

Irish Literature at GCSE - SEG
English 2400
English Literature 2495

Crossing the Irish Sea

C. Examples of students' work

By

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Parents and children

A literary tradition in Irish poetry

Throughout the years, how have poets sought to explore the relationship between parents and children?

NB: Throughout the students' work has, as far as possible, been re-produced as written with no attempt to correct grammar, spelling or style, and with the teacher's comments. Corrections to make the sense clear are given in square brackets.

Ian Ormesher

Over the years, poets have explored the relationship between parents and children.

In Wordsworth, an English poet's work entitled: "Anecdote for Fathers," he describes how he and his foster son were out walking one day at Liswyn Farm. He remembers a place where they used to live and asks the boy which place he preferred - "Now tell me had you rather be,"

*I said and took him by the arm,
On Kilve's smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm?"*

The boy replied that he would rather be at Kilve than there at Liswyn farm, despite the beauty of his surroundings. When asked why this was, he replied "I cannot tell, I do not know." The poet pressed him for an answer and the answer was "At Kilve there was no weather-cock;

And that's the reason why."

The poet felt that he could never want better knowledge if he could teach even a tiny amount from what he learns from the child's innocent honesty:

*"O dearest, dearest boy! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn. "*

William Wordsworth used the famous line "*the child is father to the man*" in his poem, "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold." The poet feels that his childhood and adulthood are linked by the feeling he gets in his heart when he sees a rainbow. This means that although he has grown up into a man, he can still feel the excitement he felt when he saw a rainbow as a child. When he was young, he appreciated the beautiful sights that nature had to offer.

He hopes that he is still pleased by such sights when he grows old "*or let me die!*" he exclaims in the poem. He wants each day of his life to be joined together by a natural religious devotion to nature which is not bound by uniform religions and so in his mind it brings him closer to Heaven and the his surroundings.

The line "*the child is father to the man*" describes how the roles of parent and child can be reversed because of how the child's innocence has a lot to teach adults. Some poets think that this is because, as adults, we take much more of the world around us for granted.

This is described in the poem, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" also by William Wordsworth, the poet writes about how he used to see things when he was a child and how, as he has grown older, he is less impressed with nature and his surroundings because he has been forced into a mould by the adult world. This relates to how the relationship between child and parent is different as they both age, with the child becoming more like the adult but then the parent becomes elderly and dependent.

The first stanza ends with the words "*The things which I have seen I now can see no more,*" which is quite a gloomy way to end it. This is because the line is describing how he can no longer appreciate nature as he did when he was younger because he has been transformed from innocence to a world of adult pretences.

He describes our birth as being "*but a sleep and a forgetting,*" which means

? that when we are born we leave God, our home, "*trailing clouds of glory*," meaning that we are still of Heaven but the clouds soon disappear.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy," ~~which~~ means that we still are a part of Heaven for a time when we are young but this is soon lost. I think that the youth "*still is Nature's Priest*" because when we are young we can still remember heaven, and God's glory and so are in a position to preach of nature as Christian Priests preach of Christianity.

✓ The theme of the "*child being father to the man*," is described in other poems as well as those by William Wordsworth. In the poem entitled "The House," the poet, Howard Wright, writes about his grandfather who, after the death of his wife, spends his time drinking and gambling. The poet describes how he could lift his grandfather with one hand and carry him "like a raincoat" over his arm. The relationship between Howard Wright and his grandfather since the death of his grandmother has changed because he now feels that he has to look after his grandfather more and so their roles are gradually reversing as he and his grandfather grow older.

✓ Another good example of the child being "*father to the man*," is "Follower," a poem by the Irishman, Seamus Heaney. He writes of how father used to work the horse plough and work in the fields and how as a child, he would follow him around and describes how he would stumble and fall behind him, generally being a nuisance - "*tripping, falling, yapping always*." The poet was "yapping" to illustrate how irritating he must have been to his father because the word is almost onomatopoeic. At the end of the poem he says that it is his father's footsteps of being a farmer, but became a poet which was not a traditional profession. He describes how the roles of the parent and of the child can be gradually reversed until the parent is dependent on the

Another poem by Seamus Heaney which explores the parent-child relationship is "Digging." This poem is about a family tradition of forming which the poet does not carry on. This is ironic because the relationship here between parent and child is very different to most as the son has decided to give up family life and start a new tradition of his own. The poet uses the simile "*snug as a gun*," to describe his pen at the start of the poem because the pen can be much more powerful than a gun could as it can draw up many images of war and violence and I think that the simile refers indirectly to the violence that exists in Ireland. It is snug as a gun because it is in his hands in place of a gun, The poet is not fighting, he is writing. This is often an oblique reference in Irish poetry as the violence in Ireland is often a big influence on poets. The phrase also contrasts starkly with the agricultural images of his ancestors, The pen is seen as a machine which is very different to the simple tool used by his ^?.

Not just these

✓ We can tell that Heaney admires his father's skill because he uses the phrase "*By God, the old man could handle a spade*." This shows the writer's appreciation and respect for his father's agricultural talent even though he himself has not followed in his foot steps.

✓ **Good** There is something mechanical in the way that Heaney's father works and this shown by the way his actions are described - "*Stooping in rhythm through potato drills*." The 'rhythm' and the 'drills' suggest a mechanical and repeated action.

Although he is a poet, Heaney feels linked to his father and his grandfather because although he says that he has "*no spade to follow men like them*," he

**Name
of
poem?**
✓

feels that his pen is his spade and that he can carry on the tradition by writing poetry and says of his pen - "I'll dig with it."

Another poet who writes about continuing a part of their ancestry which they feel is important is F.R. Higgins who writes of his father and how he has handled his death. The poet is walking in the 'hushed' fields of his home town and remembered how he and his father last walked there together.

The phrase "*the shadowed leadened flight of a heron*" creates a slow and serious atmosphere. The poet describes how he became upset when he thought of that last week in the fields by saying that he went, "*unmanly with grief.*" I think that this means that he cried and acted stereotypically like a woman, or how he expected women but not men to act, as females show their emotions more than men do.

In the fourth stanza, he uses the metaphor "*whose mind was a secret eyrie,*" and this description of his mind being like an eagle's nest is linked to the line, "*whose kind hand was sole signet of his race.*" "Signet" is used in two ways - firstly as in a signet ring, a symbol of his race and also as in a cygnet - a young swan which links with "eyrie" and also makes his father appear as a handsome swan, graceful, ~~swan~~ among his kind. This means that the poet was the only child of his father who, although was quite strict, loved him more and more up until "*Death drew its grey blind down his face.*"

✓✓✓
good

Death is personified in the the poem and I think that the grey blind is a good image to use because it describes how death can suddenly happen, like a blind being pulled down, and the light is shut out and death is often associated with darkness. His father was a farmer - we know this because of the line "*and naming colts, gusty as wind, once steered by his hand.*"

Irish poets have explored the relationship between child and parent and Wordsworth's theory that "*the child is father to the man*" is portrayed in the poems written by other Irish poets. They also show how the child does not always appreciate their parents until they are dead and the poems, for me, demonstrate just how strong the parent-child link is and how, as well as parents teaching their children, they also have a lot to learn from them.

The relationship between parent and child is a strong and ever-changing link. At birth, the child is dependent on the parents and as it grows older, it looks up to them and begins to imitate their actions. It learns to lie, it learns to take its surroundings for granted, it learns how to make its own way in the world, away from nature and its apparently blunt (but always honest) ways.

When its parents become old, the child learns not to be the cared for but the carer, and cares for its parents just as its own children will one day care for it. I feel that throughout the years, poets have sought to explore the relationship between parent and child and, in doing so, have also explored the circle of everyone's life.

✓

21/25

Super comments on 'Father & Son'. You show analytical skill especially in your consideration of each poet's exploitation of language.

Dan Lea

Poets throughout the years have tried to explore the mystical bond between parents and children. One man who wrote numerous poems about this link was William Wordsworth. In his poem "My Heart Leaps When I Behold" he wrote the famous line:

"The child is father to the man"

✓ By this he meant that adults have a lot to learn from children. Children are often unafraid to share their thoughts and feelings, while adults keep them bottled up inside in an effort to be polite. Children seem to be curious about everything and are willing to learn, as we grow older this curiosity fades and we lose touch with nature. Children also appreciate the small things in life, this is illustrated in Wordsworth's poem "Anecdote for Fathers."

In it a man is walking with his son on Liswyn Farm, he asks the boy which place he prefers- Liswyn Farm or back home in Kilve. Liswyn Farm has woods and trees while Kilve has a smooth shore and a green sea. The boy over looks the consideration of the surroundings as they are both equally beautiful, but he does make a choice:

*"A t Kilves I d rather be
Than here at Liswyn Farm."*

*"At Kilve there was no weather cock;
and that's the reason why."*

*"O dearest, dearest boy!
my heart for better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
of what from thee I learn."*

The boy has obviously been forced into a decision that he does not want to make, as he gives a stupid reason for his choice.

Wordsworth's claim that the child is father to the man is shown here, as the man says that his heart would not yearn if he could teach a hundredth of what he learns from his son. The man wants to learn from his son how to treat things the same despite their differences, for example black and white children play happily together oblivious to how racist their parents may be. Children are prepared to overcome the differences they have and this is something that adults should re-learn.

In another of Wordsworth's poems, entitled "Imitations of

immortality from recollections of early childhood" he writes:

*"But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy."*

Wordsworth writes about a prison closing in on the boy this 'Prison' represents the boy growing up. As a baby the boy come from heaven and is pure, but as he grows older his views become oppressed. As he learns to be polite his real feelings and views are locked away, as if in a prison.

*"The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel s till is natures pries t.
And by vision splendid
Is on his way attended
At length the man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common days."*

Wordsworth writes about the youth coming from the east, which is the direction from which the sun rises, so he is suggesting that it is the child that brings brightness to the day. The youth is described as nature's priest as though he is the one who can understand and relate to nature and it is he who must spread the word of nature and in a way try to get others to understand the splendour of nature.

"At length he perceives it die away. "

This is the man's (the boy as he has grown older) thought of the world fading, he is no longer curious about the world.

"And fade in to the light of day."

The light that the boy had once brought has faded due to his growing older and the decline of his curiosity.

✓ The poem illustrates that as children we think The best of things but we lose this as we get older and are unable to see the qualities of of nature. We get too used to things and take them for granted. As children we are thought to be connected to heaven, but this connection is weakened due to age and increased responsibilities.

"Follower" is a poem written by Seamus Heaney, it is about a boy (the poet) who follows his father around their farm, admiring the way he ploughs and how hard he works. He makes it sound as though he annoyed his father by following him about. The poem is written with a sort of droning beat, which goes nicely with the fathers plodding as he ploughs the fields.

"I was a nuisance, tripping, falling

*Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
behind me, and will not go away."*

✓
Good

It is now the father who follows his son, as he is now old and weak and requires the help and support of his son to get by. This links nicely with Wordsworth's claim that the child is father to the man because now the child is acting like a father to the man.

Another of Heaney's poems is "Digging". It is about how well his father digs:

*"By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man"
"My Grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog."*

Had he

Heaney shows that digging (or farming) is the family 'trade' as it were, and it is he who broke this tradition by becoming a poet. Heaney had written in other poems of his father's disapproval of him becoming a poet. Heaney wrote that his pen is "snug as a gun" as it is his weapon or tool that he requires for his trade.

*"Between finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it"*

With this Heaney illustrates how poetry to him is like digging to his father and Grandfather.

'The house' by Howard Wright supports the idea of the child being father to the man:

*"My Grandfather was so frail
that when bloothered
after a Saturday session
in the bookies and McConville's
I could lift him with one hand and carry him
like a raincoat over my arm,
and just as easily hang him
against the side of the house
until I found his keys."*

✓

This poem is about how the poet's Granddad would go out and get bloothered (dialect word for drunk). The poet would have to carry his Grandfather home and prop him up outside his house. Wright took care of his Granddad and acted as a sort of father figure to him.

Really? As you can see poets often write about their parents. I feel that they do this in order to come to terms with their death. Poetry acts as a 'painkiller' to them. It helps them remember the good and bad things about their parents. The poets seem as though they did not really like their parents when they were around, and it isn't until they have passed away that they fully appreciate them.

A- 20/25 ***You are able to analyse the philosophical and social issues surrounding the poems.***

Kevin Ryan

? Poets throughout the years / sought to explore the relationship between parents and children. There are some common factors to be found in their approaches but they all had their own individual views. Here I am going to find some of the common features that poetic minds have as well as their different ways of presenting their poetry and the approach of their parent, child relationship.

A poem by William Wordsworth that is called 'Intimations of immortality'. Here he describes childhood as how he remembers it. He then goes on to compare how life is as a child to how it is as an adult.

He writes about how as we grow older we tend to lose our innocence. Wordsworth believes that when you are born you live closer to nature than when you are older as you lose contact with nature and be further away from God.

He also compares our life to that of the sun that as we are born we are in the east where the sun rises and our lives move slowly until we die down in the west.

✓ In your older part of life, each day becomes a struggle and life starts to be a cycle. Events seem to come up more often such as weddings and funerals. This causes us to lose our memory of happier times of childhood.

Some of this poem I agree with as when you are young you are nature's child. As you grow older many grow to live further away from nature. 'Youth is still nature's priest.' By this I believe he means the youths are the spiritual agents of nature.

✓ John Montague is a modern poet who also wrote about his father and their relationship in the form of a poem called the cage. His father is one of the many Irish men who moved home from Ireland to Brooklyn, New York in the United States of America.

As many people were He was one who was moving to America for a fresh start and a place of hope in a modern area of the world. In the poem Ireland comes across as a pleasant place which is mainly countryside and there is very much a culture shock as New York is very grey and depressing. There are lots of tall buildings and busy roads which are different to the country lanes and cottages in Ireland.

Really? When he was working in Brooklyn he worked on a subway and the poet uses onomatopoeia, 'listening to a subway shudder.' He calls these last years for his father in the sense of 'listening to a subway shudder' and that he drank a lot of whiskey 'until he felt like brute oblivion,' he felt like nothing. This links in with his job, underground and away from street life, nothing. His father tried to show to everyone that he was enjoying living in America by 'extending his smile to all sides of the good non-negro.)' His father thought that a non negro neighbourhood is best because people in Ireland are white. He was most likely to be racist.

? With the poet being his son he knew that his father was happier when he was home in Ireland walking through fields and hedges. I believe that the poem was given the name of 'the cage' as he had to sit behind the bars of the ticket booth every day as if there was no way out and no meaning to life. His dream of happiness in life by moving to America was shattered and it was only the whisky that reminded him of Ireland, the pleasant countryside where life is slower and easier. America was too fast and in the end was too hard work and each year was the same, just like Wordsworth describes in intimations of immortality.

John Montague wrote another poem this time about his uncle and how his migration to Brooklyn affected his life. He writes about his uncle's passion of music and playing his fiddle. He was a well known man, a favourite at local events in Ireland such as at the barn and cross roads dance.

Good When he left for the new world he left his chances and time of playing his fiddle in a 'disgrace'. He never played after setting sail as art was what people did in Brooklyn not music.

In his life in Ireland he was an owner and runner of racehorses but in his work in America he ran a wild speakeasy. I think he found life in America hard as in the second line of the first stanza, 'my uncle played the fiddle more elegantly than the violin.' Also

Sentence
structure
patterns
✓

being a runner of racehorse shows his uncle was elegant in all he did whether it be playing his fiddle or making a horse look it's best. This is different to his life in America where he 'ran a wild speakeasy.' The word wild is perhaps not what he was expecting when he left Ireland, it was a wild change he didn't need. The rest of that line reads, 'and died of it.' The wild part of his new life took too much out of him and killed him. The drink have reminded him of home but that would also. have taken it's toll.

✓ Good

Stanza six of the poem could be seen as a metaphor. Here he is describing what has happened to his fiddle, he says the bridge fell away, the catgut snapped. As the fiddle has disintegrated so has his uncle's life. The poet could also be referring to a bridge in a song connecting verse to chorus, this has fallen away.

I have included this poem even though it is not a parent child relationship because it is obvious that the two are close. There is a link that can be made from the story of his father and the life of his uncle. He believes that there moves to Brooklyn from Ireland ruined their lives. His father's love for the countryside and his uncle's for the fiddle but neither were ever found in America. Life was to be fast for both and repetitive especially for his father, where he was stuck behind bars in the ticket booth. It is obvious to the reader that the poet and his family were all in love with Ireland and all to do with it, you can tell that he misses his relationship with his father very much.

A poem by William Wordsworth called, 'My heart leaps up when I behold.' This poem gives a different view to life to what happened in the poems written by John Montague. Here he suggests that he will be positive and enjoy life.

The line that hits you most as a reader is near the end of the poem where Wordsworth describes, 'The child is father to the man.' I think that here the poet means that when you are a child you are more natural, you are more original than when you move into adulthood. As an infant you have tremendous potential but as you grow older and see more of the world we all eventually end up being the same, you quickly begin to imitate according to intimations.

The poet links his childhood to adulthood in his poem by using a rainbow, 'A rainbow in the sky, so was it when my fife began. so is it now I am a man.' By this he means even though he has grown up there are things that are still the same in life. It will still be there for the rest of life as well. When he writes my heart leaps up when I behold he is describing the leap from being a child to an adult. It is also a leap in the different views and attitudes to life.

Another poem on the relationship between father and son is written by Wordsworth in, 'Anecdote for fathers.' Wordsworth is actually fostering the child. Here he switches the attention from when he was a boy to his current relationship with his fostered son Edward who is five.

The son gives a strange reply to a question his father asked, 'now tell me, had you rather be on kilve's smooth shore or here at liswyn farm.' The father assumed that the child would say the farm due to the poet would have chosen that as a child. The child gave the answer that he would, 'rather be at kilve by the green sea, this is because there is no weather cock at Kilve.' This weird reply shows the mind of a child. I think the link between the weather cock and the child could be that they are always changing direction in mood, thoughts and what they like or dislike. They are constantly changing. The child had already realised he'd said the 'wrong' answer before he told his father why as the poet says the child was embarrassed. The child often answers the first thing that comes into their head.

The poet seemed pleased with the child's answer as it shows the child with a different view from his own that each child is different. The poet wishes to teach others what he learnt from the child. I think it is hard for an adult to learn from a child as often they don't make sense so it's hard to understand their thinking.

All the poets have their own views on relationships between parents and children. William Wordsworth loves children and wishes his adulthood was like his childhood.

Most poets base their views on what they can remember of their childhood, so each poet has a different story to tell. My favourite poem was 'The cage' as it shows how much the poet misses his father after the split to Brooklyn ruined both of their lives.

B
19/25

Some problems with sentence structure and punctuation but you do analyse each poem's implications and language quite sensitively.

Thomas O'Boyle

The poets who write on this theme of "Parents and children" usually write about their relationship with one of their parents, usually their father but also occasionally their mother. Some children think their parents to be good, that they deserve gratitude or respect. Others show that children have a lot to teach adults, such as Wordsworth's "Anecdote for fathers". There are also many other themes that are written about.

✓
Good

"Intimations of immortality from Recollections of early Childhood" by Wordsworth suggests that that children see the world in full colour, unlike adults, the writer says "The earth and every common sight to me did seem apparelled in celestial light." This shows that, as a young boy, the poet saw everything, and his brain interpreted it as if it was all new, perfect, as if God had just created it. Now that he is older, he considers things he previously thought to be special, things that merited consideration to be commonplace, and takes the natural beauty surrounding him for granted.

The next poem I looked at is also by Wordsworth, it being "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold". This is only a short poem. In the poem he seems to be still almost enchanted by such simple beauties as "a rainbow in the sky", in the way that a young child thinks of many things, taking less of nature for granted than older people do.

The same poet's "Anecdote for Fathers" involves a conversation between his adopted son and himself. He seems to be saying that children have a lot to teach adults, but he does not specify what. The first stanza gives the impression of the boy as beautiful; "his limbs are cast in beauty's mould". The man thinks it strange that the son, in the penultimate stanza, would rather live in their old house at Kilve, near the sea, for the reason that "at Kilve there was no weathercock". To me this shows that children's brains work differently to those that adults have, that they come to decisions that often seem surprising to an adult mind.

The next poem that I have looked at is "The Cage" by John Montague. The first two lines of this poem are "My father, The least happy man I have known." These two lines, I feel, set the mood for the whole poem. The poet here paints a picture of sadness, I feel, setting the mood for the whole poem. The poet here paints a much drearier picture of his father than the majority of the poets do with their parents. The fifth line, "The lost years in Brooklyn" suggests that he wasted his time there. The line, in the second stanza, "drank neat whiskey until he reached the only element he felt at home in any more, brute oblivion", suggests that he considers himself to be in the wrong place, that the only place he now belonged was nothingness, oblivion. In the third stanza, however, the poet shows a different side to the man's character; "extending his smile to all sides of the good (non-Negro) neighbourhood" This shows that he did not spend all of his time in dismal underground places, or in drink, but also could be a respectable person, although he did have racist opinions.

The penultimate stanza provides a description of an area of Ireland, portraying it as a beautiful land, but even so they were not happy, as one might suppose, "for when weary Odysseus returns, Telemachus must leave". Here the poet quotes characters from Greek mythology: Odysseus is a character who

Explain

travels around the world, but when he returns, his son, Telemachus must leave as there is not room for them both.

In the last stanza, the poet takes the poem back underground, into a subway ticket office. The line “I see his bald head behind the bars of the small booth” is metaphoric, suggesting that he is a prisoner in jail, the “bars” being those of his cell, imprisoning him in the small ticket office.

✓ In the poem, the poet uses a lot of harsh, strong vocabulary, such as, in the third stanza, “brute oblivion” This is much more powerful a phrase than if the poet had just said “nothingness”

Generally, this poem has no rhyme or regular rhythm, relying for its effect entirely on the large numbers of strong words that are put into it, and this vocabulary is usually denser and more powerful than that found in an optimistic poem such as Wordsworth’s “my heart leaps up when I behold”

✓ Paula Meehan’s “My Father Perceived as a vision of St. Francis” shows a much happier father, indeed portraying him as a saint. It is divided into three uneven stanzas. The first two of these stanzas set the scene for the unveiling of the father as a saint. The poet was still at home, and it was so early in the morning that there were “still stars in the west” Everyone in the area except the poet and her father were asleep. It was late autumn, a frosty morning. The poet then describes the frailties her father has acquired - “and for the first time I saw the stoop in his shoulder, I saw that his leg was stiff.” The third stanza starts describing all the birds flying in from the area, then going on to describe the father again, but this time he is a man in his prime: “made whole, young again”

The imagery that the poet uses paints bold pictures in the mind; in the last stanza in particular, the poet describes her father as a saint. The lines

“The sun cleared
O’Reilly’s children
and he was suddenly radiant,
a perfect vision of St. Francis
made whole, young again
in a fínglas garden”

The poet here is packing the lines with description, the phrases “radiant”, “a perfect vision of Saint Francis” and “made whole, young again” all paint a glorious picture of the father, as a saint, at the prime of his life. The image of birds flying in is, I think, used as St. Francis is the patron saint of animals, including birds.

In the second stanza, the poet puts rich descriptions of the late autumn morning, then going on to describe the frail old man. The lines “the first frosts whitened the slates of the estate” and then, two lines later, “his hair was completely silver” both have an image of paleness contained within them; the old man is portrayed as being a part of the cold winter’s morning. The poet does not, I think, use such powerful imagery as is used in the vocabulary chosen for “The Cage”, but more, I think than Wordsworth’s “My heart leaps up when I behold”

The poem “Digging” by Seamus Heaney describes the poet in his room, with his father digging in a flowerbed below his window. The poet is thinking about his ancestors, but, at the same time, he is not going to follow in the footsteps they have trodden for many generations, possibly for as long as there have been

people in the country.

*Is it a
flowerbed?*

The first stanza outlines the situation that the poet is in; he is holding a pen, “snug as a gun”. This phrase could be hinting at the troubles in northern Ireland, which have been going on since the British attacked Ireland over 100 years ago. The following few stanzas show the father digging in the flowerbed, and in the third stanza, he “comes up twenty years away, stooping through potato drills”. This serves to remind us that Ireland is mainly an agricultural nation and was so even more in the recent past. also, virtually the entire population lived on the staple crop of potatoes, and as they also had to grow their entire supply themselves, so they put an effort into growing them as their life literally depended upon it. The third stanza describes the digging itself, the father “buried the bright edge [of the spade] deep”. The brightness shows that the spade was well looked after and much used; the blade is clean, free from dirt or mud as it is well maintained, and it is also rust free as any rust that does manage to form is quickly rubbed off by the soil during the digging. The poet's father then “scatters the new potatoes” and the poet and the rest of the family are “loving their cool hardness in our hands” The freshly dug potatoes are, of course, cool as they have only just been dug, and they are also hard as they are turgid, full of juices and goodness. The next stanza, an extremely short one, is;

✓

“by God the man could handle a spade
just like his old man”

✓

I think the poet does this to allow it to sink in; his ancestors were as good at digging as anyone, and that is all that needs to be said. In the next stanza the spotlight shifts to the poet's grandfather, and the last two lines “he straightened up to drink it then fell to right away”

✓

portray the Irish as a hardworking nation, not the stereotypical stupid, lazy nation many people think them to be. The grandfather consumed his refreshment and then he immediately got down to his digging, not wasting time or resting for a few minutes like many people would.

!

The next, antipenultimate stanza, provides more detail of the poet's grandfather being good at digging; “nicking and slicing neatly”. It then says, however, “heaving sods over his shoulder”, showing that, although he was good at this job, he still found it hard work.

The next, penultimate stanza, the poet contemplates his own life- “but I've got no spade to follow men like them”. Summing up the whole position, he is breaking away, he is different to his ancestors, and is following a different path to that taken by his ancestors.

?

I find that the most powerful of all these poems is “The Cage” as it is full of interesting vocabulary, to a greater extent than the others. Also, it is largely a negative poem. This makes it stand out like a sore thumb among the other poems, all of which are optimistic ones.

18/25

You have analysed the implications of each poem effectively. Well done.

The elegy

A literary tradition in Irish poetry

Explore ways in which poets on both sides of the Irish Sea write elegies. Consider elegies written for ordinary people as well as those written for famous people.

An elegy is a poem written for a person after their death. However, this is a simplistic view, because elegies have been used by both Irish and English poets to perform other tasks: to pose questions, to make an apt social comment, or to comment on the finality of death.

An early English elegy is *Lycidas*, by John Milton (1608 - 1674). Written in 1637, *Lycidas* is used to lament the passing of Milton's friend Lycidas, who was drowned in the Irish Sea after leaving from Chester. Milton uses the poem to mourn Lycidas' untimely, unexpected death: "*For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime, Young Lycidas, and hath not his peer*"

Lycidas was written by Milton for another reason. The poem makes clear Milton's opinions on the clergy, and priests in particular, who, at that time in England, were largely corrupt. Many elegies since *Lycidas* have surreptitiously commented on current events at the time the elegy was written, e.g. *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* by W.H. Auden.

Thomas Gray wrote *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1751, whilst reflecting upon the graveyard at Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire. His elegy, in contrast to *Lycidas*, is a calm, subdued elegy, which reflects on unfulfilled potential and the nature of death. Gray introduces a solemn, peaceful mood in the first stanza:

✓
"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."

He introduces the calm, reflective mood of the poem by using words which describe slow, unchanging rhythm like *tolls*, *lowing*, *plods* and *weary*. The initial mood perhaps reflects how quickly life passes without us noticing, and the people he goes on to describe fell victim to life's deceptive speed.

Gray emphasises the finality of death in later stanzas, e.g. in the sixth stanza:

✓
"For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share"

✓ Good
This stanza is distinctly depressing: Gray changes the mood to one of morbid reflection, and perhaps in this stanza forces the reader to confront his own mortality. Many of us today cannot conceive of our lives ending; we are far too busy! However, Gray tells us in this stanza that death is an end to everything, a theme later summarised chasteningly in stanza nine:

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave"

Gray continues his reflective, morbid mood into stanza eleven, where he questions the relevance of traditional death rituals:

"Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,

✓

Or Flatt'ry sooth the dull cold ear of Death?"

Gray personifies Honour and Flatt'ry, and uses the metaphor of the dead body as a mansion. He also uses weather, specifically the cold, to create a morbid mood. .

However, the main theme of *Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard* is to question the unfulfilled potential of the people lying under Gray's feet. It is not an elegy for a specific person, but for normal people whose lives were unremarkable:

✓

*"Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre"*

With this stanza, Gray muses about what these people could have become if their circumstances at birth had been less lowly. He uses the powerful metaphor of an unseen flower in bloom to describe the people in the grave who were "born to blush unseen":

*"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."*

Gray later comments that, perhaps all these people can hope for after death is to be remembered fondly. He also turns his attention to the reader, hoping that somebody will remember the reader after his death:

✓

*"For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate"*

Gray ends his piece with a reflective epitaph on one particular person's simple life. It is an appropriate end for the poem, because The Epitaph sums up the simplistic and innocent nature of the person's life, as expressed throughout the poem. It emphasises the simple pleasure the person gained from life: "*He gain'd from heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend*" Gray ends the epitaph with a simple truthful statement reminiscent of "*The paths of glory lead but to the grave*" earlier on the poem. He tells the reader that it would be inappropriate to flatter the person after death or to insult him - both these factors have been considered by god, and now the person is *with* god:

*"No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his father and his god"*

A common theme throughout many elegies is to ask why a loved one was taken, and why fate couldn't have intervened to save them. This is seen both in *Lycidas* and William Wordsworth's *Elegiac Stanzas*. From *Lycidas*:

✓
“Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos’d o’er the head of your lov’d Lycidas”

And from *Elegiac Stanzas*, where Wordsworth uses the metaphor of a buzzard to describe fate:

“Oh! could he on that woeful night
Have lent his wing, my Brother dear.
For one poor moment’s space to Thee,
And all who struggled with the Sea,
When safety was so near.”

In the middle of *Elegiac Stanzas*, Wordsworth makes a conclusion that frightens me.

✓
“The meek, the brave, the good, was gone;
He who had been our living John
Was nothing but a name”

Here, Wordsworth shows us that despite our great personalities, and despite our endearing attributes during life, death humbles us all: we are *all* reduced to a name. This echoes Gray’s earlier conclusion: “*The paths of glory lead but to the grave*” The two poets show us that death humbles us all.

It is a common literary tradition for a poet to write an elegy for a fellow poet who wrote an elegy. One such pairing is Seamus Heaney’s *Elegy*, written for Robert Lowell, an American poet. Lowell wrote an elegy called *The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket*, which he wrote for Warren Winslow, an American seaman who was lost at sea. Lowell’s elegy is a powerful, violent piece. Its style could not be more different from Gray’s ordered, reflective Elegy *Written In A Country Graveyard*.

Graveyard
‘We grappled at the net
With the coiled, hurdling muscles of his thighs:
The corpse was bloodless, a botch of reds and whites,
It’s open, staring eyes
Were lustreless dead-lights”

Lowell uses powerful words like *coiled, hurdling, bloodless* to portray the true horror of a slow death, whereas Gray, in his elegy, almost makes the people in the graveyard sound as if they were sleeping peacefully, and not dead.

In Lowell’s poem, the dead person is, in essence, no longer a person, he’s a *corpse, an it*. Unlike Gray, Lowell does not afford his dead person any dignity: the corpse is described fully, with the intention to “scare” the reader. Lowell uses colours as imagery in his piece also: earlier on in the piece he describes some anatomy: “*Light flashed from his matted head and marble feet*” The idea of *marble* gives the reader an impression of grey and white together; beautiful, but cold and lifeless.

Another theme used in Lowell’s poem and in *Lycidas* is the idea of *Orpheus*. Orpheus is a character in Greek mythology who brought his wife Eurydice back from the afterlife by playing his lute: he is a symbol of coming back to life. However, Lowell uses the Orphean image for opposite effect in the line “*Ask for no*

Orphean lute to pluck life back’, emphasising the finality of death. Milton uses the Orphean legend in *Lycidas* too.

After Lowell’s death in 1977, Seamus Heaney wrote an elegy for the poet. In *Elegy*, Heaney emphasises the way Lowell was unafraid to use powerful language and images in his (often disturbing) poetry. The following stanzas emphasise this attitude:

“*here where we all sat
ten days ago, with you,
the master elegist,
and welder of English*“

“*As you Englished Russian,
as you bullied out
heart - hammering sonnets
of love for Harriet*“

In a style quite different from that of Wordsworth or Gray, Heaney uses several powerful images in *Elegy* to demonstrate his attitude to Lowell’s poetry. The metaphor *welder of english* portrays Lowell as a strong man, unafraid to command his language, making it do what he wanted it to do, to great effect. This image is later continued in the line “*as you bullied out heart - hammering sonnets of love for Harriet*“, which also portrays Lowell as a man who put together dangerous, powerful poetry, unmindful of the status quo. This is true - *The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket* is certainly a powerful poem, demonstrative of Lowell’s aggressive approach to the English language.

Another ‘elegy pair’ similar to that between Lowell and Heaney is that between W.B. Yeats and W.H. Auden. In 1918, W.B Yeats wrote the elegy “*In Memory of Major Robert Gregory*” Robert Gregory was the son of one of Yeats’ closest friends, Lady Gregory. Yeats makes it clear at the beginning of the piece that he is in a morbid mood; he is thinking of all his friends who have died during his lifetime.

✓
“*Discoverers of forgotten truth
Or mere companions of my youth,
All, all are in my thoughts to-night being dead*”

✓ Good
The last part of this section: *being dead*, is a powerful choice of words. It is unusual for a poet to be so honest and blunt about his thoughts. In my opinion, the word ‘dead’ is almost used as an onomatopoeia. The state of death is not exotic or graceful ... it is simply a truth. The short, emphasised word ‘dead’ emphasises the finality of death and gives great effect.

In Stanzas 3, 4, and 5 of *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory*, Yeats ‘discusses the attributes of three of his friends. First, Lionel Johnson, a fellow poet, who “*loved his learning better than mankind*” Next, John Synge, a playwright, who had a “*passionate and simple*” heart, and finally, George Pollexfen, Yeats’ uncle, who was a “*muscular youth well known to Mayo men*“

In the next stanza, Yeats tells us the point of describing these three men: “*I am accustomed to their lack of breath*” By saying this, Yeats is showing the reader that these men ‘had a good innings’, lived their lives to the full, and died probably as old

men. It serves to make the next line so powerful: *“But not that dear friend’s dear son, Our Sidney and our perfect man”* In this line, Yeats shows that, unlike his friends Johnson, Synge and Pollexfen, Major Gregory was taken as a young man, in his prime, well before his time. He describes Gregory as ‘Our Sidney’, in reference to Philip Sidney, an Elizabethan soldier and author who died at the age of 32 in battle. It is a powerful comparison, showing Yeats’ opinion that the deceased still had long to live, and died too young.

Yeats then points out Major Gregory’s attributes: his intelligence, and how he excelled in woodwork and metalwork *“As though he had done but that one trade alone”*

The whole mood of the piece is of untimely death and unfulfilled potential. A parallel can be drawn between this piece and *Elegy Written In A Country Graveyard*. Both these poems describe unfulfilled potential and missed opportunities, the only difference being that Gray talks about many people, whereas Yeats focuses on the individual: Major Robert Gregory.

After Yeats’ death in 1939, W.H Auden wrote a potent elegy for him. Entitled *In Memory of W.B Yeats (d. 1939)*, Auden creates a mood of cold death at the beginning of the poem, set, appropriately, in *“the dead of winter”* He uses powerful weather-related metaphors to create a morbid, frozen mood to his poem: *“the brooks were frozen”* and *“snow disfigured the public statues”* are two fine examples. At the end of the first stanza, he uses a strong line, punctuated with the hard ‘d’ sound: *“The day of his death was a dark, cold day”* The alliteration used in this line (which is repeated later in the poem) makes me think of a heavy door closing on a tomb which will never be reopened: it emphasises the sheer misery caused by the great poet’s death.

Auden uses the metaphor of a city to describe Yeats’ body during it’s final hours: *“the provinces of his body revolted, the squares of his mind were empty, silence invaded the suburbs”* This is a sad line. To me, it demonstrates how Yeats’ great mind had been emptied, his great intelligence and love for poetry forgotten: death left him, an empty shell.

Auden also comments on how, perhaps, Yeats’ poetry has rendered him immortal: *“Now he is scattered among a hundred cities”* By achieving fame, and having his poetry read throughout the world, perhaps he lives on. However, Auden then comments on how *“the words of the dead man are modified in the guts of the living”*

This line is double-edged. Auden used the word ‘guts’. He might have used the word ‘heart’, which would have been a much more pleasant image, but instead, he chose guts. By doing this, he is implying that Yeats’ words are interpreted and reinterpreted until they are changed beyond all recognition. Yet, perhaps he is implying that, even after his death, Yeats’ poetry is doing good. What comes from the guts nourishes people, and so maybe, in the same way, Yeats’ words still nourish people today.

As seen in *Lycidas*, Auden then makes a social comment about the divide between rich and poor:

*“When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the Bourse
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed”*

Auden then makes a cynical comment on the nature of poetry:

“For poetry makes nothing happen“

This line is cynical considering who the author is and about whom he writes, but Auden later juxtaposes another idea which contradicts this cynical viewpoint: *“a way of happening, a mouth”* He uses the metaphor of a mouth to show how poetry can be a way of communicating.

In a dynamic change to the poem’s metre, Auden changes the poem’s rhythm to several four-lined rhyming stanzas. This appears to ‘speed up’ the poem, and almost force Auden’s ideas across to the reader. In these stanzas, he hints at the theme of war, not in Ireland but all over the world:

***“In the nightmare of the dark,
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate”***

The underlying message to these stanza’s is: let poetry into your life. If you are suffering, let it help. In particular, the fifth stanza emphasises the change from bad to good that poetry brings about:

***“With the farming of a verse,
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess,
In a rapture of distress”***

Auden uses several effective juxtapositions to emphasise how bad things may be transformed: e.g. *vineyard* and *curse*, *sing* and *unsuccess*, and *rapture* and *distress*. He also has a message for all fellow poets: *“with your unconstraining voice, still persuade us to rejoice”*

Auden terminates his elegy for Yeats with a simple message of how man could start turning his misery into something positive:

***“In the deserts of the heart,
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise”***

✓ Auden’s poem is powerful because it begins on a dark, depressing note, but ends in the opposite mood. It is a fitting elegy for Yeats.

I have shown Elegies to be a tool for commemoration or dramatisation. I have two particular favourites, *A Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket* by Robert Lowell and *Elegy Written in A Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray. I like them both because they both show the fundamental ideas our society has in death about general. Lowell’s piece shows us the reality of death, the sheer terror, emptiness and finality of death. It reminds us that, whatever opinion we may have of ourselves in life, our death may be ugly, seedy, and thoroughly undignified. This is the side of death we prefer to hide from: the darker side that we rarely acknowledge. Warren Winslow, once a *he*, now an *it*, has been made an example of to show us this perverted side

of death.

By contrast, Gray chooses to sooth his reader. He lures us almost into a false sense of security, making us picture a peaceful graveyard full of simple folk. There is none of the violent enraged power we get a glimpse of in Lowell's poem here - Gray is pointing out that death is life's only true constant, not something to be afraid of. To Gray, death is a peaceful state, in which our only hope could be to be remembered by others after we are gone.

*Heaney
and Yeats?*

Lowell's piece scares me. Gray's piece soothes me. Both pieces enthrall me in their contrasting portraits of death. However, when I die, I am unsure who I would want to commemorate my passing. Lowell would portray my long, painful, nasty death, but he would also afford me a small dignity, as he does Warren Winslow. Gray would shoe my death as peaceful, a sleeping state, but I am unsure I would like to be one of his *inglorious Miltons*, whose lives passed them by.

✓ *True*

My elegy would emphasis how life *can* pass you by, but how it can also be seized and made use of. Like all of the elegies described in the essay, it would be a suitably-tailored piece, appropriate for me alone.

25/25

An excellent piece, full of sensitive analysis of each poet's verse craft. A delight to read

Avneet Singh Thind

An elegy is a poem, which is written to mourn the death of a person, whom the writer has loved or admired. Elegies often contain details of the Deceased's life and also the reasons that they will be missed and how the world or lives of others will be affected by their death.

Although elegies are usually used to mourn for a person they are also used as an opportunity to subtly criticise someone, an example of this is the poem 'Lycidas' written by John Milton. Milton used the poem to criticise priests, whom he believed were corrupt.

✓ Even though the subject of elegies, death, is a sad thing, these poems are often a form of celebration of the deceased's life.

Elegies are seen as a literary tradition, which are known to connect poets of different countries, including England and Ireland. The power of the elegy is shown when it is made apparent how this type of poetry can be a connecting force between two countries, England and Ireland, who also have so many issues.

Many poets write an elegy about another who they have admired, this is a good way for a poet to be noticed and is often done when they are getting started. However occasionally poets write an elegy about another poet because it is expected for them to do so, an example of this is the elegy In memory of W. B. Yeats, by W. H. Auden.

✓ At the age of twenty-one Auden arrived in New York. It was the beginning of a thirty-year period he spent in America. Two days after his arrival W. B. Yeats, aged seventy-three died in Southern France, shortly after, Auden wrote the poem as an elegy for Yeats. Auden debated whether or not Yeats deserved to be considered as one of the great poets. In March 1939 Auden's poem 'In memory of W. B. Yeats' was published.

✓ **Very good**

In the first verse of the poem the winter imagery is predominant. The first and last lines both describe and set the mood, "in the dead of winter", "The day of his death was a dark cold day". The use of winter here is not only used it was the time when Yeats died but because Winter is the time of death, plants die and the time indicates an end of the year. The mood is set to one of desolation, the brooks being frozen and the snow creates the effect.

✓

The second verse has a pastoral image set to it; this is from the image of the wolves running through the evergreen forests in a far away place. This pastoral image is contrasted however, with the sharp urban images, in verse one with airports and public statues and in verse two itself, in the form of the fashionable quays. Auden airs many of his own views and feelings in this poem, at the end of verse two he writes, "The death of a poet was kept from his poems", I feel this is Auden saying that a poet and his poems become more famous after he dies. The first two verses are written in a strange way, they are very slow and they are littered with illiterations, nearly every sentence has some initial or ending with repetition of sound, "He disappeared in the dead of winter", "the airports almost deserted", "in the mouth of the dying day", are all typical example of this technique.

✓

alliterations

✓

In the final verses of the first movement, with the exception of the line "he became his admirers", which is a summary of Yeats's death and is

set off by caesura, the beats have slowed. It seems as if Auden is trying to heighten the feeling. In the fourth verse Auden uses an extended metaphor to show how Yeats's poems have meant that a part of him is "scattered among a hundred cities", he uses the cities to show how Yeats has become known and also how through his poetry he has gained the respect of other poets. The first movements come to an end with a sense of pessimism and also cynicism, the line "And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom", highlights this, he uses the prison cell as a metaphor for our brains and says we all believe in our own brain that we will be free.

✓

The second movement continues in the same way as the first, it carries on in its slow pace and still has the air of cynicism, the first line, "You were silly like us, but your gift survived it all", confirms this. The second line has become one of the most mis-quoted Auden lines. The line "For poetry makes nothing happen, it survives," is one which is very hard to understand. It may have been written because Auden was in a state of despair, however I think that he means that poetry is only fully understood by poets, and it is the poets who cannot make things happen, people with the power to make things happen rarely understand poetry. The verse is very contradictive, it juxtaposes for a rather pessimistic start, but towards the end it is much more positive saying how poetry will survive, because it is a way of life.

contradictory

In the last movement the poem discovers rhyme and rhythm, the rhythm gives the poem a whole new line of life.

Explain

In the second verse there are connections with beasts, which are often found in elegies and there are also implements of war, however the end of the poem maintains the positive outlook, which it has discovered.

I like this poem because it is a rather meaningful piece. Not only is Auden able to put his own feelings into the poem, but he also manages to do Yeats justice.

An other elegy, which I have chosen to write about is, In memory of my brother, John Wordsworth, by William Wordsworth.

Wordsworth was a romantic poet and it shows in majority of his pieces. He wrote this poem as a tribute to his brother, John a commander of a ship, who died at sea.

sombre

The first stanza sets a rather somber scene, familiar in elegies. Wordsworth sets the scene of death by writing of a buzzard, which is often associated with death, he describes its action as deliberate and slow, I think here he is applying a feel of the inevitable, death. Towards the end of the stanza he seem to express his feelings towards man, he uses the flight of the buzzard to show man's limitations even against a fairly simple animal, he does this in the lines "Oh! Could he on that woeful night Have lent his wing, my Brother dear", he emphasises this by stopping the poem for a moment using caesura.

In the second stanza starts by expressing his feeling due to his brother's death and writes of letting that "pang be still", here he is requesting that his mourning will stop. He generally talks of how he must suffer and seek comfort from nature to come to terms with his loss.

The third stanza is written in a way of how death causes one to look at themselves, look down on nature and be lost in one's thoughts. In the

eight line he writes "But before time melts away", he uses the image of a candle, the way the wax goes like time, as a reference to life. This is a fairly pessimistic view, however it is juxtaposed in the next line "Of blessedness to come", which is a vision of hope and resurrection.

The fourth stanza contains further references to god, this comes in the expression higher trust. In the middle he writes two lines "A breath, a sound, and scarcely heard: The meek, the brave, Sea-Ship-drowned-so it came" on how he came to find out. At the end of the stanza he concludes that now his brother is dead all that is left behind of him is a memory, a legacy in name.

In the fifth stanza the third and fourth lines Wordsworth tries to show how his death has affected others. In the middle of the stanza he states that to pain "there comes a mild release". This is his way of saying time will heal the wounds. He finds comfort in nature, using the life cycle of plants to bring in some justification to his brothers death.

✓ *Very good*

The main point from the sixth stanza is found from the line "cleaving to the ground" he is using the concept of how a flower has roots in the ground, to explain how his brother has ties 'roots' in the place they last met. There is an optimistic view towards the end the way he writes "some day" implies that he will be reunited in the future.

The final stanza is in a way quite religious and is a good way to finish of his tribute to his brother.

in retaliation for

Now I will look at an elegy written by an Irish poet. Casualty is a poem written by Seamus Heaney, as a tribute to his uncle who was killed by a terrorist bomb, in response to the events on 'Bloody Sunday'.

Heaney starts the poem by writing of his uncle's habits, he is trying to show what kind of a person his uncle was, in most of the elegies the poets begin by setting the scene, the way in which Heaney describes his uncle is in a way like this. Heaney comments on how his uncle enjoys a drink, and goes on to say that a natural worker, a breadwinner. He is doing this to make his uncle seem like an ordinary man as if to say anyone could have had the misfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but it was his uncle.

Unclear

In the second stanza he writes about his relationship with his uncle, he begins by explaining how he never understood him fully, he never understood the poetic side of him. In a way he is merely saying that poets only understand poets and poetry, this is a similar thing to what Auden writes in his elegy to W. B. Yeats. He finishes the stanza saying that he would always change the subject when his uncle brought up poetry, I think this shows that he valued their relationship as he would ignore the feelings, which his uncle harboured against a subject he cared so much about, just so they would get along.

✓

In the third stanza, Heaney speaks for the first time of his uncles death. His uncle was killed by a bomb when he was out drinking in a curfew. Here is another what if, if his uncle had only followed the curfew, but his love for drink killed him, although he still died with a drink in his hand, the way he would have liked to. He follows this to end the stanza, by stating the state Ireland is in at the time. He does this with the lines "PARAS THIRTEEN, the walls said, BOGSIDE NIL. This shows that the two sides are willing to do anything to prove their point, with no regard for the lives of others.

In the fourth stanza Heaney writes of the day of the funeral. He begins by setting the scene, to one usually associated to death, a cold, somber, winters day. He describes the coffin as floating like blossoms on slow water, I think this is a reference to the fact that he died before he should have, like the blossom which has fallen off the plant before it has had the chance to open up and show its beauty.

The sixth stanza is the most important, Heaney expresses his real feelings towards the death. He writes of how he missed the funeral, because it is not his idea of how to celebrate a life, he calls the people who do attend "Those quiet walkers And sideways talkers", I think he feels they are just there because of the circumstances he died in. The way Heaney says, "I tasted freedom with him" shows how he felt about him and he has written the poem as a tribute.

This poem shows that even though the author was from Ireland the techniques used in the elegy are similar.

In 1751 the poem, an elegy written in a Country Churchyard, was first published. The elegy was written by a poet called Thomas Gray, Gray started the poem in 1742, the poem was concluded at Stoke Poges in 1750.

The elegy begins by setting the scene, in the first two stanzas there is a somber scene set. Gray sets the time using the word curfew, which was an evening bell. In the poem everyone is heading home and the churchyard is left empty.

In the fourth stanza the first mention to whom the elegy is written about, the poem is not written about one specific person, but is written about the people buried in the churchyard.

Explain

In the seventh stanza Gray uses personification to justify their lives, he makes a point of the fact that even though the people are probably rich people with highflying jobs, they have found consolation in the homes and their simple lifestyles. In the eight stanza Gray refers to death as the inevitable, often in elegies this occurs Wordsworth also makes the same referral in his elegy to his brother. The final line is also a typical type of line for an elegy. Gray writes how people are never given the credit they deserve until they die.

✓

Throughout the elegy Gray is constantly thinking about how the lives of the dead are thought of after they die. He seems to make conclusion from the inscriptions on there gravestones. In the second line of the tenth stanza he comes to the conclusion that no matter what is written on their gravestone they will not be awarded for it.

In the fifteenth stanza the last two lines seem to sum up the whole point, which Gray is trying to put forward through this poem. In it he is trying to explain that in one of the graves could have been someone as talented as Milton, a famous poet, who was never famous, or someone who could have been a Cromwell, but was never given the chance to prove themselves. This is a pessimistic view to life, Gray is highlighting the missed chances in life.

In the twenty-first stanza Gray brings up a subject, which many poets, including Wordsworth, have brought up, coming to terms with death. He does this in the line, "That teach the rustic moralist to die". In the next two stanzas Gray thinks of those who try to forget about their loss. He also writes, "Some pious drops the closing eye requires", here he is

talking of the holy drop of tears, which indicate the sorrow they feel towards their loss.

“ ... “

Often in this poem Gray describes the dead as peasants, he does this in the twenty-fifth stanza with the expression /hoary-headed swain/.

Who is the epitaph for?

The Epitaph is written in a very religious way there are references to melancholy; sorrow; bounty; generosity. He makes references to Jesus and describes him as a friend in Heaven and also the way the dead are hoping for resurrection.

I think this poem is very effective and gets you thinking about what the world could have lost because they have not recognised a special talent.

The final poem, which I will look at is, The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket, by Robert Lowell. I have studied an extract from the poem, which was written about Warren Winslow who died at sea.

The section I have studied Lowell describes what it must feel like to drown at sea. He begins by briefly setting the scene at the point where a river meets the sea, he mentions how the sea is violent, he is building up an air for the sea. The first mention of the sailor shows his struggle to survive, he states how the sailor clutches the drag-net but can't get out, he uses the expression "marble feet" because the sailor is probably getting deeper and deeper as if his feet are pulling him down. Lowell writes of how the sailor is desperately trying to save himself, he writes "hurdling muscles of his thighs", this makes it sound like he is trying to jump out of the water. He describes the corpse and goes on to tell of his burial at sea.

He then goes on to discuss what happens to the body in the sea, the fish examine the body. He follows this by talking of how the sailors who send this sign to the sea, and the most powerful of the battleships can do nothing but fire the guns as a show of respect, a salute.

This poem is another, which comments on the inferiority of humans compared to death.

Disappointing finale

From studying these elegies I have found that there is a correlation between the techniques, which are used in elegies. Even though there are many different reasons for writing elegies simple techniques like setting the scene to a cold winter night.

***A
22/25***

***Sustained analysis of the texts and their writers in context.
This is a very pleasing piece of work.***

Christopher Graham Davies

Elegies are poems that are written to mourn an individual's death. It is often written about a well-known person, or somebody who was close to the writer. It often contains details of the life that the person led, and also the person would be missed.

Although elegies are written about very sad events, the death of a person, an elegy can be used to subtly criticise the writer's enemies or people disliked by the writer. An example of this is when in the poem that I will study first John Milton uses the poem about the death of his friend to criticise priests who he believed to be corrupt. They can also be used to celebrate the life that the person led. The elegy is a literary tradition, which connects poets from many different countries and cultures.

My first example of an elegy is 'Lycidus', written by John Milton. This is one of the earliest elegies, written in 1645. This can be used to demonstrate how poetry has progressed over the years. As this elegy is a particularly long one I will simply look at one of the most important stanzas in the poem. It describes Milton's dislike of Catholic priests. At the beginning of the poem he writes about his friend dying in the Irish Sea, but then by the use of a metaphor switches to write about Catholic priests. Milton claims that priests sell indulgences to make money. He then makes a comparison between shepherds and the priests, by writing that a shepherd feeding his sheep is a lot like a priest trying to preach the word of God. The shepherd cannot feed his sheep the food, nor can the priest feed the congregation his words. When the words, "Swoll'n with wind" are used, I believe that Milton is trying to suggest that a priest spouts a lot of hot air, which the congregation sometimes swallow and believe.

✓

"That scarce themselves know how to hold a sheep hook". Milton uses this to describe how the shepherds scarcely even know how to hold the sheep hook used in their job, so in other words he doesn't believe that they are able to do their job to a sufficient standard. With this I believe as he is comparing shepherds to priests anyway, he is tarnishing priests with the same brush, saying they are not fit to do their job either.

tarring

I particularly like the way Milton uses this poem to get across his opinions on another subject. I also like the way he uses priests as a comparison.

One of the most famous elegies is Gray's elegy, written by Thomas Gray. It begins in the evening time, when a bell is ringing in the background, he watches people going home after visiting their loved ones in a cemetery. It starts with a bit of a sombre attitude, talking about beetles, which have become a sign of death. The third stanza seems to concentrate around one thing, an owl. They are also associated with death as they often live in churchyards. The owl is disturbed and flies away. When the word 'rude' is used in stanza 4, it doesn't mean the way we would translate it today, but instead it means that, the people living in the past were basic and unsophisticated.

Gray goes on to write how death in a family can totally change things. How if a father died the children would be unable to run up to him and give him a big hug. When their fathers were alive, they refused to do some of the things he may have wanted them to do, such as cutting in the fields. He then writes about how people lack ambition when they are alive and he also personifies the words 'ambition' and 'grandeur'.

Later on the poem he relates people to lifetime statues using the words "Can storied urn or animated bust". As he is stood by the grave he begins to think about who could be buried below his feet, and how they may have had the potential but had failed. Also, how perhaps somebody as good as Milton could be buried there but had simply been unrecognised, "Some mute inglorious Milton may here rest".

✓

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He mentions how he had never lived in a quiet place, always in the cities, he had never strayed. He instantly changes the subject and writes about how many people had gravestones with badly written simple comments on them. Sometimes poems and other kinds of texts can help people come to terms with the death of a loved one, and helps them to move on. His attention is then turned to the reader and he talks about how we

Really?

can die an unhonourable death. He says that we hope are good points are drawn out when we die instead of people remembering us for the wrong reasons. In this same stanza alliteration is used, "Upon the brook that bubbles by". This is also an example of onomatopoeia, as Gray attempts to use 'bubbles' to emphasise the sound of water running along the brook. He ends the poem on a sad note as he talks about the sad music played at a funeral.

This poem is different to many elegies as it talks about death in general instead of the death of an individual person.

The next example of an elegy is 'In Memory of W. B Yeats' written by W. H Auden. The mood set at the beginning of the poem is dark and cold. This done by the use of puns such as "The mercury sank", showing that the temperature, read off the thermometer is dropping as the day goes into the evening time. I can imagine the dullness as the sun sinks behind the horizon. The cold temperature is also used in other poems such as 'Casualty', written by Seamus Heaney.

The way the word 'death' is used shows me that it maybe Winter time when the poem was written. This is because winter is the season of death, as many plants die in the freezing cold.

Auden uses metaphors of cities when describing Yeats' body, for example he uses provinces, and squares. He tries to say that each part of his body is a part of a city which is going into revolution. (The poem was written at the time of war).

"He is scattered among hundreds of cities", shows me that he is trying to get across that Yeats' words will live on in all cities and he will be remembered everywhere. This is an extended metaphor. Cities are used to describe one thing and then another. In that same stanza, Auden writes "The words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living", shows me that Auden believes that people can use his words and change them so that they can relate to the people. It also shows that the poem that he wrote will be remembered by many.

When in stanza 2 the word 'silly' is used, it doesn't mean what it means today, it instead is interpreted differently, it means "blessed", or "Innocent". Yeats was well known for being associated with many of Irelands richer women, he was often paid to write poems for them. Auden believed that all of the conflict in Ireland almost forced Yeates into poetry, as this was a way of expressing himself.

Suddenly Auden stops writing about Yeats and begins to write about poetry in general. Auden thinks that only poets can truly understand poetry because it exists somewhere only a poet can go. Using the words "a way of happening, a mouth", I think Auden is trying to say that poetry is a way of expressing issues, politics, emotions, and feelings.

and?

The poem then becomes philosophical and cynical as Auden writes that poetry makes nothing happen and begins to get almost angry with poetry. It is here that the speed of the poem builds up in comparison to the rest of the poem. At this point the poem acquires rhyme and rhythm. I think that this elegy is a good poem. I like the way he describes Yeats with metaphors such as cities which he later uses as an extended metaphor. This makes the poem easy to understand if you relate the poetry to something.

✓
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Another subject that talks about more than one subject, as well as 'Lycidis', is 'Casualty' by Seamus Heaney. This poem is about Heaneys uncle, an Irish fisherman, who was killed by a terrorist bomb, which was planted in retaliation for the killing of 13 nationalist demonstrators.

Is he a fisherman on a trawler or simply an angler?

Heaneys Uncle seems like he is very well known where he lives. His is shown by the way all he has to do to order a drink is to raise his thumb. Everybody knows when and what he wants to drink. He does not even have to raise his voice, he simply lifts his eyes and shows his weathered thumb. The way his thumb is described as weathered, shows that he does something where his hands would be cold and wet, and would be exposed to harsh weather. Maybe fishing where the dragging of the nets would cause his hands to wear and tear.

Later in the stanza, it is confirmed that he is a fisherman, when it says “His fisherman’s quick eye”. This shows that he knows everything there is to know about fishing, like where and when to cast the net, as his reaction speed has become very fast.

That is alliteration!

In the second stanza, Heaney talks about the way his uncle didn’t seem interested in his nephews poetry and only pretends to listen. So when talking about poetry he will suddenly change the subject to something that he will understand. Heaneys uncle didn’t seem to even realise that Heaney had another life, poetry.

In what context?

The third stanza talks about the way that he died. A kind of alliteration is used, consonance, when Heaney writes the words “He was blown to bits”. The day of the funeral was described as cold. This is used in other poems such as ‘In Memory of W.B Yeats’. A touch of irony creeps into this stanza. The word blossom is used, this symbolises life as it is a flower. Also when the words “Its swaddling band” are used, this shows life as when Jesus was born he was wrapped in swaddling. This stanza gives me a strong image of the coffins floating from the door on water. It is actually being carried slowly and steadily on shoulders. Late on in this stanza, when the two words “lapping”, and “tightening” are used, this is juxtaposition, as the two words are opposites.

Contexts?

Heaney can still see what his uncle was like before and he writes as if he can almost see him as the coffins are taken away. He says “The terror in his still knowable face”, he can imagine how his uncle would look if he could see himself being taken away to be buried.

In the next stanza, he continually makes comparisons and references to fish. He continues to do this into the next stanza, where he begins to look into the past, when he used to go out on the fishing boat with his uncle. He remembers the feeling when they would pull the net up and there in front of them was a successful catch. Here he looks back on the good times he enjoyed with his uncle.

This poem was very good, I enjoyed the way it went from being a sad poem to a happier poem at the very end, as Heaney looked back on the enjoyment he and his uncle had.

The final poem that I will study is ‘Elegiac Stanzas in Memory of My Brother’ by William Wordsworth. Wordsworth is sometimes referred to as a nature poet because many of his poems reflect the environment of the Lake District, where he lived. He did still did write elegies though.

?

The poem is written about the death of his brother John who was lost at sea. The begins with the personification of the word ‘buzzard’, I believe he was trying to compare his brother with a bird. In stanza 1 there is an example of asonance, “Oh! Could he on that woeful night”, the two words ‘Oh’ and ‘Woe’ sound the same. It talks about the sea, which was where his brother lived. ‘And all who struggled with the sea when safety was so near”, this means that he struggled to get to safety as he was so close. He again personifies bird in stanza 2. When flower is used in the same stanza, this is the use of a metaphpr to describe his brother. This is again used in stanza five and six also. The forth stanza is very disjointed, especially the line, “Sea ship-drowned-shipwreck-so it came”.

The rest of the elegy goes on to talk about how sadly he will miss his brother. I do not believe that this is one of the best elegies I have studied, as it didn’t really make me feel anything like the others had done. The best of the elegies has been casualty as I could really imagine what Heaney was trying to say. I could see images of his words, like when he was talking about how the coffin was floating over water. Over the last few weeks I have learnt a lot about elegies, and I now believe that I understand poetry a lot more about poetry, and I have learnt to enjoy it as well.

***B
18/25***

You analyse each poet’s use of poetic devices in an enthusiastic and sensitive way.

Graham Smith

An Elegy is a poem written by somebody to mourn the death of another. They can be written to tell what happened in the life of the person or how that person will be missed. They can also be used to make a political point. An elegy can be written about a famous person, for example the elegy written soon after the death of W. B. Yeats, by another poet, W. H. Auden titled 'In memory of W. B. Yeats'. Elegies can also be written about normal, not famous people. An example of this is Gray's Elegy in which Thomas Gray walks through a graveyard and thinks about whom is buried below him and what they did in life.

✓ The poem 'In memory of W. B. Yeats' by W. H. Auden is a good example of an elegy. At the beginning of the poem the mood is set. The mood is of dark and cold, this is done using words like 'frozen', 'dead' and simply 'dark, cold day'. This is talking about the day of the death of Yeats. Auden then goes on to use the metaphor of Yeats as a city, he says 'The provinces of his body revolted' and 'Silence invaded the suburbs'. This is talking of the actual death of Yeats. 'Now he is scattered over a hundred cities'. This line is an extended metaphor, in talking of the city and is also saying that he will be remembered all across the world. 'The words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living'. This is saying that both good and bad things have come out of his death. The good things are that people will take notice of the poetry that Yeats has written but the bad things produced, like the bad things produced in the gut, are that Auden thinks that much of his work will be transformed in the mind of the reader. Yeats will not be able to write anymore of the good poetry that he has written. In the next verse he uses a simile 'brokers are roaring like beasts'. This gives the impression of the brokers shouting very loudly and a general commotion on the stock exchange floor. It is this sort of thing that makes this poem better because it creates different and interesting images in the mind of the reader. Auden becomes very philosophical and cynical and talks about how poetry doesn't make a difference, how it 'makes nothing happen'. After this, in my opinion cynical, verse written in a rather sarcastic tone, the poem suddenly picks up speed. This poem was written just before the start of the Second World War in 1939 when all the tension was brewing and this poem contains some wartime references 'All the dogs of Europe bark' is talking about the European powers who are all making objections and threats at one another. This is also a reference to the animal theme from before. 'Intellectual Disgrace'. In saying this W. H. Auden is trying to shame the intellectuals of Europe, who have not been able to prevent the war that is about to break out, into doing something to find a compromise or to stop Hitler. In the final verse Auden uses rhyme to convey a good parting image of Yeats. Overall I enjoyed reading this poem because Auden creates interesting images in the mind using the English well.

✓
Why is the image used do you think?

✓ The Irish poet Seamus Heaney also wrote an Elegy, this time for his friend and fellow poet Robert Lowell. I think that this elegy is extremely clever. Lowell wrote his poems using very powerful adjectives that make it seem as though the reader is really there. In his own poem 'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket' there are many examples of these adjectives. One such line is 'Light flashed from his matted head and marble feet'. This line is talking about

✓ *Good*

a dead body that has just been pulled out of the sea that the sailors on the boat are all looking at. The reason that I like Heaney's *Elegy* is that he picks up on this and tries to use similar English. Heaney describes Lowell in the *elegy* as 'a welder of English'. The word 'welder' gives the image of Lowell moulding all of the tough words in to the shape or the meaning that he wanted to give. He also calls Lowell the 'Master elegist' this makes it seem ironic that Heaney is writing an *Elegy* for the master. Examples of Heaney using the strong language similar to Lowell are phrases like 'heart hammering black sonnets' and 'You were our night ferry thudding in a big sea'. In the first phrase Heaney uses alliteration to make the phrase sound stronger so that it has a greater impact. Heaney also makes numerous references to the sea in this poem as Lowell did in his poems. He writes such things as 'a wind from the Irish Sea' and 'thudding in a big sea'. I prefer this *elegy* to the first because it seems to have better rhythm and I think that it has much better use of English.

✓

Vague

Sentences!

Thomas Gray also wrote an *elegy* but his *elegy* 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard.' This *elegy* is not written about anyone in particular like a relative or a friend but is written as the author is wandering around a grave yard looking at the grave stones and wondering who the people were and who they could have been. He says that none of the people here were famous and none of them were infamous. He says that the people lived an obscure life not doing any thing of note 'Far from the madding crowds ignoble strife'. His poem is written for the normal man because he says that he wishes that every man could at least have a decent gravestone and he cannot bear reading the epitaph on some of the gravestones. At the end of the poem Gray writes an Epitaph for a normal person so that they can have something good to write on their grave stones.

William Wordsworth wrote a different type of *elegy*, this time about his brother who drowned when his ship sank in 1805. Instead of writing about the person who is dead and what they did in life he writes about himself and how he feels standing by his brother's grave. He writes this when seeing a buzzard fly away 'Oh! Could he on that woeful night, have lent his wing, my brother dear'. Here he is saying that he wishes that his brother could have had wings, could have been a bird so that he could have just flown away to the land away from his ship. He also describes how sad he feels at the death of his brother using words like 'Sorrow', 'Weep' and 'Miserably Deep'.

✓

He sees a flower growing next to his brother's grave Wordsworth notices this and comments on how he believes that his brother would have really liked the flower growing there 'He would have loved thy modest grace'. In the final verse Wordsworth says that he hopes that people walking past the grave yard will stop and notice his brother's grave.

The *elegies* appear to be very different on either sides of the Irish Sea. The English poets Wordsworth and Gray both wrote more abstract poems they are not the real definition of an *elegy* as they are both not specifically about one person. The poem by Auden on the other hand is more like a real *elegy* because it is written about Yeats. The *elegy* by Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, is my favourite because of the clever use of language in recreating the words that Lowell used in his own poems. The style of poetry is not as different as it seems because the two more recent poems, the Auden and the Heaney poems,

✓

are similar but the differences are bound to come when comparing poems that were written centuries apart because of the language differences.

B
17/25

You have provided much useful analysis of each poem's implications and each poet's use of language. Some phrasing problems.

Images of Ireland and Merseyside

You have seen various film clips about Ireland, listened to Irish music and discussed some of the stereotypical views of Ireland held by people in other parts of the British Isles.

WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU HAVE FOUND IN THE SPACE BELOW
IN COMPARISON ALSO WRITE DOWN SOME OF THE COMMONLY
HELD IMAGES AND BELIEFS ABOUT MERSEYSIDE.
DON'T JUST INCLUDE THE NEGATIVE.

WHERE DO YOU THINK THESE STEREOTYPES ABOUT IRELAND AND
MERSEYSIDE HAVE COME FROM?
ARE THEY JUSTIFIED?

The main view on the Irish are that they are 'friendly', 'stupid', 'musical', 'humorous', 'traditional' and 'superstitious'. These are all stereotypical views because different parts of Ireland have very different cultures. We get a lot of these views from the media, ie, television programmes like Father Ted, films like 'Commitments' and music from groups like 'U2', 'Boyzone' and 'The Corrs'. People generally think of Ireland as having a very laid back way of life, everything done over a long period of time. In the major cities, like Dublin and Belfast, it is very much like other European cities. The view of them being superstitious probably comes from the leprechaun myth. Ireland is thought of as being not technologically advanced as the rest of Europe.

Merseyside is not dissimilar to that of Ireland in the views of outsiders. This is because a lot of people came from Ireland to Liverpool during the potato famine.

Merseyside has a good connection with the arts, ie, the Beatles and Cast. It has large theatres and there are also television programmes about it, ie, Brookside. It is thought of as being deprived and run down. In inner city areas this is quite true but this is the same in most major cities. Liverpool is associated with sport, especially football, Everton, Liverpool, Tranmere.

It is often portrayed as having a violent side to it where a lot of wheeling and dealing takes place. This has been done in programmes like Mersey Blues and Liverpool One.

Phil Weldon

We have been thinking about images of Ireland and Merseyside recently, and whether the stereotypical views of the two places are justified. The main stereotype of the Irish is that they are 'stupid'. My grandmother is Irish and I would hardly call her 'stupid', absent minded perhaps. I think many of these stereotypical views are made up by comedians, looking for people to poke a few cheap laughs at. Other views were 'religious', 'poetic' and 'loquacious', perhaps more justified.

I think that people outside of Merseyside have fixed views on people who live there.

We have been discussing the stereotypical views of Ireland and wrote down a list of adjectives that could be used to describe them. As it was a view of outsiders, namely us, voting for the favoured description and only looking in on Irish communities, the more popular choices were stereotypical, with few votes coming from personal experience. However, favoured adjectives such as 'friendly', 'drunken', 'religious', 'musical', and 'superstitious' are closely associated with the Irish. The fact that they are friendly shines through if you happened to have visited Ireland and the musical talents of bands coming from Ireland, such as 'U2', 'The Corrs' and 'Ash' are rather obvious to see. Being drunken is a rather stereotypical view, however. From my own personal experience of Irish people, they certainly do drink more than is considered normal. Throughout history, Ireland has been separated through Catholics and Protestants. Each group strives to give their viewpoint strongly and violence is sometimes used. The nationalist group 'The IRA' is heavily Catholic but they use violence more for Ireland. Religion is taken rather seriously. The 'luck of the Irish' is talked about quite often. Their stated belief in 'leprichums' and 'four-leaf clovers' could be described as superstitious. On the other hand, Merseyside is described as an aggressive place, which is true if the rough parts of Liverpool and Birkenhead are visited - the same could be said of Dublin.

Adam Shore

The various stereotypes of Irish people describe them in almost every way, both positively and negatively; their good side: 'friendly', 'welcoming', 'witty' and 'musical'; and their bad points: 'drunken', 'violent', and 'stupid'. However, these points are just stereotypical and prejudiced and not necessarily true. They have probably been passed down over generations and spread about, creating widely-held views which are now hard to shake off.

The same thing happens almost everywhere, including Merseyside, where again people are thought of as 'friendly', 'generous' and

Some love 'Scousers' and others hate them. There is a popular belief that they are very funny. Personally, I don't think they are any more funny than anyone else. I think Liverpool comedians such as Jimmy Tarbuck have made this up and this is probably why 'Scousers' aren't popular with some people. It is also believed that they are theiving. I have to say that's very unfair. I've lived on Merseyside for over 7 years now (and even before that I have a strong connection with it) and I don't once remember having anything stolen. My word to describe Merseyside citizens would be 'nostalgic'. They seem to somewhat live in the past, always remembering the Beatles, the great Liverpool and Everton sides of old and all the famous buildings.

John Murray

'welcoming', but there are more bad - perhaps unfair - views, for example: 'criminal', 'uncouth' and 'foul-mouthed'.

It is hard for people from these places to shake off their stereotypical images and when views of them are usually unjustified it is very unfair on them. People are often prejudiced against them before they even know them

Andrew Christie

We have been thinking about images of Ireland and Merseyside and how people from different parts of the U.K. see them. We came up with above 50 words and we found that most of them were stereotypical with words like 'un-employed' and 'benefit claiming' coming up quite a lot. They weren't all bad though. Words like 'generous' and 'fun loving' came up quite a few times. This shows that not all people are prejudiced.

Most of these stereotypes aren't justified. There may be people in Liverpool who steal or are un-employed but this doesn't mean that all Liverpoolians do this. People get this idea from television on programmes like The Bill or Brookside. They now think that all Scousers bury people under patios. Father Ted does the same thing to Ireland. Now people think the Irish walk around saying 'Agh Ted' and 'You will!'

Andy Gilbert

Thinking about Irish poetry

Thinking about:

Name: Adam Stone

Irish Poetry

We have talked in class about some of the main ideas or 'themes' that keep cropping up in Irish poetry. Here is a reminder (not in order of importance):

**the land; town versus country; community life; family life;
history, politics, religion, language.**

TASK 1

Are there themes which you think should be included but which have been omitted from the list above? Give details below:

Nature, Death & destruction, Irish, reminiscing of Ireland from one country to another country, e.g. America

TASK 2

Pick one of the poems you have not yet studied or talked about in class. Give the title and name of the poet. In detail, write what the poem is about and how you think it fits in with one of more of the above themes. Use the space below and over the page. Do not forget to use paragraphs.

Northern Haiku by Tony Curtis

This poem symbolises all the fighting going on in Ireland with all the bombings and shootings as the separation of Ireland continues. It is based on politics and religion from the list above. It describes the loyalists devoted to King Billy (William of Orange) and how they praise events involving him in the past. An historical figure pre-determines what the future holds for them. The I.R.A. are also described as the opponent group. This is shown in the ninth stanza as it says 'Billy on his horse. Giddy up the I.R.A. Photo-fit finish.' I think he describes it as a photo-fit finish because neither will give in despite all the death and destruction. This division between Northern Ireland is historical which is shown in stanza 1 'A wall divides the wet land, planted in the past'. Stanza 3 says 'A soldier's gun trained on me - teaches nothing new'. This may imply that guns are normal around Ireland and that the author has been around guns his whole life. Stanza 4 says 'waiting for a face that wears its religion out'. I think this means that he is waiting for someone who is tired of religion and the conflicts surrounding it. He also describes the bombers as cold hearted and having no regrets as they just go and get drunk as stanza 6 describes 'Having killed where do they go? Four pints please, Paddy.' In stanza 13, he says 'Freeze the present 'til stragglers catch up from the past'. I think he is saying that the country is stuck in the past and is not going forward. A wedge drove between the

country in the past is still here in the present. He writes strong words in stanza 14, 'Protestant prayer, Popish prayers. Funerals, we go the same way'. He is saying that even though they feel differently about things, they still end up living the same lives involving death and destruction. In the last stanza he writes 'A blackbird's sweet song lost in the wildness of the hills, prayer for the dead'. I think he is saying here that peace is lost and is regained by death.

Paragraphs please. A detailed and considered study

Thinking about:

Name: C. West

Irish Poetry

We have talked in class about some of the main ideas or ‘themes’ that keep cropping up in Irish poetry. Here is a reminder (not in order of importance):

**the land; town versus country; community life; family life;
history, politics, religion, language.**

TASK 1

Are there themes which you think should be included but which have been omitted from the list above? Give details below:

Nature is referred to in many of the poems, and the majority are set in the past.

TASK 2

Pick one of the poems you have not yet studied or talked about in class. Give the title and name of the poet. In detail, write what the poem is about and how you think it fits in with one of more of the above themes. Use the space below and over the page. Do not forget to use paragraphs.

Going Home to Mayo, Winter, 1949 by Paul Durcan

This poem is narrated by the poet himself, and it incorporated family life, as he mentions his father and his grandmother. It is also set in the past like many other poems in the anthology.

The poet makes good use of alliteration in the poem, e.g., 'cattle cries and cock crows', and 'seemingly seamless garment gorgeously'.

There are also contrasting words grouped together in the poem, such as 'daylight nightmare' which, although meaning totally different things, blend together well. These are called oxymorons.

The poem is based around travel, and so many places are named. The poet also comments on how 'home as not home', mentioning the dullness of the railings, parkings, asphalt and housing blocks of Dublin, compared to the peacefulness of Mayo, and also commenting on how he talked with his father, which was unheard of in the City. He also mentions the grass in Mayo, to give an idea of the differences between the two places.

He ends the poem, 'In the narrowing grave of the life of the father; In the wide, wide cemetery of the boy's childhood.' This gives the reader an impression that life is compared to death, highlighting the dullness of the city.

The title, 'Going Home to Mayo', sums up the poem, as it refers to Mayo as home, although Dublin is his true home, therefore he thinks of Mayo as a better place than

Dublin,

The final two lines (above) differ, describing 'narrowing grave' and 'wide cemetery', meaning that the father has less time than the son, yet both refer to a life like death.

An assured, confident response. Well done.

Thinking about:

Name: Paul Sheridan

Irish Poetry

We have talked in class about some of the main ideas or ‘themes’ that keep cropping up in Irish poetry. Here is a reminder (not in order of importance):

**the land; town versus country; community life; family life;
history, politics, religion, language.**

TASK 1

Are there themes which you think should be included but which have been omitted from the list above? Give details below:

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Pick one of the poems you have not yet studied or talked about in class. Give the title and name of the poet. In detail, write what the poem is about and how you think it fits in with one of more of the above themes. Use the space below and over the page. Do not forget to use paragraphs.

DIGGING
BY SEAMUS HEANEY

In 'Digging', the poet observes his father digging over some land in their garden. The poet notes his father's sturdy, unweilding technique.

During the poem, the poet also tells us of his grandfather, his interactions between him and his grandfather, and about the similarities.

In between the detailed descriptions of his father and grandfather, the poet inserts his own opinions about the situation e.g. 'By God, the old man could handle a spade'. This poem is also very ordered, as there are three stanzas in between each opinion, and each opinion itself is only two or three lines long.

The poem is also very 'neat'. What I mean by this is how the poem is neatly started and finished off with the same two lines: 'Between my finger and my thumb, the squat pen rests, snug as a gun'. Except at the end of the poem, there is the addition of the line 'I'll dig with it'.

The tone of the poem, I believe, is admiring but also sad. The poet greatly admires both men and their skill, but is at the same time upset by the fact that he'll never follow in their footsteps, shown by the line 'But I've no spade to follow men like them'. Obviously the poet was 'born' and academic, not a man of the land.

Perhaps the 'digging' action of the poem signifies both the father and the grandfather toiling at what they do best; giving it their all. The poet vows at the end that, although he can never be as good at physical work as they are, he will emulate them by trying his best at writing, shown by the simple final line 'I'll dig with it'

(referring to his squat pen).

This poem is similar to many others in the collection which show an intimate relationship between father & son, e.g. 'Anecdote for fathers' by William Wordsworth.

Useful comparisons made. A sensitive and detailed response.

Irish Poetry

We have talked in class about some of the main ideas or ‘themes’ that keep cropping up in Irish poetry. Here is a reminder (not in order of importance):

**the land; town versus country; community life; family life;
history, politics, religion, language.**

TASK 1

Are there themes which you think should be included but which have been omitted from the list above? Give details below:

tradition, normality, adjusting, fear.

TASK 2

Pick one of the poems you have not yet studied or talked about in class. Give the title and name of the poet. In detail, write what the poem is about and how you think it fits in with one of more of the above themes. Use the space below and over the page. Do not forget to use paragraphs.

The Disturbance - a poem written by Tony Curtis - describes the normality of bombs in Northern Ireland and the involvement of the community in the troubles.

The initial blast, which 'shatters the silence' with its intensity and force, then is over, again. They have survived another one, unscathed - possibly.

The only sound now is a milk bottle - a symbol of society passing over another day - still unaffected by the meaning of reality. The bottle is moving with the effect of 'circular sound' - suggesting a rotating movement, viciously repeating itself.

How similar this style of life is to people who are paying for great wrong doing - however physically restricted they may be. The people of Northern Ireland - he says - are trapped in the prison of war, their only crime mere circumstance.

Because this is the break of dawn, this is the first thing that enters people's heads - WAR. This makes me realise how real this political condemnation brought on those of innocence really is.

He finishes his poem by describing 'another quiet road' - a familiar Irish scene - tranquillity in the form of nature and simplicity and country and the land from which the monstrous [monstrous] situation has formed. He like me does not understand; WHY?

An impassioned response - good.