

Rothesay Academy

Higher English

Poetry

L. Nicol, Rothesay Academy, 2007

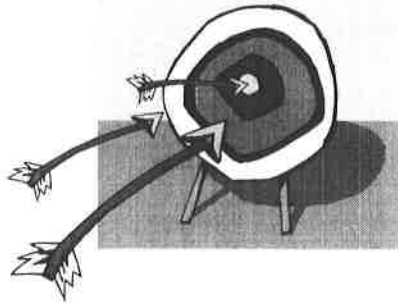
Aims and Objectives

Aim:

- To enable you to successfully engage with higher level literature that will lead to success in the Higher exam (Paper II)

Objectives:

- To develop an appreciation and understanding of the themes and techniques employed by poets.
- To enable you to analyse and evaluate poetry and poetic techniques.
- To promote discussion among pupils and teachers about poetry and the techniques employed by poets.
- To prepare you for the Higher exam.



Note to Students

The following unit contains tasks and information on six poems. These poems are paired in order to enable you to compare and contrast them as well as study them in isolation.

Poems and themes:

- *The Horses*, by Edwin Muir.
- *Eugenics*, by William McIlvanney.

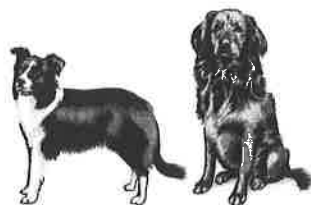
These poems are primarily concerned with the impact that new technology and scientific advances have had on our lives. They have a fairly negative view towards the influence of modern science and technology on humankind. By the end of each poem there is a rejection of the new technology and a desire to revert back to a simpler way of life.

- *The Almond Tree*, by John Stallworthy.
- *Welcome to a Bastart Wean*, by Robert Burns.

These poems are concerned with the birth of the poets' children. In the "*Almond Tree*", Stallworthy provides a moving portrayal of his reaction to the birth of his disabled son. In "*Welcome to a Bastart Wean*" Burns shows his love and affection for his newborn daughter but also rages at those who criticise him because she has been born out of wedlock.

- *Holy Willie's Prayer*
&
- *The Twa Dogs*, by Robert Burns

These poems are written using the form of poetry known as *Dramatic Monologue* and are satirical in tone. In these poems Burns adopts the persona of a completely different person or, in the case of *The Twa Dogs*, animal in order to make a point about the society in which he lived. These poems can be answered on in isolation but can also be compared in terms of style.



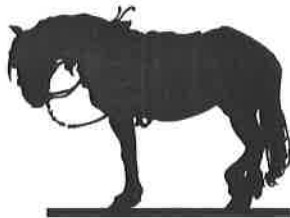
The Horses

By Edwin Muir



Read the poem once and then discuss the following questions in your groups.

1. What major event has taken place in this poem?
2. In what ways has the world changed at the beginning of this poem?
3. What is the tone of the poem in the first fifteen lines?
4. How has the tone changed by the end of the poem?
5. Why have the horses come?



Take your copy of the poem and, using the highlighters provided, annotate the poem.

- **This means you should go through the poem highlighting any poetic techniques or areas of interest.**
- **At the side of each area highlighted attempt to name the technique used.**
- **Be prepared to share your points with the class when we feedback on whiteboard.**



The Horses

By Edwin Muir



Answer the following questions, in sentences, in your jotter. Use the number of marks allocated to each question as a guide to the length of answer you should provide.

1. What event is described at the start of the poem? (1)
2. Comment on the poet's use of biblical language throughout the poem. (4)
3. Can you suggest a reason why the silence surrounding the survivors might make them afraid? (1)
4. How does the poet convey the breakdown of technology? Explain the techniques used and analyse them. (4)
5. "Dead bodies piled on the deck" (line 10)
How effective do you find the image created here? (2)
6. Consider the poet's use of repetition in lines 15-18. How does this help to convey the feelings of the survivors? (2)
7. "That old bad world that swallowed its children quick
At one great gulp" (lines 19-20)

Comment on the effectiveness of the image being used here. (2)
8. How effective is the poet's use of simile to describe the tractors? (line 25) (2)
8. "We have gone back
Far past our fathers' land." (lines 29-30)
What is being suggested in these lines about the lifestyle of the survivors? (2)
9. Consider the poet's use of onomatopoeia in lines 33-35. Explain how this is effective in describing the gradual approach of the horses? (2)
10. Explain how the poet emphasises the strangeness of the horses in lines 40-41. (2)
11. Why does the poet mention the birth of the colts? (2)
12. Explain the poet's use of oxymoron in line 52. (2)
13. Look at the last line of the poem. In what way has the arrival of the horses meant a new beginning for the survivors? (2)

The Horses

Note-taking



In order to enable you to revise for your exam it is a good idea to make summary notes of each text we study. In your groups make notes under the headings listed below. We will feedback on the interactive whiteboard in order to create a set of class notes on this poem.

- Background
- Narrative
- Themes
- Setting
- Language/word choice
- Imagery
- Structure
- Overall message of poem



Your teacher will email you a copy of these class notes as an attachment. You should print a copy of these out for your own revision purposes and save a copy to your user space so that you can access a copy of the notes if you lose them.



Homework

Using the above headings create a mind map for “The Horses”. Your teacher will give you poster paper to complete this on. You should aim to make it as colourful and as clear as possible. Illustrations are a good visual revision tool, so try to include drawings in your mind map.

Writing an Essay



Now that you have studied “*The Horses*” your next task is to write an exam style essay on this poem. Below you will find several essay questions that have appeared in recent SQA Higher Exams. These questions are particularly suited to “*The Horses*”.

1. Choose a poem where there is a noticeable change in mood at one or more than one point in the poem.

Show how the poet conveys the change(s) of mood and discuss the importance of the change(s) to the central idea of the poem.

2. Choose a poet who reflects on the idea of change.

Show how the poet explores the subject and explain to what extent your appreciation of the subject was deepened.

3. Choose a poem which reflects on the relationship between man and nature.

Explain how effectively you feel the poet is in getting his point across about this relationship.

The Structure of an Essay

We use our knowledge of a particular poem, novel or play to answer two essay questions in the exam. It is important that we actually answer the question asked and not just lapse into telling the story of the text.

When writing a critical essay you are assessed in the following areas:

- **Understanding** – You must demonstrate thorough knowledge of and insight into the ideas or central concerns of the text and you must provide a well-structured response to the demands of the question. You will be able to refer to the text to support your comments.
- **Analysis** - You must be able to closely examine the text by referring to specific examples of style, literary techniques, language and structure to support the relevant points you are making.
- **Evaluation** - This requires you to comment on how effective the writer has been in the quotations or detail you have referred to in your analysis. Evaluation also includes, as relevant to the chosen question, your genuine response to the ideas expressed by the writer in the text you are discussing.
- **Expression** - Spelling, grammar and punctuation will be accurate. language will be controlled and fluent and you will use appropriate critical terminology. Quotations will be set out properly.



Your teacher will now issue you with a copy of the Critical Evaluation Assessment Criteria for Higher. In groups of 2 or 3 devise a checklist of steps you must take to successfully meet these criteria.

You will then feedback to your teacher to create a class checklist that your teacher will email to you.



The Structure of an Essay Cont'd

Essay Layout

Introduction: You should create the opening paragraph by using the language of the question. A useful mnemonic for your opening paragraph is **TART**. **T** = title of text. **A** = author of text. **RT** = reference to task.

Main body of essay:

From here you should continue to develop your response. Pay particular attention to the structure of your paragraphs. You should open each paragraph with a statement relevant to the question. This is known as a **topic sentence**. You should then follow this up with **evidence** from the text and then go on to connect the evidence to the question with an **explanation** and **comment**. This pattern will enable you to establish a successful line of thought and to meet the performance criteria. This is explained as follows:

Topic Sentence = Understanding
Evidence = Analysis
Explanation = Analysis
Comment = Evaluation

This gives you an easy mnemonic to remember with the use of **TEEC**.

You should aim to make 6-8 points within your essay. Sometimes one paragraph may contain 2-3 points on the same topic.

Of critical importance is the linking together of your argument. This will be done primarily through your topic sentences and will create your line of thought. A good test for your own work is to highlight your statements and then read them together as if they were a single paragraph. If there isn't a natural flow, your line of thought is weak.

Conclusion:


A good conclusion should summarise the main points of your essay and answer the question once and for all.




Deconstructing an Essay

The Clothes Line Exercise



 Your teacher will give you an exemplar essay on “*The Horses*”. Read through this essay and use your highlighter pens to mark the areas of the essay that fulfil the *Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation* criteria.

 Once you have completed the above exercise you should now attempt to complete the *Washing Line Task*. Follow the instructions below.

- You will need seven post-its and a piece of string.
- You must now construct an essay plan that matches this essay using the post-its.
- Attach the post-its to the string (as demonstrated by your teacher).
- You should now have a study aid that will help you to remember some of the main points of the poem, as well as help you to remember the structure of an essay.
- Go hang it in your bedroom!!!!!!

Planning with Post-its



Having successfully deconstructed an essay you should now be able to actually construct one from scratch. However, when you are tackling an essay for the first time it is better to plan thoroughly, although you should note that this is a luxury you will not have time for in the exam.

- Choose one of the essay titles from the previous page.
- Using the post-its and A4 sheet create a plan of what you will write for your particular essay.
- Remember to use the information on the “*Structure of an Essay*” page and the mnemonics provided.
- You should be aiming to make around 8 points.
- Ensure that you are relevant to the question at **all** times.
- Put your plan into the plastic pocket provided.



Homework Exercise & Self-evaluation

You should now have a comprehensive plan for the essay of your choice. Take this plan, and any other notes you have on “The Horses”, and complete the essay you have chosen.

Once your essay has been assessed and handed back, you should use the feedback given by your teacher to complete the self-evaluation form attached to it.