An Anthology of Poetry for the Junior Cert

Notes by Ms Quinn
Bailieborough Community School
‘4 C Boy’ by Robert Morgan

He was passive, one of seven

With a subnormal gait and a confused Brain damaged by the evils of home And the mean cells of heredity.

His speech was slow, peculiar, Asthmatic, his face flushed With fear imposed by classmates In quiet corners of playgrounds.

His bitten fingers moved With spastic slowness, his glasses Pressed against his eyebrows And his fleshy ears stuck out Like two discs of pink plasticine.

Words on paper were strange Symbols for his dull eyes

And ripped thoughts. Painting

Was his only source of joy.

When he laboured on rich compositions His eyes glared over hoghaired Brush and sugar paper.

His work sparkled with colour; Fantasies from his imagination forced Black unending lines of tension

Around shimmering abstract shapes.

His paintings reminded me of a tropical Garden full of rainbows and birds Where the sun shone in lemon yellow Over a stream flowing with tears of despair.

ROBERT MORGAN
Advice to a Teenage Daughter

You have found a new war-game called Love.
Here on your dressing table stand arrayed
brave ranks of lipsticks
Brandishing swords of cherry pink and flame.
Behold the miniature armies of little jars
packed with the scented dynamite of flowers
see the deaded tweezers,
tiny pots
of manufactured moonlight,
stick-on stars.

Beware, my sweet;
Conquest may seem easy but you can’t compete with football,
motorcycles, cars,
cricket, computer games or a plate of chops.

Isobel Thrilling
In this poem Isobel Thrilling is concerned with the theme of adolescent love. She gives her teenage daughter advice on matters of the heart. She describes how her teenage daughter embraces the power and allure of her sexuality. She describes how her daughter has found a ‘new war game/Called love’.

She is aware of her allure to the opposite sex. Thrilling uses metaphorical language to portray this girl’s power over the opposite sex. This girl has ‘brave ranks on lipsticks/brandishing/swords of cherry pink and flame’ on her dressing table. The bottles of beauty products are metaphorically likened to ‘miniature armies of little jars’. The explosive power of these potions contain ‘scented dynamite of flowers’.

The first stanza is imbued with a tone of insouciance as the girl enjoys the process of titivation in order to make herself more alluring to the opposite sex. Wearing make-up is analogous to war paint. It is a tactic that the girl employs in order to make the opposite sex fall for her and so become her ‘conquest[s]’.

However, in the second stanza, the poet espouses a slightly more cautious tone ‘Beware, my sweet; conquests may seem easy’. Thrilling continues the metaphor of love as a ‘war-game’ when she says that the girl cannot ‘compete with football, motorcycles, cars, crickets, computer games or a plate of chops’.

Thrilling lists the things that will distract the boy’s attention and which the girl will have to fight against in order to gain the boy’s full attention. Love is indeed a ‘war-game’.
Back in the Playground Blues

I dreamed I was back in the playground, I was about four feet high
Yes dreamed I was back in the playground, standing about four feet high
Well the playground was three miles long and the playground was five miles wide

It was broken black tarmac with a high wire fence all around
Broken black dusty tarmac with a high wire fence running all around
And it had a special name to it, they called it The Killing Ground

Got a mother and a father, they’re one thousand years away
The rulers of The Killing Ground are coming out to play
Everybody thinking: ‘Who they going to play with today?’

Well you get it for being Jewish
And you get it for being black
Get it for being chicken
And you get it for fighting back
You get it for being big and fat
Get it for being small
Oh those who get it get it and get it
For any damn thing at all

Sometimes they take a beetle, tear off its six legs one by one
Beetle on its black back, rocking in the lunchtime sun
But a beetle can’t beg for more, a beetle’s not half the fun

I heard a deep voice talking, it had that iceberg sound
‘It prepares them for Life’ - but I have never found
Any place in my life worse than The Killing Ground

Adrian Mitchell
Notes on “Back in the Playground Blues” by Adrian Mitchell

In this poem, the poet Adrian Mitchell uses hyperbole (exaggeration for effect) to depict the brutality (cruelty) of the playground from the perspective (from their point-of-view) of a young vulnerable (weakness) child. In the opening stanza the poet makes reference to a lot of numerical (numbers) measurements. He describes how he was “standing about four feet high”. The playground was “three miles long and the playground was five miles wide”. The word “playground” effectively portrays the irony (the difference between appearance and reality) of what is in reality the “Killing Ground”.

We are told that the playground had “broken black tarmac with a high fence all around”. The second reference to the fence “a high fence running all around” portrays the playground in terms of a prison. It is a punitive (punishment) place rather than a place of fun and play. It is nicknamed or dubbed the “Killing Ground”.

The poet uses hyperbole (exaggeration for effect) to depict the child’s vulnerability (weakness): “Got a mother and a father, they’re a thousand miles away”

The playground bullies are sadistically (taking pleasure in other people’s pain) referred to as the “rulers of the killing ground” who are coming out to “play”. The fear that is aroused by these bullies is effectively delineated (shown) in the line: “Everyone thinking: who they going to play with today?”

Mitchell goes on to enumerate (lists) some of the reasons why people get picked on and bullied:
"You get it for being Jewish
You get it for being black
Get it for being chicken
Get it for fighting back
You get it for being big and fat
Get it for being small
O those who get it and get it
For any damn thing at all"

Mitchell describes the sadistic (taking pleasure in other's pain) brutality (cruelty) of these bullies in their treatment of a defenceless beetle. They pull off his six legs and set him rocking on his back in the lunchtime sun. However, the beetle cannot beg for mercy unlike some of their other victims: "But a beetle can't beg for mercy, a beetle's not half the fun".

The acquiescence (to accept without complaining/or doing anything about it) of this playground bullying and brutality (cruelty) is effectively evoked in the saying: prepares them for life”. However, the poet refutes (exposes this as false) this saying “I have never found/Any place in my life that's worse than the Killing Ground”
An extremely poignant poem that I have studied in relation to the theme of childhood is entitled ‘Child’ by Sylvia Plath. In this poem, Plath conjures up staccato images of ‘ducks’ and ‘zoo of the new’, ‘April snowdrop, Indian pipe’. These images refer to all of things that the poet would like her child to experience in her childhood. The poet imbues the first two stanzas with a sense of awe and wonder. This echoes the child’s sense of awe and wonder in the world as she experiences and learns new things. Plath portrays the child as the epitome of innocence and vulnerability using an interesting simile ‘stalk without wrinkle’. The poet insists that she wants this child to experience ‘grand and classical things’. However the last stanza of this poem underscores the deep sadness at the heart of this poem. The imagery of the last stanza is desolate and is indicative of the unhappiness of the speaker:

‘Not this troublous
Wringing of hands, this dark
Ceiling without a star’.

The last stanza of the poem effectively captures the mood of the poet, her tenseness, her world weariness. There is a resounding sense of futility and hopelessness in the last stanza. It is as if the speaker sees no way out of her troubles. There is no light at the end of the tunnel for this speaker. This contrasts sharply with the sense of magical hope and endless possibility evoked in stanzas one and two.
Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils

William Wordsworth
Possible themes- evocative imagery, nature, memories

Notes on “Daffodils” by William Wordsworth

The poet William Wordsworth found that nature provided him with a cathartic (therapeutic/healing) joy. Wordsworth appreciated the beauty of the natural world and this forms the inspiration behind many of his poems. In the poem "Daffodils", he begins by using a simile (comparison using the word like) from nature to depict his sense of loneliness and aimlessness.

"I wander’d lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills"

However, Wordsworth is quickly extricated (pulled out of) from his gloomy state of despair (sadness/depression) by the sight of "a host of golden daffodils".

Such a sight fills Wordsworth with joy and excitement. The poet uses personification (giving human qualities to an inhuman object) in order to depict the ebullient (excitable) beauty of the daffodils. Wordsworth describes them as "fluttering and dancing in the breeze". These flowers are iridescent (give off light). They are described as "golden" and they are "continuous as the stars that shine/ And twinkle on the Milky Way". The vivacity (liveliness/energetic) of these flowers is depicted in their "sprightly dance".

Wordsworth describes how they "out did the sparkling waves" of the lake beside them "in glee". The joviality (fun/happiness) of the daffodils and the iridescent (to give off light) imagery draw the poet out of his gloomy state as the poet states: "a poet could not but be gay". They are described as "jocund company".

In the final stanza of the poem, the poet describes how when he is lying on his couch in a "vacant or in pensive mood" how the brilliance of these flowers "flash upon that inward eye" and fills his heart with pleasure at the remembrance of such ebullient (lively/excitable) beauty.
Funeral Blues

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

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.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.
A poem that I have studied for my Junior Cert is called ‘Funeral Blues’ by W.H. Auden. This poem is about the death of someone special belonging to the poet.

This poem conveys a loving relationship that is **devastated** by death. The poet uses **hyperbole** (exaggeration for effect) in this poem to convey his sense of **grief** and **devastation**.

The poet feels **heart-broken**. In the first stanza of this poem the poet’s **devastation** is clearly evident as he wants everything to stop: ‘**Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone**’. In the second stanza he states ‘**Let the aeroplanes circle moaning overhead/Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead**’.
The use of the capital letters also convey **devastated** the poet is. This is a **catastrophe**, a **major crisis** in his life. In the third stanza, the poet conveys how important this person was to him. He states that ‘**He was North, my South, my East and West**’. This person gave the poet’s life **meaning, purpose** and **direction**.

His life **revolved** around this person. He states that he was his ‘**working week**’ and his ‘**Sunday rest**’, indicating that this person meant everything to the poet.

The poet is full of **despair**: ‘I thought that love would last forever; I was wrong’. The poet’s life is now **empty** and **meaningless**. The poet’s conveys this **meaningless** in the final stanza when he states ‘**The stars are not wanted now; put out every one**’. Life for the poet now is **meaningless**. The poet states ‘**For nothing now can come to any good**’. The poet is **devastated** and **heart-broken** because his friend is dead.
He Wished For The Cloths of Heavens

HAD I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

By W. B. Yeats
‘He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven’ by W.B Yeats

Themes:

Love

Dreams

Descriptive imagery/language

A poem that I have studied for my Junior Cert is called ‘He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven’ by W.B. Yeats. In this poem the poet wishes he could give his love one ‘heaven’s embroidered cloth’. We learn that these cloths are very beautiful. He describes them as being ‘enwrought with golden and silver light’. In other words, the poet wishes that he could give something special to the girl he loves. The poet declares that he would put this beautiful cloth under her feet: ‘I would spread the cloths under your feet’. However, we learn that the poet is unable to do this because he is poor and all he has to offer to this girl is the gift of himself and his dreams: ‘But I, being poor, have only my dreams; I have spread my dreams under your
feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams’. He begs her to be careful not to trample on his dreams and break his heart.
I do not think of you lying in the wet clay
Of a Monaghan graveyard; I see
You walking down a lane among the poplars
On your way to the station, or happily

Going to second Mass on summer Sunday-
You meet me and you say
‘Don’t forget to see about the cattle- ‘
Among your earthiest words the angels stray.

And I think of you walking along a headland
Of green oats in June,
So full of repose, so rich with life-
And I see us meeting at the end of a town

On a fair day by accident, after
The bargains are all made and we can walk
Together through the shops and stalls and markets
Free in the oriental streets of thought.

O you are not lying in the wet clay,
For it is a harvest evening now and we
Are piling up the ricks against the moonlight
And you smile up at us- eternally.
In this poem Kavanagh reminisces (looks back on) on the past as he remembers his mother. He asserts that he does not think of his mother lying dead in the wet clay of a Monaghan graveyard:

‘I do not think of you lying in the wet clay
Of a Monaghan graveyard’.

Through a series of staccato images, Kavanagh makes his mother come alive for us the reader. Through these staccato images we get a real sense of the vivacity Kavanagh’s mother exuded.

Kavanagh sees his mother ‘walking down the lane among the poplars/On your way to the station/Or happily/Going to second Mass on summer Sunday’. The poet’s use of enjambment here enhances our impression of this once vivacious woman.

Kavanagh employs colloquial language to enhance the realistic portrayal of his mother: ‘Don’t forget to see about the cattle/Among your earthiest words the angels stray’

In the third stanza, Kavanagh makes an analogy between nature and his mother. He evokes the visual image: ‘of a headland/Of green oats in June’. Both, in Kavanagh’s view are ‘so full of repose, so rich with life’.

In the fourth stanza Kavanagh delineates the intimate relationship between mother and son as they ‘walk/together through the shops and stalls and markets/Free in the oriental streets of thought’. Against this hustle and bustle of a busy fair day, mother and son can enjoy each other’s company. Talk is supererogatory (not needed).

The final stanza is a lament for his dead mother as the poet refuses to accept his mother’s death ‘O you are not lying in the wet clay’. He states that it ‘harvest time’ and emphasises the hardworking and diligent nature of his mother as he reflects that they should be ‘piling up the ricks against the moonlight’. Kavanagh delineates the maternal affection his mother had for him in the last poignant line: ‘and you smile up at us –eternally’.
"Nails" by Brendan Kennelly

The black ban exploded
Fifty yards from the hotel entrance.
Two men, one black-haired, the other red,
Had parked it there as though for a few moments
While they walked around the corner
Not noticing, it seemed, the children
In a single file behind their perky leader,
And certainly not seeing the van
Explode into the children's bodies.
Nails, nine inches long, lodged
In chest, ankle, thigh, buttock, shoulder, face.
The quickly-gathered crowd was outraged and shocked.
Some children were whole, others bits and pieces.
These blasted crucifixions are commonplace.

Brendan Kennelly
Notes on “Nails” by Brendan Kennelly

This poem describes the horrific atrocity (act of violence) of a nail bomb explosion as a result of sectarian (hatred of another because of their religious belief) trouble in Northern Ireland. The poem’s opening has a very detached (cold/aloof/cut off) succinct (short + to the point) tone:

"The van exploded
Fifty yards from the hotel entrance”

We are told how “Two men one black haired, the other red/ Had parked it there as though for a few moments/While they walked around the corner” as if they were going about their daily business and what they were about to do, was of no consequence (didn’t matter/had no consequences) at all.

We are told how these nondescript (nothing special/ordinary looking) men didn’t notice “the children/In a single file behind their perky leader”. These men did not witness their gruesome (horrible) handiwork, how the van exploded into the children’s bodies.

An eerie (creepy) atmosphere of foreboding (we know something bad is going to happen) is evoked (created) against the insouciant (carefree/relaxed/happy) image of the children engaging in some fun activity.

Kennelly adopts the same cold detached (cold/cut off/not emotional) tone as he did in the opening lines of the poem to describe the horror of the atrocity (act of violence/killing). “Nails, nine inches long, lodged/In chest, ankle, thigh, buttock, shoulder, face”. Kennelly’s succinct (short & to the point) use of imagery here evokes (creates/conjures up) the horror of such an atrocity (act of violence) as the reader can conjure up (summons up/creates/evokes) for themselves macabre (gruesome/horrific/awful) images of the injuries and deaths that must of incurred (happen/being acquired) due to the nail bomb explosion.
We are told how “quickly-gathered was outraged and shocked”. This is the response of the reader as we are told how “some children were whole, others bits and pieces”. The final line is an indictment (giving out about something) of not only the ordinariness of such atrocities (act of violence) but also how differing religious beliefs can contribute to such destructive violence:

“These blasted crucifixions are commonplace”
Overheard in County Sligo

I married a man from County Roscommon
and I live in the back of beyond
with a field of cows and a yard of hens
and six white geese on the pond.

At my door’s a square of yellow corn
caught up by its corners and shaken,
and the road runs down through the open gate
and freedom’s there for the taking.

I had thought to work on the Abbey stage
or have my name in a book,
to see my thought on the printed page,
or still the crowd with a look.

But I turn to fold the breakfast cloth
and to polish the lustre and brass,
to order and dust the tumbled rooms
and find my face in the glass.

I ought to feel I’m a happy woman
for I lie in the lap of the land,
but I married the man from County Roscommon
and I live at the back of beyond.

Gillian Clarke

Overheard in County Sligo—
themes—Nature/Describing a Person/Dreams/Sadness & Regret
A poem that I have studied for my Junior Cert is called ‘Overheard in County Sligo’ by Gillian Clarke. This poem describes a woman ‘married a man from County Roscommon’ and lives ‘at the back of beyond’. The woman describes the country setting as being very beautiful. She is surrounded by a field of cows and a yard of hens and six white geese on the pond. At her door there is a ‘square of golden corn’.

It sounds idyllic. However as we read the poem, we learn that this woman is not happy as she herself says ‘I ought to feel I’m a happy woman for I lie in the lap of the land’. The use of the word ‘ought’ implies that she is not happy. We learn that this woman dreamed of being an actress and hoped to ‘work on the Abbey stage’.

She also dreamed of being a famous writer. However, she has ended up a housewife and is left to ‘polish the luster and brass’ and all the other household chores.

She feels unfulfilled by her life. She is depressed as she gets no fulfilment from her life despite the fact that she lives in the beautiful and idyllic ‘lap of the land’. She is full of regret. She feels trapped by her marriage.

She feels resentful of the country and describes it as the ‘back of beyond’. She doesn’t like how rural and isolated it is. She feels isolated by her isolated surroundings.
The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

By William Butler Yeats
“The Lake Isle of Innisfree” by William Butler Yeats

Yeats wrote this poem whilst he was living in London and was feeling very homesick. In this poem he expresses strong desire to return home: “I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree”. Yeats’ sense of longing is emphasised in the repetition of the word “go”. The next seven lines of the poem go on to delineate (describe in words) the lake isle of Innisfree as a sort of utopian (perfect world) retreat. Yeats describes how he will live in a “small cabin” made of “clay and wattle”. He will have “nine beans rows” and a “hive for the honey bee”. He asserts that he will “live alone in the bee-loud glade”. In other words, he will live a life of quiet sufficiency (independence/won’t need anyone else/he’ll have all he will need)

The second stanza inadvertently (indirectly) depicts Yeats’ world-weariness (he’s fed up with life). He longs for peace and solitude (quiet/on his own). He makes the assertion (declaration/statement) that he “shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow”. He describes the natural healing beauty of the place using both visual (seeing images) and aural imagery (hearing images). We are made to see the “midnight’s all a glimmer and noon a purple glow” and hear the “crickets sing”.

In the final stanza he repeats the opening line which has almost become a refrain (chorus) indicative of Yeats’ longing to return home: “I will arise and go now”. He uses the aural image of the “lake water lapping” to transport us to this utopian (adj. pertaining to a perfect world) paradise. His sense of longing and homesickness is exacerbated by London’s urbanity: “While I stand on the roadway, or pavement grey/I hear it in the deep heart’s core.”
Those Winter Sundays

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

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

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.

What did I know, what did I know
of love’s austere and lonely offices?
‘Those Winter Sundays’ by Robert Hayden

Possible themes:

Family

Relationships

Memories

Childhood

A poem that I have studied for my Junior Cert is called ‘Those Winter Sundays’ by Robert Hayden. The poet reflects on his memory of his father. The poet describes his father as a hardworking man who never took it easy even on Sundays:

‘Sundays too my father got up and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,

And then with cracked hands that ached from labour in the weekday weather made banked fires blaze’.

The poet tells us how his father would wake him only when the house was nice and warm:
'When the rooms were warm, he’d call'

The poet also describes how he would fear the ‘chronic angers’ of the house. This conveys that the poet’s father was a very strict and perhaps angry man. However, the poet realises that ‘No one ever thanked him’. The poet feels bad that he took his father for granted. He knows that he failed to appreciate his father.

His father was a very good and caring father to him. He always ensured that his son got up to a nice warm fire blazing downstairs and that his shoes were polished for going to church.

‘Speaking indifferently to him who had driven out the cold and polished my shoes as well’.

The phrase ‘speaking indifferently to him’ conveys that the poet couldn’t even be bothered to speak to his father in a friendly manner even though his father had been up all morning doing little things for his son. The poet now feels regret. This is evident in the line: ‘What did I know, what did I know of love’s austere and lonely offices?’
The **use of repetition** here conveys the poet’s anger at himself for taking his father for granted.

He did not appreciate his father. He did not appreciate all the little things his father did for him. He did not appreciate how hard life was his father on his own bringing up a small child. The poet now feels guilty and regrets that he took his father for granted. He was not grateful to his father when he was young but now that he is grown up and has gained some life experience, he realises that he was wrong not to have been more grateful towards his father.
When asked to discuss your reasons for liking a poem, you could discuss the following points:

1. **Universal themes of significance:**

   For example:
   Love/war/nature/sickness/health/school/joy/sadness/suffering/fear/dreams/childhood/peace/conflict etc.

   Sample answer:

   I really enjoyed the poem ‘The Choosing’ by Liz Lockhead. I felt that I could really empathise with the theme friendship. **This theme has universal significance.** In this poem Liz Lockhead delineates the intimate friendship between two girls and how it changes with the inexorable march of time. I **felt that I could really empathise with poem** as I too have experienced something similar when I made the transition from primary school to secondary school. **This poem resonated personally with me and really struck a chord with me.** Its theme I suspect has relevance for many young readers in my class. Also this poem is concerned with the theme of momentous life choices that shape one’s life. I thought this theme was **extremely thought-provoking** as I find myself in a stage in my life whereby I am faced with many decisions of importance like making the right subject choices, whether or not to do transition year etc.

2. **Evocative Imagery**

   Sample answer:

   Robert Morgan’s uses imagery with **great bravura** in the poem ‘4C Boy’. The imagery conjured up by the poet **really appealed** to me. The poet’s use of imagery that appeals to the senses is not only **very effective** but also very striking. As the famous **Greek poet Simonides** quoted: ‘Painting is silent poetry, poetry is eloquent painting’. This is particularly true of this poem whereby Morgan uses **visual, aural and tactile imagery in order to evoke a sense of realism and suffering.** I found the visual imagery to describe the ‘4C boy’ as a social anomaly **extremely effective:**

   ‘He was passive, one of seven
   With subnormal gait, and a confused
   Brain damaged by the evils of home
   And the mean cells of heredity’.

   'Why I liked this poem' Notes compiled by Ms. Quinn © 2010
I thought the aural image to depict the boy’s suffering to be very apt (effective):

‘Words on paper were strange
Symbols for his dull eyes
And ripped thoughts’.

I enjoyed the tactile image used to depict the boy’s cathartic (healing) release from his misery. The ‘4C boy’ gains catharsis from his suffering and misery by painting exotic utopias:

‘Fantasies from his imagination forced
Black unending lines of tension
Around shimmering abstract shapes’

I thought this was very apt as painting is a physical activity that one does using their hands. This tactile image shows the conflict that exists in this poor boy’s life.

3. Poetic Techniques

I think R. Southey’s ‘December’ is written with great bravura. His use of personification is extremely interesting and effective in its portrayal of both the positive and negative aspects of the winter season. This Petrarchan sonnet delineates the negative aspects of the winter season- the barrenness, the bleakness and desolation in the octet. The poet conjures up images of winter as a ‘wrinkled crabbed man’ with a ‘rugged beard as grey/As the long moss upon the apple tree’. Winter is delineated as having a ‘blue-lipt, an ice drop at thy sharp blue nose’. The sestet delineates the more sanguine and positive aspects of winter time- the hospitality of people, story-telling, blazing fires etc. The warm images of the hearth have a communal aspect as individuals ‘circled by them as lips declare/Some merry jest, or tale of murder dire’. The fire that is referred to twice in the poem acts as a focal point of comfort and snugness around which individuals tell stories or enjoy themselves in ‘some merry jest’. I also enjoyed the alliteration in this poem which gives the poem a beautiful musical quality and adds to the momentum of the poem: ‘high-heap’t hearth’.

*** Can referred to any of the poetic terms on the handout entitled ‘Poetic Jargon/Terminology’

For a 15 marks question, candidates must refer to all three factors

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