaker explored the landscape, all the elements of that landscape seemed like his playmates; the sun, hay, smoke, air, and water would also frolic and sing.

As these descriptions accumulate, the speaker's childhood seems at one with nature. Rather than just playing in nature, the speaker plays as a part of it. For example, the speaker says, "I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves / Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold." The speaker, as a child, felt like both a hunter and shepherd in this landscape. It's not that the speaker was killing or protecting things, but that the speaker had a role to play; it felt as if all these animals responded to the speaker. Again, then, the speaker's childhood joy stemmed in large part from feeling in harmony with the natural world.

The feeling of being a part of the landscape even extended to night-time: "And nightly under the simple stars / As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away." Here, the elements of the landscape all get mixed up, so that the flying owls seem to carry the farm away and the speaker seems to ride them! In this description – and many others like it throughout the poem – the speaker and elements of the landscape seem to blend together. Night, then, captures the height of the speaker's joyful connection with the natural world. Child, owl, barn, stars all swoop through the world as part of each other.

It's clear that the speaker remembers childhood as a time of joyful romping through nature. That joy was the result of feeling like a part of the landscape, rather than apart from it. And adulthood, the poem argues in the end, is incompatible with such feelings; the joyous "farm" of the speaker's youth has since "forever fled from the childless land." Adults are no longer able to access the sense of peace and harmony that comes from being one with nature – they are effectively kicked out of this Eden.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

Lines 1-3

Lines 6-12

Lines 15-54

3. THE POWER OF TIME

Throughout "Fern Hill," time looms as a godlike presence. Time grants the speaker a brief period of childhood happiness, yet it also ensures that nothing lasts forever and that all joys come to an end. Ultimately, the poem presents time as an unstoppable force with control over human beings.

Very soon after the poem begins, the speaker personifies time as an all mighty figure. This figure mercifully grants the speaker a brief period of childhood, while also looming over that childhood with the threat of imminent change. In the first stanza, the speaker describes time as a kind of god that "let[s]" the speaker experience a joyful childhood: "Time let me hail and climb / Golden in the heyday of his eyes." Here, time almost seems like a giant in whose eyes the speaker can "climb." This metaphorical description captures how time enables people to have childhoods in the first place. Without time, there'd be no "heyday" to "climb" in.

In fact, this personified time is merciful for allowing childhood to exist. "Time let me play and be / Golden in the mercy of his means," says the speaker. Time grants the speaker a "golden" childhood, but only has enough "mercy" to provide a short one. The speaker has a keen sense of how time only permits people to be children for so long. Pretty soon, the time's up.

As a result, time as a personified figure represents a looming sense of change. However, as a child, the speaker didn't fully comprehend childhood's brevity: "And nothing I cared [...] that time allows [...] so few and such morning songs." In other words, the speaker didn't know or didn't care that childhood would be over so soon, that time is merciful only up to a point. This ignorance further highlights the inevitability and surprise of time's passage. Everybody knows they're going to grow up, and yet, somehow, it still comes as a surprise when it actually happens.

Presiding as an all-powerful force throughout the poem, time gives the speaker a wonderful childhood and then takes it away. Both predictable and unrelenting, there's nothing that can be done about the passage of time.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

Lines 4-5

Line 7

Lines 13-14

Line 39

Lines 42-54

4. THE END OF CHILDHOOD GRACE

When nature runs its course, the poem implies, children grow up, losing the "grace" of childhood. According to Christianity, grace is the experience of God's love and an awareness that all of God's creations are good. For the speaker, childhood represents such an experience, and the end of childhood is thus a painful fall from grace.

The speaker often frames the goodness of childhood through allusions to the biblical story of Adam and Eve. This religious lens captures how the speaker remembers childhood as a paradise akin to the Garden of Eden. For instance, the speaker describes waking up to the world covered with dew as "all / Shining, it was Adam and maiden." This moment explicitly compares the speaker's childhood memories with the story of Adam and Eve, revealing that the speaker thinks childhood is like being in the Garden of Eden.

In Eden, the story goes, Adam and Eve felt at one with everything around them. They tended to the garden, felt no shame, and knew nothing of evil. The speaker imagines childhood feeling a lot like being in Eden: "So it must have been after the birth of the simple light / In the first, spinning place." In other words, living in the newly created world must have been a lot like being a kid at Fern Hill.

Understood through the lens of Christianity, the speaker's memories are filled with "grace." The Christian idea of grace has a lot of meanings and resonances, but in terms of this poem it can be roughly summed up as being close to God, just as Adam and Eve were. For the speaker, childhood itself is grace. All the speaker's experiences of feeling special, of sensing the harmony of the world, are part of that grace. For the speaker as a child, the world's divinity can be seen even in the humblest stones; "And the sabbath rang slowly / In the pebbles of the holy streams," the speaker says. In this state of grace, the speaker can see that the whole world is good, that it is all full of God's divinity.

At the end of the poem, the speaker loses the grace of childhood just as Adam and Eve lost their grace, and along with it the paradise of Eden. This experience is very painful for the speaker. The last lines of the second-to-last stanza describe how “the children green and golden/ Follow [Time] out of grace.” Just as Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden, the speaker “wake[s] to the farm forever fled from the childless land.” It’s as if one day the speaker wakes up, no longer a child, and all the joy has been sucked out of the world. The speaker doesn’t feel connected to the world anymore, either. Instead, all paradise and harmony has been removed, leaving the speaker alone.

Moreover, just as Adam and Eve could now experience physical and emotional pain, the speaker now knows suffering. The poem ends on a dramatic and mysterious image that captures this suffering: “Time held me green and dying/ Though I sang in my chains like the sea.” This image of a dying, enchained sea conveys the pain of childhood ending. Put simply, it feels awful. Thus bleakly ends the speaker’s depiction of childhood’s grace. Now, like Adam and Eve, the speaker feels the pain of losing that “green and golden” paradise.

Where this theme appears in the poem:
Lines 1-54

SOURCE:
<https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/dylan-thomas/fern-hill>

FERN HILL – Dylan Thomas

Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas

A Critical Analysis

CAPSULE SUMMARY

The poem opens with the speaker happily recounting spending time outside in a picturesque landscape with green grass, apple trees, and a starry sky where he felt like a "prince." He details his adventures as a youth, recalling how he acted as both a "hunter and herdsman" and saying that time allowed him to play in the sun "once only" – the first hint that this happiness won't last.

Throughout the first three stanzas, the speaker continues to detail his adventures and their landscape. He rules his natural dominion, referring to himself as "prince of the apple towns" and "famous among the barns," and it seems he alone is present in this natural world along with the animals.

In the second stanza, he expands on his adventures as a "green and carefree" boy, his greenness (or youth) matching that of the landscape. He repeats the phrases "time let me " and "golden in the ____ of his ____," beginning lines with them just as he did in the first stanza. In the third stanza, he continues to elaborate on the landscape, getting caught up in his descriptions as he lists thing after magical thing, beginning several lines with "and..." In the fourth stanza, he compares witnessing the coming of the day to Adam and Eve in Eden and God creating the universe.

The next stanza begins the poem's ending tone of regret, alluding to the Pied Piper as the speaker begins, with the phrase "nothing I cared," to characterize himself as "heedless," indicating his later regret. The poet ends the poem lamenting his carelessness and mourning the loss of his childhood and innocence, beginning the stanza by repeating the phrase "nothing I cared" from the previous stanza.

GENERAL ANALYSIS

The poem can be divided into two parts: the first three stanzas are related to the poet's experience as a child when he used to spend his summer holidays at his uncle's farm (Fern Hill, it is in Wansley in Wales) but the last three stanzas are about an awakening in the child which signifies the loss of the world of innocence.

At the center of this loss of the innocence are the myths of fall of the first human beings (Adam and Eve). The world of innocence (child) as described in the first three stanzas is like the Garden of Eden. This is a world in which the child is in complete union with the nature. This world of fantasy offers the child an Edenic bliss. The way Thomas describes this world; it appears to be a timeless world without a sense of loss and decay. In the third stanza the poet slowly moves towards the transition between the world of innocence and the world of experience.

In the fourth stanza the speaker's sleeping is a symbolic sleeping, which ends a flashing in the dark. This flashing is a kind of awakening as hinted by the first line of the fourth stanza. In this awakening the child (speaker) initiates into the world of maturity. "Sleeping" in the poem is symbolic that refers to the loss of innocence that equates the Adam and Eve, who had slept after a fall from the Grace of God. This initiation of the world of maturity entails the

loss of Edenic bliss, innocence, grace and freedom. Moreover, poet loses creative imagination and fantasies in which a union with nature was possible.

In the last stanza the poet once again contemplates on the memoirs of his childhood, but this time the awareness, becomes dominant.

In the last line the poet refers to his chained situation in the world of experience. Now he is in chain, green colour is withered now. So, this poem is the journey from childhood to manhood when the manhood comes, the man suffers from agony. Now I am not what I was in the past.

The use of verb "song" hints that the losses can be captured through art in the last line stanza. Of course, the poem is intensely nostalgic: but it is written from a point of view which takes into account the fact that the adult has awoken, "to the farm forever fled from the childless land". The farm still exists, in reality: but it no longer belongs to the phantasm world which the child created and lived in. That land seems itself still to exist somewhere, but is childless: and one can never go back to live in it: One has died out of that land. To be green and growing is to die out of it: but during the whole process, he sang in his chains - as the sea does, in the rhythmic control of the tides.

Adult consciousness brings a loss of phantasy freedom. Undeniably, the poem is written from a schizoid feeling about reality: The self can relate with immediacy to an object, which is the object of its own imagination or memory.' When the self 'abandons itself to the real' it will lose its sense of freedom. This applies to both perception and action. The child is self-enclosed in his Eden, and the poem encounters the paradoxes of omnipotence and impotence, freedom and slavery (chains), being 'anyone in phantasy and nothing in reality'. The air in that childhood world is different from the air of Thomas' poems of strangling and constriction: it is the air of freedom, and everything is made of it like 'castles in the air' - it is the 'other air', of morning songs, of chimney tunes, of the child's horns and the bark of foxes. Even the image of Time taking him by the hand is not here bitter or negative: it is as though time is a merciful mother.

Personifying the "lilting" house at the start of the poem sets the stage for the landscape the speaker describes: it is so lively and vivid that it is almost a character itself. Time is similarly personified, becoming almost like a playmate to the young boy. Thomas's use of the phrase "once below a time" emphasizes the power of time – the speaker is merely a guest in time's domain – and instantly reminds us of fairy tales beginning "once upon a time," calling to mind stories of childhood innocence.

The line "in the sun that is young once only" in the second stanza is the first hint that the speaker's joyful innocence won't last. Though time "lets" him play, it remains in control. In the second stanza, he also mentions the Sabbath and "holy" water, marking the first of many Christian references that will grow richer as the poem progresses and giving Fern Hill a sacred aura. The colours green and gold, which will become recurring images, also appear

SOURCE:

<https://www.uoanbar.edu.iq/eStoreImages/Bank/407.pd>

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS: Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas

SOURCE / REFERENCE:

<https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Fern-Hill/author>

FERN HILL -- Dylan Thomas

1. Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
2. About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
3. The night above the dingle starry,
4. Time let me hail and climb
5. Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
6. And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
7. And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
8. Trail with daisies and barley
9. Down the rivers of the windfall light.
10. And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
11. About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
12. In the sun that is young once only,
13. Time let me play and be
14. Golden in the mercy of his means,
15. And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
16. Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
17. And the sabbath rang slowly
18. In the pebbles of the holy streams.
19. All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
20. Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
21. And playing, lovely and watery
22. And fire green as grass.
23. And nightly under the simple stars
24. As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
25. All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
26. Flying with the ricks, and the horses
27. Flashing into the dark.
28. And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
29. With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
30. Shining, it was Adam and maiden,
31. The sky gathered again
32. And the sun grew round that very day.
33. So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
34. In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
35. Out of the whinnying green stable
36. On to the fields of praise.

37. And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
38. Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
39. In the sun born over and over,
40. I ran my heedless ways,
41. My wishes raced through the house high hay
42. And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
43. In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
44. Before the children green and golden
45. Follow him out of grace,

46. Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
47. Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
48. In the moon that is always rising,
49. Nor that riding to sleep
50. I should hear him fly with the high fields
51. And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
52. Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
53. Time held me green and dying
54. Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

CHARACTER, SPEAKER AND TIME:

THE CHLD

- The child is young and enjoys his time on the farm. This joyful abandon begins to wane as he matures. The child depicted in the poem "Fern Hill" is drawn from Dylan Thomas's time at his aunt's farm by the same name. The time of childhood where there are no problems or cares is idyllic, but all too fleeting. Soon the child begins to transition into the adult world, and the joy of childhood is left behind.

THE SPEAKER

- The speaker interjects a reflective tone throughout the poem. He indicates the transition from child to adult as well as the interactions with Time.

TIME

- Time is depicted as a character who is at first playful and caring and then harsh and unyielding.

PLOT SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS SUMMARY

CAREFREE NATURE OF CHILDHOOD

- The first three stanzas of the poem are dedicated to depicting the sort of joys and carefree abandon children feel when they are young and untouched by the cares of the world.
- Thomas draws from his days at his aunt's farm at Fern Hill because these were some of the most idyllic memories he has. Childhood is a time when the young feel empowered, immortal, and capable of such great things.

- The poem suggests that childhood is the best time of life because the knowledge of death and corruption has not yet crept into their existence.
- Time is personified and initially acts as a benevolent caretaker in the first three stanzas.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF TIME

- The last three stanzas of the poem offer the reader a more sobering view of childhood than that shown in the poem's beginning. This perspective depicts the end of childhood and the movement toward the reality of life.
- As a contrast to the first three stanzas, the last three stanzas depict Time as a cruel master leading the child out of paradise.

ANALYSIS

- Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill" is written in six stanzas.
- The first three stanzas depict the poet's experiences on his aunt's farm and the carefree nature of being young and innocent.
- The last three stanzas are a bittersweet commentary on the loss of innocence and the toil of having to grow up.

STANZAS 1-3

- The speaker describes his blissful delight when he was a child out in nature.
- The speaker describes a very picturesque and pastoral setting and says he was the "prince of the apple towns" and the world of that farm was his dominion. He says he was "famous among the barns" and that he and the animals peacefully coexisted. Time did not mean anything to him.
- The speaker says, "Time let me hail and climb / golden in the heydays of his eyes." In this instance Time is a playmate and cheerful companion.
- In Stanza 2 the speaker states that "Time let me play and be / Golden in the mercy of his means." He was without care and his happiness was immeasurable when he was young and innocent.
- The fantasy that the child engaged in while on the farm aids the paradise state implied by the speaker. It is a timeless experience without any hint of loss, decay, or sadness.
- In Stanza 3 the speaker expounds on the wonders that seem so large and lovely when one is a child. He describes "the hay fields as high as a house, the tunes from the chimneys." At night when he would ride "to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away."
- However, at the end of Stanza 3 the child's symbolic sleep ends in a flashing light in the dark. This flash is the light of awareness and signals the loss of paradise, freedom, and innocent bliss.

STANZAS 4-6

- The waking child in Stanza 4 is symbolic of wakening into maturity. Like Adam and Eve, the child awakens after "the fall," or maturity, to a new world. Adam and Eve are people depicted in the Christian Bible. In the story of Genesis they are exiled from the Garden of Eden because they broke faith with God and their innocence was removed.

The adult world is not as carefree as that of childhood and the speaker experiences a sense of regret and loss as he moves from one to the other.

- Time has betrayed him. This betrayal is indicated by the placing of the cock on his shoulder. A cock is another name for a rooster and is an allusion to the betrayal of Jesus in the Christian faith. A rooster crows when Jesus is betrayed in the Bible.
- When the child awakens, he declares that it was like "Adam and maiden, / The sky gathered again." At this point in his life, the farm moves forward without him. He imagines "the spellbound horses walking warm / Out of the whinnying green stable."
- The speaker recalls with a stinging sense of regret and intense nostalgia that he was "in the sun born over and over / I ran my heedless ways" when he was young.
- The child has an awareness he never had before because he is now growing up. The fantasies he once engaged in as easily as breathing are difficult.
- He laments that "the children green and golden / Follow him out of grace." The use of the word "grace" indicates a fall from grace or innocence and suggests he has moved from a state of perfect union to an awareness of reality. The embrace of reality brings with it regret and a loss of freedom.
- The poem does not end on this sad note. The speaker suggests that it is possible to regain some of that peaceful freedom of childhood through creativity and thus Time does not erase everything.
- The speaker writes, "I should hear him fly with the high fields / And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land." He suggests that the loss of youth to time and reality can be recaptured in the same type of joy that comes from creating art.

QUOTES

1. *'I was young and easy under the apple boughs.'*
 - In the first lines of the poem, the speaker sets the tone for the first half of the poem. The speaker was carefree as a child and life seemed like an endless summer.
2. *'Time let me hail and climb / Golden in the heydays of his eyes.'*
 - Time is presented as a character who interacts with the speaker throughout his life.
 - The speaker suggests that Time allows him the chance to enjoy the freedom that comes with childhood.
 - This description casts Time in the role of guardian or as an authority figure.
3. *'And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves.'*
 - During his childhood days, the speaker was filled with a sense of empowerment and wonder.
 - His engagement with the natural world seemed as easy as breathing and believed that this way of life would go on forever.
4. *'Time let me play and be / Golden in the mercy of his means.'*
 - Time allows the speaker the chance to enjoy the bliss of an innocent child's paradise.
 - The speaker suggests that to have such a childhood is a mercy.
 - The remembrance of childhood bolsters him as an older man.

5. *'And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman.'*

- Thomas uses the colours green and gold to indicate youth and perspective.
- The child depicted in the first part of the poem believes that everything in his life is perfect.
- He can be anything he wants to be and go anywhere he wants to go without fear.

6. *'The sabbath rang slowly / In the pebbles of the holy streams.'*

- The entire world is a cathedral when the child is in his natural state.
- The child's memories depict the moments of his youth and his experiences with the natural world as holy.

7. *'All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars.'*

- The sound of the nightjars signals the beginning of maturity and a departure from the innocent state of a child.
- The nightjars are birds that sing at night and herald a change.

8. *'And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white.'*

- When the child wakes, the world seems different to him.
- He is like a wanderer on the farm and feels disconnected.

9. *'So it must have been after the birth of the simple light / In the first, spinning place.'*

- The speaker references the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve.
- This is a direct reference to the Christian Bible's story regarding Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden.
- The speaker writes that the new awareness of the world that a maturing child feels must be similar to the awareness that Adam and Eve had after they were dismissed from the Garden.

10. *'Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long.'*

- The nostalgic tone indicates the speaker's memories of his days on the farm as a child.
- He is moving toward acceptance of the loss of childhood's freedom.

11. *' So few and such morning songs / Before the children green and golden / Follow him out of grace.'*

- The entire message of the poem is summed up in a few lines.
- Childhood joy is fleeting and is all too soon gone.
- Children are depicted as green or golden to represent their youth, their tenderness and their golden innocence.

12. *'Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me.'*

- The speaker pauses for a moment to return to the memory of how it felt to be young and carefree.
- As a child the speaker did not think that life would ever be any different.
- The speaker uses the words "lamb white" to describe the pure innocence of childhood.

13. '*Nor that riding to sleep / I should hear him fly with the high fields.*'

- Maturity and the "chains" of adulthood came all too quickly for the speaker and the speaker laments the lost days of his youth.

14. '*And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.*'

- The speaker accepts that once childhood is left behind there is no going back unless the tool of creating is used.
- Only then can an individual tap into the joy and freedom experienced in childhood and even then, the joy is brief.

15. *Time held me green and dying / Though I sang in my chains like the sea.*

- The speaker has made his peace with the loss of freedom and accepts that it is the natural way of life. It does no good to fight it.

THEMES

1. NOSTALGIA

- The sense of nostalgia is intense in the poem "Fern Hill."
- The longing to return to a state of innocence and security is a common thread throughout the entire work.
- The speaker regrets that he had to grow up and leave a state of grace to embrace sadness, exile, and a separation from nature.
- He likens this separation to the fall from grace experienced by Adam and Eve in the Bible.
- The speaker looks back on his time at Fern Hill and realizes that he was very lucky to have had these experiences.
- He urges the reader to try and regain some part of what was lost.

2. TIME

- Time is presented as a character in "Fern Hill" as real as any other.
- In the context of this poem, Time acts as a playmate who allows the speaker to "hail and climb" in blissful ignorance of reality and the adult world.
- When the speaker is a child, Time works in his best interest. This alliance does not last because in the end Time eventually throws him out of paradise.
- The theme of Time revolves around the message that Time is always the one in control and everyone feels the loss of time when they reach maturity and enter the adult world.
- Instead of feeling free like he did when he was a child, the speaker now feels chained and weighed down by responsibilities.

3. THE PRESUMPTIVE NATURE OF THE YOUNG

- The wonders and joys of youth are represented as fleeting and the speaker suggests that there is a type of divinity that surrounds the innocence of this time in everyone's life.
- Time and maturity taint that innocence and bring regret.
- The speaker ponders that children do not appreciate what they have when they are young.

- Children are naive and do not often consider such weighty matters as life and death. Because of this naivete, the speaker calls childhood the most blissfully happy time in anyone's life.
- He is saddened that every child must inevitably come to realize that not every day will be happy.

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14. Golden in the mercy of his means,
15. And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
16. Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
17. And the sabbath rang slowly
18. In the pebbles of the holy streams.
19. All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
20. Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
21. And playing, lovely and watery
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23. And nightly under the simple stars
24. As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
25. All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
26. Flying with the ricks, and the horses
27. Flashing into the dark.
28. And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
29. With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
30. Shining, it was Adam and maiden,
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BACKGROUND

Dylan Thomas was born in Wales in 1914. He died in 1953. He left school at the age of 16 to pursue a literary career. He was famous for his original and lyrical poetry and radio broadcasts.

THE TITLE

This poem speaks of the beauty of an actual place named Fern Hill, where Thomas spent time as a child. It is essentially a reflection on his happy times at this place. It is certainly an autobiographical poem.

SUMMARY

- The speaker reflects on and celebrates the joy he experienced during his youth in the countryside. He reflects on the freedom he felt and the beauty that surrounded him. It is a nostalgic poem – the speaker, once an innocent child, is aware of his loss of innocence and fantasy freedom.
- In “Fern Hill,” Thomas presents an idyllic view of childhood on a farm, filled with vivid imagery which presents a child’s view of the world. This is contrasted in the final stanzas with the regret of the adult as he recalls the loss of the innocence and splendour of childhood.

FORM/STRUCTURE

- This poem consists of six stanzas, each comprising nine lines. There is a strict syllabic count in each line which is repeated in each stanza: 14,14,9,6,9,14,14,7,9.
- Despite the strict syllabic count/rhythm, there is no specific form to this poem. The poem is song-like in its rhythm. The poem can be divided into two parts: the first 3 stanzas are related to the poet’s experience as a child and the last 3 stanzas focus on the awakening in the child which signifies the loss of innocence.

STANZA 1

LINES 1-2

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs / About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,

- *Now* – The speaker is, as an adult, reflecting on his youth.
- *bough* – branch
- *easy* – carefree
- *lilting* – singing merrily
- *green* – associated with youth, innocence, inexperience and naivety, the child had no worries and no cares, hence the freedom he felt.
- The speaker describes his blissful delight when he was a child who enjoyed nature.
- He recalls how he enjoyed living in the arms of wild nature, playing under the apple trees.

LINES 3-4

The night above the dingle starry, / Time let me hail and climb

- *dingle* – valley with forests
- *starry* – the night sky was filled with stars. He focuses on its beauty as he is captured by its charm.
- Time is personified as a parent that allows him to do things. The reason for this freedom and happiness is that the child was not yet worried about time. Time is personified as the friend and ally of a child, unlike adults who are constantly pressed and tormented by time.

LINE 5-6

Golden in the heydays of his eyes, / And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns

- Gold has connotations of wealth and beauty and Autumn – leaves turning and sunlight and yellow flowers.
- Golden also has connotations of glory.
- *heydays* – Prime/best days. These precious childhood days are the golden times during which time was merciful and kind.
- *honoured among wagons* – he was honoured by all the inhabitants of the area
- He was the "prince of the apple towns" and the world of that farm was his dominion.
- Metaphor – compares himself to a prince. The metaphor continues in line 7.

LINES 7-9

And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves / Trail with daisies and barley / Down the rivers of the windfall light.

- Metaphor – Compares himself to a lord. This place made him feel like royalty.
- *Windfall* – an apple blown down from a tree or a large amount of money arriving unexpectedly (fortune/luck).
- Metaphor – Light is compared to a river filled with riches.

- The landscape around him is rich with flowers, fields of barley and rivers of light. It is indeed a paradise and he felt like he was a prince and a lord ruling this paradise.

STANZA 2

LINES 10-11

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns / About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home, /

- He continues to revisit his happy childhood in a series of flashbacks. He recalls how naïve, innocent and inexperienced he was then, but also how he lived without any worries or cares. As an adult, he thinks he was "green" as a child. Being naive or green is a small cost of being happy and carefree. Unlike children, adults are care-worn, unhappy and struggle daily to make ends meet.
- Instead of being famous world-wide, the child was famous among the barns where animals are kept and rural festivities were held.
- He is famous among country people and he is master of the animal world. Farm was home – he had a sense of belonging. Also, he was oblivious of the adult world.

LINES 12-14

In the sun that is young once only, / Time let me play and be / Golden in the mercy of his means,

- *the sun that is young once only* – Time is personified. We are all at the mercy of time because we cannot stop time.
- And as he was young, he felt everything around him was just as young including the sun under which he played freely and merrily. These times are a golden and precious gift that Time gave him out of its kindness and mercy.

LINES 15-16

And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves / Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,

- Metaphor – compares himself to a hunter and herdsman. The child imagines that he was the hero. Sometimes he was a huntsman blowing his horn, going after wild animals and foxes and hunting them the way first human beings did; other times he was a herdsman/shepherd tending his cattle.

LINES 17-18

And the sabbath rang slowly / In the pebbles of the holy streams.

- *sabbath* – Biblical allusion creates a mood of reverence (deep respect).
- *rang* – refers to church bells.
- *pebbles of the holy streams* – It is as if the very streams sing a song of praise to God (in the sound of the water running over the pebbles) in the beauty and glory of this rural childhood. He felt like worshipping in the temple of nature and the holy altar was the water stream whose pebbles noise felt like hymns in his ears.

STANZA 3

LINES 19-21

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay / Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air

- *Sun* – represents the passing of time. Note the unusual word order in line 19 which creates a personification
- The child is still speaking, gushing on his past memories. He is still that playing, innocent child who has no cares and no worries. The lovely sun is now running as autumn days are shorter.
- The harvest is done. The hay stacks stand in piles as high as house (Simile). The chimneys do not send smoke out in the air, but music that he liked.

LINES 22-24

And playing, lovely and watery / And fire green as grass. / And nightly under the simple stars His playing is never interrupted even when he was all drenched in rain and the days are cold. Even the fire looked green his eyes, like the green grass.

LINES 25-27

As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away, All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars / Flying with the ricks, and the horses / Flashing into the dark.

- As the child drifts off to sleep, he imagines that the entire farm is carried away into 'dreamland' by the owls whose call is heard in the night.
- He heard the singing of birds like the nightjars which made of the stable their homes. In the darkness, the farm is no less noisy than in the day and no less bright as he can see the eyes of horses flashing in the darkness and hear the singing and noises of night life. In short, he felt blessed, happy and free.
- At the end of Stanza 3, the child's symbolic sleep ends in a flashing light in the dark. This flash is the light of awareness and signals the loss of paradise, freedom, and innocent bliss.

STANZA 4

LINES 28-30

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white / With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all / Shining, it was Adam and maiden, /

- *And* – introduces a change. The waking child in Stanza 4 is symbolic of maturity. the farm, like a wanderer white – Personification. He wakes up to the sound of the rooster crowing.
- *With the dew* – time has passed. It is now winter. Winter is symbolic of the end of his childhood and innocence.
- *Shining* – the light of the morning sun reflects off the dew has settled on the leaves and ground.
- He feels that Time has betrayed him. This betrayal is indicated by the placing of the cock on his shoulder. A cock is another name for a rooster and is an allusion to the

betrayal of Jesus in the Christian faith. A rooster crows when Jesus is betrayed in the Bible.

- The reference to Adam and his maiden refers to the Garden of Eden and creation of Man. He suggests that his time at Fern Hill is comparable to Adam and Eve's time in the Garden before the loss of innocence. It is idyllic and beautiful and free. He was very happy there. The adult world is not as carefree as that of childhood and the speaker experiences a sense of regret and loss as he moves from one to the other.

LINES 31-33

The sky gathered again / And the sun grew round that very day. / So it must have been after the birth of the simple light the sun rises up in the sky.

- *sun grew round* – the sun was shining brightly that very day – he remembers this day as it was of great significance to him. Also symbolic of his growing up; he was no longer a child.
- *the birth of the simple light* – Birth of the world/the first light in Eden.

LINES 34-36

In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm / Out of the whinnying green stable / On to the fields of praise.

- *spinning place* – The Earth
- *the whinnying green stable* – Onomatopoeia – sound of horse. Brings the scene to life.
- As the sun shines, all creatures wake up to glorify nature and praise its beauty and abundance. The farm horses leave their stable with the birth of light and go to the fields to join the rest of the natural world in a prayer or hymn addressed to the farm. This creates a mood of reverence.

STANZA 5

LINES 37-38

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house / Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,

- He felt honoured/like royalty
- *pheasants* – a large bird with a rounded body and long tail, that spends a lot of time on the ground and is often shot for sport and food
- He felt as if the foxes, the pheasants and other animals were his friends and they loved him and honoured him as they wandered around the happy and merry house of Fern Hill.
- *Gay* – happy/playful. The house is personified to reflect how the child felt about the house. It was lively and happy and filled with merriment and joys.
- *new* – the birth of the world

LINES 39-40

In the sun born over and over, / I ran my heedless ways,

- The speaker recalls with a sense of regret and intense nostalgia that he was "in the sun born over and over / I ran my heedless ways" when he was young. He admits that he was "heedless" as a child and how the farm gave him all that he needed and made him feel complete.

LINES 41-43

My wishes raced through the house high hay / And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows / In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs

- His wishes seem to be fulfilled as quickly as the stacks of hay grew high in the house. The sun bathed him with its warmth and light and he felt free looking at the blue sky.
- *sky blue trades* – activities. He was too occupied to care that time was passing by and did not realise that his childhood paradise would end.
- He felt time is kind and loving and he could hear its morning music and singing.

LINES 44-45

Before the children green and golden / Follow him out of grace,

- *children green and golden* – children who were still young and naïve. They did not have any worry and were in complete harmony with time. The child-speaker talks proudly and happily about his adventures in Fern Hill farm.
- *grace* – indicates a fall from grace or innocence and suggests he has moved from a state of perfect union to an awareness of reality. The embrace of reality brings with it regret and a loss of freedom.
- *Follow him* – This is symbolic of Adam and Eve leaving Eden. His carefree world has been left behind.

STANZA 6

LINES 46-47

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me / Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,

- The speaker returns to the present. The child becomes an adult and leaves behind the innocence of his past.
- *Nothing I cared* – emphasises his complete freedom in his childhood.
- *lamb white days* – symbol of innocence and purity. Emphasises his carefree attitude as a child.
- *time would take me* – Time is personified. He is aware of Time even though he is unaware of anything else. Time is guiding him and leading him until he loses the carefree attitude of the child.
- *Up to the swallow thronged loft* – A high place full of swallows (birds).
- *shadow* – something negative/unpleasant is introduced.

LINES 48-51

In the moon that is always rising, / Nor that riding to sleep / I should hear him fly with the high fields / And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

- He felt that all nights are bright with the moon, which is always rising.
- *Nor that riding to sleep / I should hear him fly with the high fields* – Literally, even when he is going home after nightfall, he could hear the swallows flying high over the fields which are also high as they sit on the hill.
- Figuratively – How he goes to sleep without worries and without cares. All he thinks of is to wait for the morning so that he would have another playful and joyful day.
- *And wake to the farm forever fled* – Maturity and the "chains" of adulthood came all too quickly for the speaker and the speaker laments the lost days of his youth. He accepts that once childhood is left behind there is no going back unless the tool of creating is used. Only then can an individual tap into the joy and freedom experienced in childhood and even then, the joy is brief.

LINES 52-54

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means, / Time held me green and dying / Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

- *Oh* – A cry of regret, sorrow.
- This is the turning point at which the child-speaker disappears and adult steps in to tell us about the experience of waking up from the dream of childhood memories: the farm is longer crowded with the laughter and noise of playing children. It becomes "childless"; that is, barren and fallow.
- He starts to feel the sting of time and now time is longer kind or gentle, but is leading him to the end which the child was unaware of. Deep inside, he feels he is still that green, naive child, yearning to relive his childhood's pleasures. But he is no longer that child as he has lost his freedom and is now burdened with worries and cares. Time and experience have put him in bonds (chains) and he is their prisoner. The simile "like the sea" shows the vastness of his feelings, but also the depth of his despair.
- The lightness, ease and joys of the days of innocence are gone for ever, and never to return. In their place, the speaker, now an adult, is living through the harshness and hardships of the days of experience and awakening
- The use of the verb "sang" creates hope: The losses can be captured through his memories. The green and golden joy of childhood and the shadowy sorrow of maturity become the joy of art (poetry). In this manner, the loss to time is not total; it is possible to use art to recapture the happiness of innocent youth.

THEMES

- Childhood joy and innocence
 - this poem is at its core a celebration of childhood. The speaker was a happy and innocent child and part of a harmonious world. Children experience the specialness and harmony of the world through their freedom and, paradoxically, their security. They believe that they are safe to explore and experience joy. There are no severe restrictions and responsibilities on them.

- **Harmony and the Wonder of Nature –**

- The speaker's childhood joy is closely connected to playing outside. The poem suggests that real joy comes from a sense of connection with the natural world. To be young and innocent is to be one with nature. Nature is a place filled with wonder, peace and harmony. As the young speaker explored the landscape, the personified elements of Nature seemed to be his playmates. The speaker plays a role in the environment he visits - he is both hunter and shepherd. (He is not actually killing animals here.) His joy stems from the fact that he is a part of nature and the landscape, rather than apart from it. Adults are incapable of accessing the sense of peace and harmony that comes from being one with Nature.

- **Time –**

- throughout the poem, time looms like a godlike presence. Time grants the speaker a brief period of childhood happiness. However, time also ensures that nothing lasts forever and that childhood joys comes to an end. Time is ultimately an all-powerful and unstoppable force with ultimate control over humans.

- **The end of childhood grace –**

- the poem implies that when children grow up, they lost the 'grace' of childhood and its joys. The Christian concept of Grace is to experience God's love. For the speaker, childhood best represents such an experience, and the end of childhood is thus a painful, yet inevitable, fall from Grace. The references to the Garden of Eden parallels childhood as akin to the Garden of Eden. As people age, they lose their Grace, just like Adam and Eve lost theirs. Just as Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden, the speaker "wakes to the farm forever fled from the childless land". It is as if one day the speaker woke up, no longer a child, and all the happiness has disappeared from the world.

- **Nostalgia –**

- The sense of nostalgia is intense in the poem "Fern Hill." The longing to return to a state of innocence and security is a common thread throughout the entire work.

- **Regret associated with growing up**

- **The joys of childhood**

TONE

- A reflective tone throughout the poem. He indicates the transition from child to adult as well as the interactions with Time.
- The tone is joyful/fervent/emotional/ecstatic/rhapsodic: it is a hymn of praise to youth and innocence.
- In the final stanza the tone changes to one of melancholy at the lost and irretrievable days of childhood.
- Nostalgic

QUESTIONS

1. What does the speaker mean by "As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away" (line 24)? (2)
2. Describe the tone in the first four stanzas. (2)
3. Where and how does the tone alter? Explain your answer. (3)
4. What is the significance of the references to colours? (3)
5. Discuss what Thomas says about time in this poem. (2)
6. What realisation does the speaker have in line 51 when he says, "And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land"? (2)
7. How does the speaker suggest the beauty and innocence of the beginning of the world in stanza 4? (3)
8. What does this poem suggest about Thomas' view of the relationship between humankind and Nature? (2)

THE SHIPWRECK - EMILY DICKINSON

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- 1 Glee! The great storm is over!
- 2 Four have recovered the land;
- 3 Forty gone down together
- 4 Into the boiling sand.
- 5 Ring, for the scant salvation!
- 6 Toll, for the bonnie souls, --
- 7 Neighbour and friend and bridegroom,
- 8 Spinning upon the shoals!
- 9 How they will tell the shipwreck
- 10 When winter shakes the door,
- 11 Till the children ask, 'But the forty?
- 12 Did they come back no more?'
- 13 Then a silence suffuses the story,
- 14 And a softness the teller's eye;
- 15 And the children no further question,
- 16 And only the waves reply.

BACKGROUND

- Emily Dickenson was born in the United States of America in 1830. She died in 1886. She wrote close to 2000 poems but only 10 were published in her lifetime. She is deemed one of America's most important and influential poets.
- References to storms and shipwrecks appear in quite a few of Emily Dickinson's poems as ships were not as sturdy as they are today, and storm warning equipment did not exist.
- This is not surprising as news of shipwrecks, a common occurrence in those days, would have reached even those living far from the ocean. Also, classical poetry and literature is steeped in stories of shipwrecks – some which Dickinson herself would have read or heard as a child.

THE TITLE

The – tells the reader that this poem is about a specific shipwreck.

Shipwreck – implies a tragedy, usually involving the loss of lives, grief and mourning This sets the tone for the poem.

SUMMARY

- This poem is about an actual shipwreck in which 40 people lost their lives. The poem contrasts the joy at the survival of four people and the sorrow that 40 people died. It is this sorrow/loss that us the focus of stanzas three and four. The tale is told to children on a cold winter night. The speaker's sorrow is clear and there is no empty cliché offered as "only the waves reply".

FORM/STRUCTURE

- This poem has 4 stanzas of 4 lines each. It follows a strict rhyme pattern: abcb defe ghij jklk. It is close in form to a ballad but does not have the prerequisite refrain characteristic of this form.
- The first two stanzas focus on the positive news of the survival of four people. The last two stanzas focus on the grief of the loss of 40 lives.

STANZA 1

LINE 1

Glee! The great storm is over!

- *Glee!* – Joyous mood. There is reason to be very happy. This is emphasised by the !
- *Great* – alludes to a terrible storm.
- The great storm is over! – conveys a sense of relief. The ! emphasises that the people have something to celebrate.
- The first line is ironic. While the people are relieved that the storm is over, 40 people died as a result of this storm.

LINE 2

Four have recovered the land;

- *Recovered* – survived.
- There were 4 survivors. This small number of survivors implies that there were others who did not survive.
- *recovered the land* – They made it back to land/shore. They survived the shipwreck.

LINE 3

Forty gone down together

- *gone down* / Euphemism: died
- *together* – all them drowned.

LINE 4

Into the boiling sand.

- The “*boiling sand*” implies a very rough sea, with huge waves that it seemed to churn up the sand at the bottom of the sea.
- This emphasises the violent nature of the storm and shocks the reader.
- There is a complete change in the tone to that in line 1: celebration turns to grief, mourning.

STANZA 2

LINE 5

Ring, for the scant salvation!

- *Ring* – They ring the town bell to draw the attention of the people.
- *Scant* – very few
- *scant salvation!* – they are thankful that there were 4 survivors. The ! emphasises that very few survived.
- It also implies that they cannot really celebrate those who survived because it will be tainted by the loss of so many others.

LINE 6

Toll, for the bonnie souls, -

- *Toll* – refers to the ringing of the church bell. This is a funeral bell for the forty who drowned. This evokes the sound of a bell ringing slowly and repetitively, usually a sign that someone has died. This contrasts with line 5: ‘Ring!’ evokes the sound of bells ringing in celebration
- *bonnie* – beloved
- *souls* – emphasises their death
- The dash after souls provides a description of who died.

LINE 7

Neighbour and friend and bridegroom,

- This makes it personal – the deceased were members of the community who were known to all. Bridegroom increases the shock of their death. He had just started a new life. Also implies that his wife was one of the survivors. We cannot imagine her grief.

LINE 8

Spinning upon the shoals!

- *shoals!* – refers to a place where sea is shallow.
- *Spinning* – the people are being tossed around helplessly in the shallow waters.
- The irony is that they did not die in the middle of the ocean. They were close to the shore. However, the people had no control of their movement because of the extremely violent storm and the mountainous waves that sent them Spinning.
- This emphasises the fate of those who drowned. Leaves one feeling shocked.

STANZA 3

LINES 9 and 10

How they will tell the shipwreck.

- What explanation will they give

When winter shakes the door,

- Winter is associated with death. Literally, the personification refers the door shaking because of the cold and windy conditions. Figuratively, the personification refers to the death of the forty people; door is symbolic of their life.

LINE 11

Till the children ask, 'But the forty?'

- The initial celebration to offer thanks for the survival of the four will stop when children start asking questions.

LINE 12

Did they come back no more?'

- Emphasises that they could give the children a suitable explanation. The disbelief of the children is evident in this question:
- Are you sure that they will not return?

STANZA 4

LINE 13

Then a silence suffuses the story,

- When the children questioned what had happened, silence gradually spread (suffuse) among the adults as they could not offer any explanation that would help the children come to terms with their loss.
- There is a mournful tone at the loss of so many innocent people.

LINE 14

And a softness the teller's eye;

- This creates a sombre tone as the storyteller is reminded of the deaths and how they have all lost a love one.

LINE 15

And the children no further question,

- Children sense the difficulty of the adults.

no further question –

- implies that the children have understood that the forty have died. Their sorrow and grief cause them to stop asking questions.
- This emphasises the pathos (sense of pity).

LINE 16

And only the waves reply.

- This emphasises the silence of the adults and the children.
- There is no empty platitude (cliché saying) that will offer comfort.

THEMES

- Contrasts evident throughout:
 - Joy vs Grief
 - Celebration vs Mourning
 - Saved vs Lost
 - Living vs Death
 - the response to the loss of life.

TONE

- Grief
- Mourning
- death
- Stanza 3 and 4: sombre mood as focus is on the loss

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS: THE SHIPWRECK – Emily Dickinson

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Glossary:

Glee: happiness/celebration

Scant: limited

Toll: slow ring of a bell

Bonnie: lovely/good

Shoals: sandbanks/reef/shallow waters

Suffuses: spreads through

BIOGRAPHY: Emily Dickenson

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- This poem is about an actual shipwreck in which 40 people lost their lives. The poem contrasts the joy at the survival of four people and the sorrow that 40 people died.
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POETIC DEVICES

- Dickenson uses punctuation marks to emphasise feeling and tone. The exclamation marks create a celebratory tone in the first two stanzas.
- In the last line of stanza two, the exclamation mark highlights the sorrow caused by the deaths of so many people. This conveys the speaker's shock and distress.
- The dash in line 6 states an abrupt explanation of who the "bonnie souls" were – these people were known in the community and their loss is immense.
- Dickenson uses rhyme and rhythm (consistent use of syllables per line) to give the poem a regular "beat"/pace.
- It is almost lyrical.
- The ringing of the bells is both celebratory and mournful.
- The sibilant s in the last stanza emphasises the speaker's sadness as she is reminded of the lives lost in the shipwreck. This slows down the pace and creates an almost respectful silence

QUESTIONS

1. What is the effect of the exclamation marks in lines 1 and 5? How does this contrast to the exclamation mark used in line 8? (3)
2. What are the two reasons for "glee" in the opening lines? (2)
3. Explain what "recovered the land" means. (2)
4. Critically discuss the effectiveness of the imagery in "Forty gone down together/Into the boiling sand". (3)
5. Why would "scant salvation" be celebrated? (2)
6. Explain the two ways in which the bells ring in this poem. Quote in support of your answer. (4)
7. Identify and comment on the effectiveness of the figure of speech in "When winter shakes the door".
8. How does the final stanza evoke pathos? (3)
9. Discuss the effectiveness of the alliteration/sibilance in line 13.

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