

**GUIDELINES: ANSWERING QUESTIONS IN POETRY
ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE P2**

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

QUESTION TYPE 1: What impression... (2 marks)

- This is a LEVEL 3 question.
- You need to respond to the given information by making a judgement.

STEPS INVOLVED:

Step One: Analyse the identified words.

Step Two: Explain the response that these identified words evoke in you.

E.g. *What is your impression of your best friend?*

- Your response will take the form of an EVALUATION of his / her character.
- A typical response could be that he / she is a *sensitive* and a *perceptive* person.
- This conclusion will be based on observable actions.

APPLICATION

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>somewhere ... beyond / ee cummings.</i></p> <p>What impression of the speaker is created by the use of the word "<i>gladly</i>" (line 1)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The speaker is enthusiastic about, and open to the new possibilities in his life.</i> • <i>Although it is the unknown, the anticipation fills him with excitement.</i> • <i>He welcomes the thought of the adventure and looks forward to the experience.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the adjectives used to evaluate the speaker is based on the word 'gladly' • The word '<i>gladly</i>' presupposes enthusiasm, openness, excitement etc.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>The Zulu Girl / Roy Campbell</i></p> <p><i>Her body looms above him like a hill..."</i></p> <p>What impression is created about the mother in 'Her body looms above him'? (2)</p>	
<p><i>A Hard Frost / CD Lewis</i></p> <p><i>A frost came in the night and stole my world And left this changeling for it - a precocious Image of spring, too brilliant to be true:</i></p> <p>What impression about the place does the speaker create in the above words? (2)</p>	
<p><i>Felix Randal / GM Hopkins</i></p> <p><i>Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;</i></p> <p>What impression of the speaker is created by the above words? (2)</p>	

QUESTION TYPE 2: Comment on...

(3marks)

- This is a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 question.
- You are required to give an opinion (comment) on the value that the techniques such as diction, imagery, tone, etc adds to the poem.
- There are three steps involved in answering this question for you to achieve 3 marks.

STEPS INVOLVED:

Step One: Analyse the identified words.

Step Two: Deal with the technique mentioned in the question.

Step Three: Give your opinion (comment) on how this technique adds value to the poem.

E.g.: Comment on your friend's attitude towards figures of authority.

- Firstly, you have to describe the attitude of your friend and then you have to either approve or disapprove of your friend's attitude.
- Essentially a comment is your personal view based on a particular aspect / context.
- Your typical response will entail identifying your friend's attitude as either being respectful or rebellious towards authority
- This should be followed by a personal view for e.g. Is your friend correct in his / her attitude?

PRACTICE EXERCISES

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>A Hard Frost/ CD Lewis)</i></p> <p><i>'Mockery spring, to lend this bridal gear For a few hours to a raw country maid'</i></p> <p>Comment on the appropriateness of this image in the context of the poem. (3)</p>	

<p><i>The Garden of Love, by W Blake)</i></p> <p><i>'And I saw it was filled with graves, And tomb-stones where flowers should be And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds, And binding with briars, my joys and desires'</i></p> <p>Comment on the effect of the repetition of 'And' in these lines. (3)</p>	
<p><i>First Day After the War/M Kunene)</i></p> <p><i>'Then without waiting we ran to the open space Ululating to the mountains and the pathways Calling people from all the circles of the earth.'</i></p> <p>Comment on the tone of this stanza in relation to the title. (3)</p>	

QUESTION TYPE 3: Critically discuss / discuss...

(3 marks)

- This is a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 question.
- You are required you to examine an issue from various angles and make a judgement.
- '*Critically*' requires a deeper examination of the issue than the instruction 'Discuss' does.
- This is similar the instruction that asks you to comment on how techniques such as diction, imagery, tone, etc add to the poem.
- There are three steps involved in answering this question for you to achieve 3 marks.

STEPS INVOLVED

Step One: Analyse the words in the given lines.

Step Two: Deal with the technique mentioned in the question.

Step Three: Write a balanced view of the way in which this technique adds value to the poem.

APPLICATION

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p>Unseen poem: <i>Exodus</i> / Don MacLennan [February 2017]</p> <p>Refer to lines 17-20:</p> <p><i>'Skinny little birds of death thrown onto the huge savanna are eating out tonight in twilight crammed with manna.'</i></p> <p>Critically discuss how these lines convey the speaker's attitude toward the bats. (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Firstly, analyse the words in the lines (lines 17-20).• Then, deal with the instruction mentioned in the question (in this case, it is attitude).• Finally, write a balanced view about how this instruction (attitude) applies to / conveys the message of the given lines/poem.• In this instance, the descriptions/words show the speaker's negative attitude towards the bats.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>The Zulu Girl / Roy Campbell</i></p> <p><i>'A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder Unslings her child tormented by flies.'</i></p> <p>Critically discuss how these lines convey the speaker's attitude toward the Zulu girl. (3)</p>	
<p><i>Remember / C Rossetti</i></p> <p><i>Yet if you should forget me for a while And afterwards remember, do not grieve</i></p> <p>Discuss what the speaker's tone in these lines conveys about her attitude to her beloved. (3)</p>	

An African Thunderstorm / D Rubadiri

*'Pregnant clouds
Ride stately on its back,
Gathering to perch on hills
Like sinister dark wings.'*

**Discuss the appropriateness of the image in
these lines in the context of the poem. (3)**

QUESTION TYPE 4: What does the diction...

(2 marks or 3 marks)

- This is a Level 5 question.
- You are asked to respond to the writer's craft.
- Diction refers to the writer's choice of words.
- You have to explain WHY the speaker chose to use THESE PARTICULAR WORDS in the poem.
- Sometimes the word 'diction' is not used in the question, but the question asks for the REASON for the use of certain words.

STEPS INVOLVED

Step One:

- Identify the word(s) related to the instruction question.
- Underline/highlight them.

Step Two:

- Analyse the word/s you have identified in Step One by focussing on what is conveyed.

Step Three:

- Use the analysis of the word to elaborate on / answer the instruction in the question.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>An African Elegy / B Okri</i></p> <p><i>'That is why our music is so sweet'</i></p> <p>What does the diction in this line convey about the people mentioned in the poem? (2)</p>	
<p><i>Vultures / C Achebe</i></p> <p><i>'Full gorged they chose their roost keeping the hollowed remnant in easy range of cold telescopic eyes...'</i></p> <p>What does the word, 'cold' suggest about the speaker's view of the vultures? (2)</p>	

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>The Zulu Girl</i> / R Campbell</p> <p><i>'The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes The sullen dignity of their defeat.'</i></p> <p>Suggest a reason for the speaker's describing the dignity of the tribes as 'sullen'. (2)</p>	

QUESTION TYPE 5: Questions dealing with MOOD**(2 marks or 3 marks)**

- This is a Level 3 question.
- You are asked to arrive at a conclusion (mood) based on the words used in the poem.
- In poetry, mood depends on the way in which words create an atmosphere (e.g. of joy, sorrow, grimness, hopelessness, etc).
- You are required to understand how the words build an atmosphere/mood.

STEPS INVOLVED**Step One:** Analyse the word/s in the question.**Step Two:** Use the analysis to show how a particular ‘vibe’ (feeling) or atmosphere comes through in the line/stanza/poem. That is the mood.**APPLICATION**

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p>Unseen Poem: <i>Exodus</i>/ Don MacLennan {February 2017}</p> <p><i>‘By secret signal from a star a wild, erratic exodus of bats fountains into the silky air with delicate chewing sounds and squeaks’</i></p> <p>Refer to: ‘a wild, erratic exodus of bats’.</p> <p>Describe how this line contributes to the mood in the second stanza. (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, analyse the indicated words in the question, in relation to the poem (“a wild, erratic exodus of bats”). • Then, you use your analysis to formulate the mood or atmosphere created by those words.
NATIONAL MEMO	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These words indicate that the movements of the bats appear to be unpredictable and uncontrolled. • The air is alive/filled with various sounds associated with the bats (step one: analyse the words). • The mood is chaotic/frenzied because of the sudden activity of the bats as they leave the cave (step two: use your analysis to formulate the mood). 	

PRACTICE EXERCISES

POEM AND QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>First Day After the War / Mazisi Kunene</i></p> <p><i>Then without waiting we ran to the open space Ululating to the mountains and the pathways Calling people from all the circles of the earth.</i></p> <p>What does the word, 'Ululating' (line 7) indicate about the mood in the village? (2)</p>	
<p><i>Funeral Blues / WH Auden</i></p> <p><i>Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead Scribbling on the sky the message: 'He is Dead'. Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves, Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.</i></p> <p>Explain how these lines contribute to the mood of the poem. (2)</p>	

QUESTION TYPE: 6 Questions dealing with CENTRAL IDEA OF THE POEM (3 marks)

- This is a Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5 question.
- You are asked to relate the literary technique that the question has identified, to the central idea/message of the poem.

STEPS INVOLVED

Step One: Identify the literary technique in the question.

Step Two: Discuss this technique using evidence from the poem.

Step Three: Show how the technique captures the central idea/theme/message of the poem.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

POEM and QUESTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
<p><i>Remember / C Rossetti</i></p> <p><i>'Better by far you should forget and smile Than that you should remember and be sad.'</i></p> <p>Discuss how the tone of the rhyming couplet reinforces the central idea of the poem. (3)</p>	
<p><i>Somewhere ... travelled / e e cummings</i></p> <p><i>Nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals the power of your intense fragility: whose texture compels me with the colour of its countries, rendering death and forever with each breathing."</i></p> <p>Show how this stanza conveys the central idea of the poem. (3)</p>	

Felix Randal / GM Hopkin

*This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too
it endears.*

*My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had
quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix,
poor Felix Randal."*

**Discuss how the diction in this stanza
reinforces the central idea of the poem. (3)**

