

'That Old Rope' - Crib/Revision Sheet

In answering examination questions on the poems in this section, you need to have a clear view about what **you** think they mean. The following notes are suggestions and ideas, but you must not use these unless you fully understand and support them.

You will need to be able to talk about the poems' meaning (message) and how they work as poems (medium). In doing so, try to use some of the following key words:

**relationships emotions parents children tensions anxiety care protection
love imagery language metaphor tone structure rhyme rhythm**

Exam questions on these poems will ask you to make links and comparisons and some of the following key words and phrases will help you to structure your answers accordingly:

compare link however alternatively on the other hand similarities differences

One of the most important things to do is structure your answer. You will demonstrate this clearly by writing in paragraphs. If the question you were answering was to do with discussing how these poems look at caring relationships, you need to structure your answer. For example

1st paragraph (introduction): *The poems 'Lullaby', 'Nettles' and 'Upon My Son Samuel his Going for England, Novem.6,1657' are all poems which explore ways in which both parents and their children demonstrate how much they love and want to protect one another.....*

2nd paragraph (start with one poem): *'Lullaby' is an interesting poem because it is actually about a child expressing their desire to protect their parents.....This is interesting because we normally expect the parent to do the protecting and this role reversal.....The poem covers the ages of the child from birth to adulthood....In the first stanza.....'Lullaby' has a conversational style and this simple language makes it read as if.....*

NB You should always establish the context/story of the poem you are discussing before going on to explore it in detail

3rd paragraph (introduce a poem for comparison): *The poem 'Nettles' is similar in the way that it is about protection, but it differs because this represents the more conventional parents' view.....In this poem a boy has been stung by nettles and the father goes out to cut these down in his anger at the attack....This poem uses the symbol of the nettles to represent anything that can harm the son.....The formal language and strong rhyming make this a more obviously poetic piece when compared with 'Lullaby'. Whilst 'Lullaby' sounds as if someone is speaking the lines, 'Nettles' has a more organised and structured presentation.....*

4th paragraph (another poem - don't forget a pre-twentieth century example): *'Upon My Son Samuel his Going for England, Novem.6,1657' is again about a parent's protective feelings towards their child. However, this poem introduces a third partner in this relationship.....*

Within all of this and any further paragraphs, you need to be talking about each poem in detail. You must support points that you make by briefly quoting examples. For example:

'Nettles' uses many military words to stress the anger the father feels and his battle with the nettles, for example, 'green spears', 'regiment of spite' and 'fierce parade';

'Lullaby' repeats the phrase 'Go to sleep, Mum' to link with the idea of a lullaby. The repetition of the phrase 'I won't' is meant to be reassuring;

The final metaphor in 'Catrin' sums up how the poem is exploring the fragility of the parent/child relationship:

'As you ask may you skate
In the dark, for one more hour'

Remember the ladder of response: **identification, explanation, exploration**. Put very simply, this means:

You can **identify** that a poem is about a parent protecting a child (D-ish grade).

You can **explain** that the parent's protection is a response to being angered by an attack on the child (C-ish grade).

You can **explore** the way the poet uses the metaphor of nettles to represent this attack and then sustains this with other military words (B-ish grade).

OR

You can **identify** that a poem is conversational in style.

You can **explain** how this is conveyed through the language sounding as if someone is speaking directly to the reader (give an example).

You can **explore** how this adds realism to the message of the poem because as readers we can identify with the spoken voice. It encourages us to believe that this is real as we are not being made to unravel and think about complex images (not that using images is a bad thing!).

Most people can identify features of a poem. You must always try to at least explain these and then explore their purpose and effect. When making comparisons, get beyond just identifying links. Explore how differences and similarities are meant to work and to affect you as a reader.

Simple things: put poems in single quotation marks and use capital letters. If you don't do this it is very irritating - and it's so simple to remember and do! 'Nettles', 'Lullaby' etc.