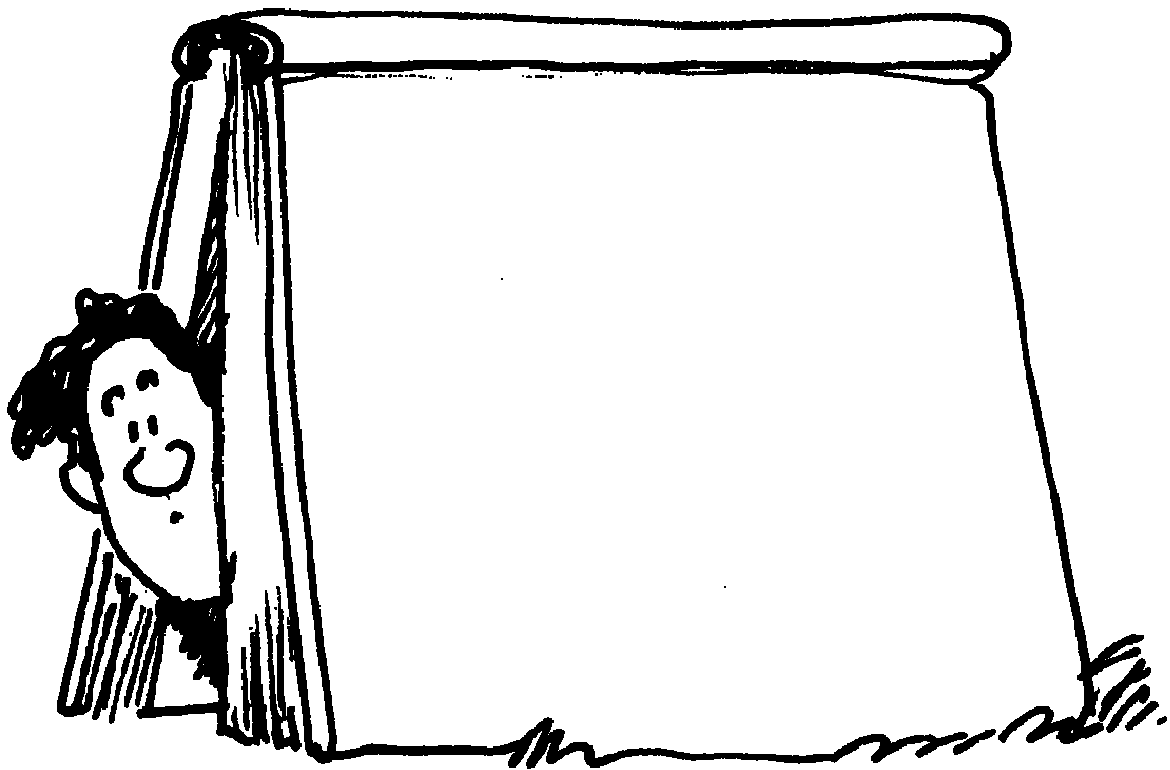


Easter Revision Notes 2011



When it comes to studying English, you should ask yourself “where am I struggling?” and tackle that area first. The truth is you won't get everything covered over the holidays, so choose wisely.

This guide is broken down to give you pointers in constructing essays based on the notes you already have.

In Hamlet we will look at the main character of Hamlet, How to answer this and look at some other areas for analysis.

In the comparative study, we will briefly look at Vision and Viewpoint.

There are really 3 poets you should concentrate your study on: Boland, Dickinson & Frost

For the purpose of this guide, a brief analysis of Boland and what to look out for will be examined. Emily Dickinson is also included. Look at the structure of both notes and use these to study Frost.

You should also look at the various bits and pieces I have uploaded onto Moodle, there are all sorts of ideas floating around in this place.

If any questions pop up, simply email me at mounthawkfilm@yahoo.ie and I will try and answer your queries.

Happy Studying!! (Oh and Happy Easter!)

Hamlet

The Character Question

You have plenty of notes to derive any sort of answer for a character question on Hamlet.

First of all select the main attributes that cover a wide variety of angles.

Sample Structure:

Opening

Respond to the question asked and the areas you select for analysis should be used to answer the question. Give an opinion on Hamlet and couple this with your notes.

“Hamlet is arguably the greatest dramatic character ever created. From the moment we meet the crestfallen prince we are enraptured by his elegant intensity. Shrouded in his inky cloak, Hamlet is a man of radical contradictions -- he is reckless yet cautious, courteous yet uncivil, tender yet ferocious. He meets his father's death with consuming outrage and righteous indignation, yet shows no compunction when he himself is responsible for the deaths of the meddling Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the pontificating lord chamberlain, Polonius. He uses the fragile and innocent Ophelia as an outlet for his disgust towards the queen, and cannot comprehend that his own vicious words have caused her insanity. Hamlet is full of faults. But how is it that even seemingly negative qualities such as indecisiveness, hastiness, hate, brutality, and obsession can enhance Hamlet's position as a tragic hero; a 'prince among men'? To answer these questions we must journey with Hamlet from beginning to end, and examine the many facets of his character.”

First Point - A man of constant sorrow

Deal with our perception of Hamlet in the opening, his dark clothing, his grief and his anger at the way his mother has married so soon. As with all your answers, ensure you are writing this in response to the question, do not lump down notes without referring to the question. Look at his introspection, his views on life and death.

“Our first impression of Hamlet sets the tone for the whole play. Dressed totally in black, Hamlet displays all the 'forms, moods and shapes of grief'. His mother cannot help but notice Hamlet's outward appearance of mourning, but Hamlet makes it clear that the overt signs of grief do not come close to conveying how much sorrow he feels inside:

For they are the actions that a man might play,
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I.ii.84-6)

Hamlet cannot forget his father, even when all those around him have resumed their merry lives, content to offer the occasional conciliatory words of wisdom. The queen, considering she has lost a husband, offers up the rather unhelpful "Thou know'st tis common, all that lives must die/Passing through nature to eternity" (I.ii.71-2), and Claudius adds, amongst other things, "We pray you to throw to earth/This unprevailing woe, and think of us/As of a father" (I.ii.106-8). Hamlet's tremendous grief is intensified by this lack of feeling by those around him, and more significantly, by the cold-hearted actions of his mother, who married her brother-in-law within a month of her husband's death. This act of treachery by Gertrude, rips the very fabric of Hamlet's being, and he tortures himself with memories of his late father's tenderness towards his mother:

So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of
heaven
Visit her face too roughly; heaven and earth,
Must I remember?... (I.ii.141-45)

The respect and awe Hamlet has for his father is seen in the above passage, as the Prince compares the late king to Hyperion, a Titan in classical mythology. The godlike view of his father is enhanced by the comparison of Claudius to Hyperion's antithesis, the satyr, a creature half-goat and half-man, known for its drunken and lustful behavior - the behaviors of the new king, Claudius. It is no wonder, then, that Hamlet develops a disgust for, not only Claudius the man, but all of the behaviors and excesses associated with Claudius. Hamlet begins to find revelry of any kind unacceptable, but particularly he loathes drinking and sensual dancing. As they await the Ghost on the castle wall, Hamlet hears the king engaging in merriment down below, and tells Horatio that the whole world is feeling the same contempt for his drunken countrymen:

This heavy headed revel east and west
Makes us traduc'd, and tax'd of other nations;
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.

While this is very long, you can summarise it down to suit the question posed. Note it has an excellent contrast between his view of his father and Claudius.

Second Point – The Reluctant Avenger

In this you may want to deal with the ghost and the desire for revenge - look at how he says he will act so quickly, yet changes his mind to one of doubt and procrastination. Note

he adopts his antic disposition and suddenly we see a man who acts rashly and carefully at the same time.

“Any possibility he had of regaining a semblance of normalcy and happiness is gone when the ghost of his father demands Hamlet seek revenge. Although Hamlet himself desires to see Claudius pay for his crime, he realizes the evil in the deed of killing the king, prompted by both "heaven and hell" (II.ii.586). The ghost has placed Hamlet in a most unnatural position by asking him to commit murder. Hamlet hates the king for his treachery, but he would not act on that hate if he were not prompted to do so by the ghost. Hamlet is an introspective scholar. He is reflective and pensive, and we see this throughout the play as Hamlet delays the moment of revenge as long as he possibly can. It appears to the audience that only a little time has elapsed since Hamlet's meeting with the ghost, but, in fact, months have gone by. And the perfect opportunity to kill Claudius as he prays alone in his chamber is passed up by Hamlet, who makes excuses that the timing is not yet perfect. As Gareth Lloyd Evans writes in his book *Shakespeare IV*:

Hamlet's arguments for not killing Claudius at prayers are both subtle and logical -- too subtle, in fact, considering the enormity of Claudius' deed and the virtual certainty that Hamlet possesses of his guilt. Yet he holds back his sword--his heart does not seem to lie in its blade. (35)”

Note how easily he moves from logical thought to the rash deed of killing Polonius. His treatment of the corpse and his lack of guilt contrasts clearly with how he feels about his obligation to seek revenge on Claudius.

Third Point - Hamlet's View of Women

His views of women become distorted, his treatment of Ophelia and Gertrude are shocking – is this part of his plan or is he actually angry?

“It is unfortunate for the innocent Ophelia that the actions of Claudius and Gertrude have also tainted forever Hamlet's thoughts and feelings towards women. Based on the letters and gifts Hamlet gave his once-cherished Ophelia, it is apparent that he did love the girl, and likely felt those feelings of sweet devotion that his father felt for his mother. But, whether due to some overwhelming desire to become the mouthpiece for his father who cannot himself chastise his traitorous wife, or due to the sad fact that all the love in him has truly dried up, Hamlet turns on Ophelia and destroys her, with cruelty almost unimaginable:

I have heard of your paintings well enough
God hath given you one face,
and you make yourselves another: you jig,
you amble, and you lisp,
you nick-name God's creatures, and

make your wantonness your ignorance. (III.i.144-48)

As the play he has arranged for the king begins, Hamlet takes a much different tone with Ophelia:

Hamlet: Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Lying down at Ophelia's feet.

Ophelia: No, my lord.

Hamlet: I mean, my head upon your lap?

Ophelia: Ay, my lord.

Hamlet: Do you think I meant country matters?

Ophelia: I think nothing, my lord.

Hamlet: That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs. (III.ii.111-20)

Some argue that this scene supports the theory that Hamlet is truly mad; that, unable to control his own thoughts and feelings, he hates Ophelia one moment and longs to engage in sexual intimacy with her the next. But Hamlet is not expressing his desire for Ophelia; he is not lost in the fog of his own madness. Although he does not, this time, lash out at her with overt cruelty, he is nevertheless once again heartlessly mistreating her with demeaning and disrespectful behavior. And Hamlet obviously is using Ophelia to further his facade of insanity -- his actions are clearly for the benefit of old Polonius, who already believes that Hamlet has gone mad for want of Ophelia's love.

Hamlet must be held accountable for his treatment of Ophelia. He is not incoherent or paranoid; his ferocity cannot be blamed on insanity. In his destruction of his beloved creature Hamlet is lucid and brilliant, fueled by rage and thoughts of Gertrude's betrayal. Ophelia is the only outlet for the hostility that he must keep secret from the king. The belief that Hamlet still genuinely loves Ophelia, and that his deep sensitivity and hunger for justice compel him to behave the way he does, allows us to conclude that Hamlet is at once so heartless and yet so virtuous. The actual recognition of his love for Ophelia can only come when Hamlet realizes that she is dead, and free from her tainted womanly trappings:

I lov'd Ophelia: fortie thousand brothers
Could not (with all their quantitie of Love)
Make up my summe. (V.i.263-4)"

His attack on Gertrude is also something we need to take into account:

"Hidden beneath Hamlet's bitter cynicism and cruel words is a desire to embrace those that fate dictates he must despise. Even when he confronts his mother and is so relentless that the ghost must intercede on her behalf, we know that Hamlet longs to show her affection; to comfort her and to be comforted by her. But love, pleasure, and tenderness all have disappeared behind Hamlet's encompassing wall of depression and overwhelming responsibility. The royal couple's actions have destroyed his faith in

humanity, and he contemplates suicide. He declares "I do not set my life at a pin's fee" (I.iv.65), and, in act III, he soliloquizes:

...To die; to sleep,
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep; (III.i.60-4)"

Remember that while you are writing down your points, bear in mind that these should be used to support your argument!

Fourth Point – the Man of Procrastination becomes a man of Action

Note that in Act 4, Scene 4, Hamlet has a moment of truth. Hamlet, on his way to exile in England, meets a captain in Fortinbras' army. He learns that Fortinbras and his army are marching to Poland to regain "a little patch of ground/That hath no profit in it but the name" (4.4.19). Hamlet is fascinated by Fortinbras' willingness to die over something so insignificant, and the encounter prompts Hamlet's final soliloquy: How all occasions do inform against me (4.4.35-69). This is the turning point because when we see him again he has changed, he outwitted Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and is more lucid in his actions.

“Hamlet's perpetual introspection does finally help him to overcome his great anxiety. When he returns from exile in Act V, we see a very different Hamlet. He is calm, rational, and less afraid of death than merely indifferent. He has come to the realization that destiny is ultimately controlling all of our lives:

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
And prais'd be rashness for it, let us know,
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn
us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will. (V.ii.4-11)

Hamlet is ready to confront the paradoxical truth that to avenge his father's death he must commit the very same act for which he seeks revenge. Using fate as the scapegoat, Hamlet can distance himself from the act of killing Claudius. He can now admit that he knows nothing of the world, "since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be." (V.ii.209-14). Hamlet has reached the climax of his philosophizing; he has prepared himself for death.

When Hamlet does finally die, it is his princely qualities that make the lasting imprint in our minds. Hamlet remains

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue,
sword,
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion, and the mould of form
The observ'd of all observers (III.i.153-56)"

Conclusion - Sum up the main Points

Note that he is a fascinating character, a true depiction of all the contradictions that make us human. He wants to avenge but is afraid, reluctant. He is a hero yet his actions can appear anti-heroic. Always refer to the question and this summary should be pointing to the fact that whatever you have been asked is proved

Symbolism and Imagery

This often appears so get it perfected!

Guys, your essays while very good need to use the notes to prove a point, DO NOT PUT DOWN POINTS WITHOUT GIVING AN EXPLANATION OF THEIR PURPOSE!

You could use the following structure:

Opening

State the role of imagery and symbolism in the Elizabethan World: special effects of the era, to highlight themes familiar to them like death, royalty and the natural chain of being. State what imagery and symbolism you will use and ALWAYS REMEMBER TO STATE HOW THESE PROVE WHATEVER ARGUMENT YOU ARE WRITING ON!

The role of corruption, weeds, poison, disease and decay, animal imagery, flower imagery, war imagery and the mask/acting symbolism should be dealt with.

Point 1 – Something is rotten in the state of Denmark

Here you can draw on a lot of the imagery above. State the role that these images have in proving your point. First of all deal with corrupt state of Denmark and how the weed/garden image shows this. Deal with the natural order of being that would have been very familiar with an Elizabethan audience.

Link this with Poison (a cowardly act and an image that is used over and over in the play) and then move onto Disease and Decay, again reflections on the theme of the natural order being disrupted.

Point 2 – We have become Animals

The animal imagery can be linked to the above by writing about the natural chain of being. Because the order is destroyed, we have become bestial (animal). This is reflected in Hamlet's imagery, especially with Claudius and Gertrude.

Point 3 – Fighting Talk

Throughout the play we are reminded that Denmark is threatened by war – inside and outside its borders. The opening tells us of Fortinbras and Denmark's preparation for war. This image is moved into symbolic realms when both Hamlet and Claudius use images of war to highlight the internal struggle between good and evil, between Hamlet and Claudius.

Point 4 – Flower Imagery****

***If you want, you can tie this in with the garden imagery of point 1. Basically Ophelia is regarded as an innocent fragile, beautiful flower. Highlights a contrast between her and the decay corrupt Elsinore and Gertrude.

Point 5 – The Art of Deception

This play is all about truth and lies, deception and false appearances. You can talk about Polonius' advice to Laertes, How Claudius appears like a benevolent King but is really a murderer and usurper. The antic disposition of Hamlet reinforces this disposition. The actors and the play within the play also back this up?

Point 6 – Death

Perhaps the skull of Yorick can link point 5 with death in point 6. Death is a common topic for the Elizabethans, a fact of life that for so many they would die young. Many images to deal with throughout the play.

Conclusion

Your conclusion should be a summary of all the main points – always linking them to the question posed. In the conclusion you are stating that everything you have written proves your point. Concluding with a quote on the role of imagery could be effective.

Here is a useful link on it: <http://www.shmoop.com/hamlet/symbolism-imagery.html>

The Comparative Study

Vision and Viewpoint:

Some ideas you can work with- this is not an answer but a collection of ideas that you should be able to tease out.

The general vision and viewpoint refers to the author/playwright/ director's look on life. This outlook may be conveyed through **the manner in which a particular society is portrayed**, through the moral beliefs held by the key characters and also **through the conclusion drawn at the end of each text**.

It took a while to look at this and come up with a satisfactory angle on the whole vision and viewpoint question, but I feel that Philip Camp ion's view of how life is presented, the moral vision of the key characters and the conclusion is suitable and purposeful in answering any vision and viewpoint question.

For this question we need to draw key moments to support each area.

How Society is Portrayed:

In Wuthering Heights, Bronte does not hold back in presenting a world that is harsh, oppressive and unforgiving. Life for many of the characters is tough. Joseph, Haerton, Nelly and Zillah work and exist for the whims of others. The work they do is backbreaking and as Heathcliff groans all get up around four and bed by around nine. There is little fun in this world. The weather can be dangerous (Lockwood could have died if he ventured forth into the snow storm). Social snobbery cripples the lives of many. Lockwood is a snob and critiques both Nelly and Haerton at times. Edgar's unwillingness to look at Heathcliff as anything other than a ploughboy demonstrates the extreme snobbery that existed and indeed this snobbery lent much to Heathcliff's wish to exact vengeance on Edgar (it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff , preferring Edgar's high social standing to Heathcliff's life as a labourer on the farm.)..).

In Billy Elliot, life is present in the same unflinching way as Bronte. People are impoverished and with the strike going on money is tight and tensions are running high. The oppressive nature of both the strikers and policemen behaviour adds greatly to the sense of anger and siege mentality that existed in the town. The social bigotry that exists in WH also is present here. However it is the narrow minded view of what boys and girls should be doing that creates this. Jackie refuses to accept his son could ever be involved in Ballet – his ability at boxing makes his father lament that he is a disgrace to his grandfather's gloves. Tony's behaviour matches his father. He attacks Mrs Wilkinson for trying to mess an eleven year old's life.

Despite the sense of pessimism the strike creates, Daldry presents many light and humorous moments and proves that in difficult times the community can rally together. The concern held by the locals on Billy's progress is touching.

In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the harsh world of 1930's Ireland is presented to the audience. Like Daldry and Brontë, Friel gives us a harsh world of bigotry and hypocrisy. A world of limited opportunity and broken dreams. High emigration and no employment opportunities leave the girls with little opportunity of finding love and therefore finding happiness. The actions of the local priest show the control the church exerted over the lives of the people of Ballybeg. Despite all this there is gentle humour and moments of great tenderness among the family as they shower love on an illegitimate child (just think of how society treated unmarried women at that time – the Magdalene laundries etc.) and have great banter among the women.

The Moral Beliefs of the Main Characters:

In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë has created characters who hold some very morally dubious beliefs. Both Cathy and Heathcliff act for their own selfish reasons and justify their actions because they hold a great love for each other. Heathcliff is an evil character, a sadist yet he is a tortured soul whose own cruel upbringing at the hands of Hindley and Joseph creates a perplexing character for the reader to condemn. His treatment of Isabella, Edgar, Haerton, Linton and young Cathy is shocking, but he holds the conviction that he is just in doing so because of how he was treated. He is exacting revenge on those who gravely mistreated him. He uses the Linton and young Cathy to gain control over TG and therefore exact the ultimate revenge on Edgar.

Cathy's behaviour is much the same, she acts for her own means. She is deeply connected to Heathcliff, yet she marries Edgar to elevate her own social standing and uses the excuse of using her position of lady of the grange as an excuse to elevate Heathcliff out of his own situation in the heights. The way she treats Edgar borders on bullying and yet she retains some love for her as she cannot deal with the situation between Edgar and Heathcliff and breaks down as a result.

Joseph's Pious words are not matched by his behaviour. Much of the words he utters are poisonous and harmful. He believes he is doing God's work, yet his behaviour is far from Christian.

Nelly is also morally suspect, she tries to wriggle out of situations of her own doing and avoid getting the blame for incidents directly relating to her. As much of the story is told through her eyes we get a narrow and self-justified vision of what went on in the two houses.

In Billy Elliot, Jackie shows how his moral convictions guide his life. An ardent supporter of the Strike, he breaks down when he is faced with a crisis. When the reality of Billy's ability dawns upon him, and when his pride at not accepting charity from Mrs Wilkinson means that Billy may miss out, he resorts to do anything for his son, even if that means crossing the picket lines. Caught by Tony he breaks down not knowing how he will give his son the chance to achieve his dream. The incredible strength of character means that he reconciles the demons of his own grief at the loss of his wife and he pawns off her jewelery and scrapes whatever few pence they have to bring Billy to London. Clearly out of his depth, he tries to hold his own in the Ballet school. His pride at seeing his son at the end is inspiring. Compare his actions to Heathcliff and Cathy.

Mrs Wilkinson is another person who struggles with the mediocrity of life in a small minded town.

Look at Billy's own determination.

In DAL, despite the lack of wealth, and her pious beliefs on Christianity, Kate is a strong moral character. Her position as head of the household is reflected in the way she delegates and assumes responsibility by being the main earner in the house. Despite deep religious convictions, she adores her nephew and is patient with Fr Jack's odd views on religion. Her heart is broken when the family falls apart. Compare this with the moral beliefs of the local priest, who fires her because of Fr Jack. Where are his Christian, charitable beliefs. Look at how Maggie, Agnes, Chris and Rose hold a strong bond and often make light banter, despite having little material wealth.

Agnes and Rose's decision to leave the home, so as not to be a burden on the family is to be admired, even if it is foolish.

Gerry's moral ambivalence is obvious the way he flitted in and out of the story. While he means good, his actions cause great heartbreak for Chris and his broken promises to Michael are long remembered by the narrator. He holds little moral responsibility for his actions and the revelation at the end reinforces this.

The Conclusion:

Despite the great cruelty and suffering that exists in Wuthering Heights, the ending is uplifting and deeply optimistic. Love wins out when Lockwood returns to discover that Haerton and Young Cathy are to be married, and are seen sitting happily together. Images of open gates and planted flowers add to the optimism that at the end. The Marriage in the new year heralds an optimistic note of happy ever after. This is reinforced with the belief that the spirits of Cathy and Heathcliff are reunited in the afterlife. The story of the young boy witnessing their spirits on the heath allows Bronte to show that despite all the suffering and mental torment these two people had in their lives, they too can have that happy ever after ending.

In *Billy Elliot*, the culmination of the great sacrifices Billy, Jackie, Tony and Mrs Wilkinson have made pays dividends when we witness that dramatic conclusion of the adult Billy arcing in the air as the lead role in the ballet performance. The pride on Jackie's face, Billy being lead and even Michael in Drag and with a man all lend itself to a deeply optimistic and very happy conclusion.

In *DAL*, Such a happy ending is lacking. We are presented with a deeply pessimistic conclusion as Michael reveals how the family unravel. Kate loses her job and tutor the son of the man she loved, Chris works in the factory and hates every day, Gerry stops visiting them and Michael reveals that he has been living a double life, having a family with children in Wales. Father Jack dies but perhaps the most heartbreaking moment is the revelation that Agnes and Rose end up destitute on the streets of London. Despite the deeply pessimistic end, Friel holds some gleam of optimism from the story. The Adult Michael reflects on the harsh reality of life in Donegal, but the moments of fun, the deep love and bond of the five Ballybeg women, their uplifting and dramatic dance and the love they shower on Jack and young Michael hold deep with the audience long after they leave the play.

Eavan Boland

While we all know what happened last year, this Easter you should study Boland and return knowing absolutely everything about her.

Boland's work can be looked at for her deeply personal views, her views of history and feminism and for her wonderful technical and lyrical craft.

When studying Eavan Boland, look for links among her poems that will create a flowing essay.

Divide the themes as follows:

History, Violence and Northern Ireland- The War Horse, Child of our time, The Famine Road

The Role of The Parent – Child of our time, Famine Road, This Moment

Women – Famine Road, The Shadow Doll

Love – This Moment and Black Lace Fan my Mother gave me

Suburb – The Warhorse, This Moment

Remember, you will also be tested on your knowledge of her technical ability.

The War Horse – the couplets, the simile and metaphor, her wonderful descriptions and use of onomatopoeia all create a vivid and memorable poem. The use of full stops creates tension and drama.

Child of our time – unusual rhythm reflects the discord of the child's scream. The internal and half rhyming add to this effect. Powerful imagery, the strong use of the personal pronoun make this a deeply personal poem. It is a distorted lullaby to wake us, the adults up to our responsibility to protect the innocent.

Famine Road – highly original and deeply arresting, Boland's juxtaposition of two very different stories create a poem of strong emotion and anger. The tone remains the same throughout, cold and unfeeling. The lack of understanding of the English masters and the doctor are brilliantly pulled together and the conclusion is deeply moving.

This Moment – deceptively simple, yet a very powerful poem on the role of the mother and child, of love and the simple things in life. The poem is very cinematic. The dramatic short lines, the use of full stops create a sense of drama as Boland paints the picture for the reader. She sets the scene, pauses it so we can appreciate the importance of the build up and then she releases the spectacular, yet very ordinary moment of a child running into the arms of its mother. The suburban setting means it could be anywhere, therefore it is a universal poem celebrating a universal truth about the power of love.

The Shadow Doll – images of imprisonment (the vacuum of the airless glass dome, the locked suitcase, under wraps) give an unsettling tone to this poem. The concrete harsh images of the making of the dress reinforce the sense of confinement in the poem. The Victorian world of oyster, pearls and bisque features contrast nicely with the modern era of coffee pots and clocks. The image of the poet closing down the battered suitcase reflects the claustrophobic feeling of the doll in the dome, yet while the imagery may tie in both the Victorian times and the times Boland lives in, I get the feeling that Boland is more in control than any Victorian bride would be, after she is the one in control when closing that case.

Black Lace Fan my Mother gave me – Powerful, evocative descriptions, great tension and atmosphere all contribute to making this poem a memorable reflection on love and passion. Like this moment, there is a strong cinematic feel to this poem. The dramatic inter-cuts between her mother waiting in the cafe and the anxious father buying his gift creates great tension. The backdrop of Paris and the descriptions of the sultry, close day lends itself perfectly to the drama of the moment. The hints of the impending invasion of France adds to the romance of the poem. The details of the fan show the rich beauty of the gift, however the fact that it was made from a tortoise that had to suffer, underlines the tension and imperfections that a couple have in their relationship.

Much of the imagery of the time spent in Paris is imagined by Boland, she improvises on what she does not know, those little intimate moments her parents shared. The ending is celebratory; the image of the blackbird is vibrant and echoes the love of her parents.

For the purpose of a question on Boland, you may look at constructing an essay which links the historical with her view of being a parent, therefore connecting warhorse with child, with famine road, with this moment.

P1 – The poet's reflections on Irish history, coupled with her views on women and parenthood

P2- The War horse, the fact that as she was writing this poem a 100 miles away acts of violence were being committed. We are hiding behind the border. The threat of violence lingers despite the history of violence in our country. Powerful imagery style etc enhance the poem

P3 – Violence that was threatened in warhorse becomes reality in child of our time. Young poet, not yet a parent is moved by the violent death of a young child – powerful lullaby, trying to make sense of this needless death. The unusual structure reflects the discord and disharmony of this child's death.

P4 – Irish history, suffering of Irish people in famine. Juxtaposition of the woman's story brings forth Boland's views on the role of women and parenthood. Look at techniques here.

P5 – Link this moment. The sense of emptiness is reinforced when you compare the powerful emotions captured by the parent of a child. Short, simple but very moving. The ordinary is made extraordinary.

P6-Sum up

Also worth looking at (from the hub)

Interested In what it means to be Irish.

In **the role of the woman** as poet.

In women as real people.

In the **Northern Troubles**.

- Very good at teasing out ideas in a poem.
- She explains **socio-political ideas** in relation to Ireland and the north.
- **Feminism** and the role of women.
- She puts women in a **historical perspective**. Their role in the past, their role now.

Note in your reading of her poetry that:

- Her **language** can be lyrical.
- Her descriptions **imaginative**.
- She speaks out for those who have **no voice**.
- She looks to the past, to **history**, for examples.
- She represents the 'ordinary' woman living in the **suburban** Dublin.
- Her poems have **political** undertones
- She writes from **personal** experience.
- She expresses thought processes that can be **complex**.
- She can be word perfect and very deliberate.

[Link : The troubles and suburban life](#)

- In 'The War Horse', Boland is living in Dundrum in a housing estate with her husband Kevin and their two daughters .

The horse is from the travellers settlement in Enniskerry.

- But the **estate** becomes a **war zone** and the **horse a symbol of violence and destruction** –

- The laurel, the rose and the crocus become **images** of the 'remote, crushed, mutilated' corpses.

- Her own neighbours become the people who **close their minds** to world violence.

- She remembers the **colonial injustice** that Ireland suffered and all the rebellious that failed – 'burned countryside', 'a world betrayed'.

[Link : Childs death and bombing of Dublin.](#)

[• Child Of Our Times](#)

Here also is a public event, May 1944.

When a series of bombs went off in Dublin's streets.

Eavan had seen a photograph of a dead child being taken out of the wreckage.

This **personal experience** inspired the poem which describes the murder of an innocent child in a way that adults had created – 'one broken images' – the Northern Troubles.

The child whose rhymes, legends, and tales have been taken

away can teach the adults a lesson even in its death.

Society is guilty of this. It must awaken to the reality that no one had the right to take this child's life, no one. It's a powerful condemnation of war.

The Famine Road

Link : the famine 1847 and childless women.

In this she explores the experience of women in today's world and sets it against the experience of the famine in 1845-47.

- The famine road is a **symbol** of going nowhere.

Roads that were built to give employment in places that had no purpose.

- The Irish suffered enormously because of the **uncaring arrogance** of the Relief Committees and especially those in charge – Trevelyn and Jones are mentioned.

She compares this to a childless woman, female sterility, barrenness.

The woman in the poem is unnamed, a mere statistic – 'one out of ten' – 'a third of those again / women'

The Relief Committee carry on a discussion with no concern for those dying

So being a woman and being Irish are linked together and both are suffering in silence and feel humiliated and useless failures.

Emily Dickinson

The other female poet you should know off by heart for the Easter Session!

Despite what is often present on Emily Dickinson, she was not a doom and gloom poet. Like many of the other poets on your course, her poetry explores the wide range and variety of human emotions and experiences (real or imagine by the poet) and always presents her ideas in a highly eccentric, yet brilliant structure.

The poems could be divided into meditations on death (funeral and Fly Buzz) nature (I taste and a bird) hope (feathers) and love (I could bring). So you see it's not all dark stuff!

Look at constructing an answer that deals with her themes and style, that has been the flavor for the past two years. Have an opinion on her and a personal reflection, married with the notes will help make your answer feel original.

About Dickinson:

Life and background

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was born into a prominent Massachusetts family. Her father was a state legislator, a congressman and a judge. She was brought up in the Congregational Church, a Puritan form of Christianity, which emphasises personal moral responsibility, and the notion of God as severe in his justice. Even though she ceased quite early to believe many of the tenets of this faith and was greatly afflicted by religious doubt, her Puritan upbringing profoundly affected her poetry.

She was an exceedingly private person. In her twenties she began to live a reclusive life, and after the age of thirty she never again left the confines of her house and garden and she rarely received visitors. She did however maintain some friendships through regular correspondence.

In keeping with her private nature, she only published ten poems during her lifetime. After her death, her sister discovered in her room a huge collection of poems, 1,775 in all, neatly bound in booklets.

Unfortunately for her poetical reputation, most of her early editors ironed out the eccentricities of grammar and punctuation that make her work so remarkable. They even altered what they held to be inappropriate phrases, so as to make the poems more conventional and refined. It was not until the 1950s that the reading public first got to see her work faithfully rendered. She is now widely regarded as one of the most important and innovative poets of the last century.

Commentary

In one of her later poems, Dickinson says, "**Tell all the Truth but tell it slant**". This is as good a summary as any of what her poetical purpose was. She has the keenest of eyes for the material and moral features of the world, but her perspective is always oblique. She is profoundly psychological, but she often captures the experience of mood or emotion through strange narratives, improbable images and unlikely juxtapositions of different worlds or ideas.

Consider her astounding account of the sensation of nervous breakdown through the account of one witnessing, from the darkness of her coffin, her own funeral and burial (I Felt a Funeral in my Brain). Or her unconventional depiction of the strangeness and mysteriousness of the natural world by referring to a snake under the disarmingly off-hand title of "**a narrow fellow in the grass**".

The unorthodoxy of her ideas is reflected in the eccentricities of form in her poems. She mostly uses the rhythms of the Christian hymn, yet her vision is far from being traditionally Christian. The soul, for her, is an almost tangible thing that seeks to discover the unity of things, but this is much more a philosophical and emotional quest than a religious activity.

The technical irregularities in Dickinson's poems are there for a purpose. Again it has to do with approaching the world in a "slanted" or oblique way. Her departures from standard grammar, her almost arbitrary use of capital letters, her heavy dependence on imperfect rhyme, and her occasional breaks from regular metre - all of these have the effect of constantly defying expectation, of making the world new by refusing to be predictable, of forcing the reader to be alert and to imagine the different, the exotic, even the impossible. Her poetic voice is unique, and her reputation as one of the great poets of modernity is safe.

Sample Answer

Now while you folks want an answer handed to you on a plate, perhaps take the initiative and write one yourself! You have a few a samples already so read these before you embark on your own masterpiece. I have put together possible points (you don't have to include all in an answer!)

Opening:

As always, you are attempting to answer a question so address this in your opening and explain to your reader how you will prove this – mention poems and why they will be used. If it is a question about her eccentricity, mention her personal life and how her craft and themes reflect this eccentric life.

Point 1- her meditations on life and death

Emily has often been accused of being fascinated by death or being a pessimist, a very simplistic observation. However, I felt a funeral in my brain is certainly the darkest and most shocking work you may have encountered. This poem is a visual and aural treat as she delves into the darkest thoughts on mental breakdown. The funeral images are appropriate and reflect the

anguish felt by the poet. Look at how the sound effects are pronounced as her she feels trapped in a box and therefore relies more on sound than sight. Have some personal thoughts about this poem. Move from thoughts of despair using funeral imagery to how she looks at the death process. In I heard a fly buzz she imagines her own death, and while this may be shocking, it is original and her perverse dark humour runs throughout. The idea of a stumbling fly ruining her perfect moment is comical and there are a few light touches such as her willing away what part of her can be willed. It is unusual and the style reflects this.

Move from here to look at how here ironic dark humour is present in other poems.

Point 2 - From lows to great highs

Dickinson's humoristic and celebratory side can be seen in I taste a liquor never brewed. A highly original poem and a visual feast, she has abandoned the strict puritan upbringing to become drunk and lightheaded on nature. This contrasts greatly with the previous two poems. Use the notes to prove your point on this.

Point 3 - The Power and Beauty of Nature

Dickinson's life was certainly eccentric and while she may have isolated herself from the community in Amherst, her poetry reflected a keen eye and an appreciation for nature. In a bird came down the walk we see how observant Dickinson is from her window as she paints an unusual image of a bird walking down the lane. Dickinson recognizes the beauty and cruelty of nature as the bird gobbles up worms. The brilliant and accurate images, coupled with the spectacular ending of the bird rowing home, are beautiful and memorable. Again, use the notes and quotes to support this view.

I could give you jewels is another poem that celebrates the ordinary. This poem challenges the materialism of gifts and says that for her, the simple flower in the meadow celebrates and expresses her true feelings more than any diamond or perfume could. An interesting poem in this day and age, where we often forget it is the thought that counts! Again the imagery is very visual and the punctuation and structure are to be commented on.

Point 4 – Hope

While Emily has often been accused of being a pessimist, Hope is a thing with feathers is a brilliant and unusual celebration of the hope that resides in all of us. Using the abstract emotion of hope she creates a concrete symbol of a bird singing within all of us. It is upbeat and as usual, highly original and always unusual.

Conclusion

Draw up your main point to answer the question asked, point out that your poems prove your answer and conclude.

THE UNSEEN POEM

Guidelines

1. • Read the questions carefully
2. • Then
3. – Look at the poem
4. – Look at the title
5. – Read the poem without a pen in hand
6. • Repeat these three steps and pay attention to detail

If you have difficulty understanding the poem ...

1. • Write down first impressions of poem and any words or phrases used to good effect
2. • Ask questions using the prompts: Who? What? Where? Why? When? How?
3. • Read poem sentence by sentence. After each sentence write a brief note in the margin.
4. • Underline words and ideas which express the main argument, idea or emotion
5. – Is there any change in the poet's thought?

STYLE

Third reading: pay attention to style

1. • Pick out examples of
 2. – Imagery
 3. – Metaphors
 4. – Similes
2. and note what they add to the development of thought
1. – Are there **run-on lines**; are **words or phrases repeated**? To what effect?

sound effects

1. • Alliteration
 2. • Assonance
 3. • Onomatopoeia
-
1. • Musical quality

Mood and tone

1. • Poet's attitude
2. • changes in tone and mood

3. • your emotional response
4. • Tension?
5. • contrasts, conflicts, ironies

Sensuous?

1. • I see....
2. • I feel
3. • I hear....
4. • I can smell....
5. • I can taste....

Colours

1. • light or dark
2. • colours obvious or suggested
3. • highlight mood?
4. • what effect?

Structure

1. • 14-line sonnet,

or four or three-line stanzas?

1. • Is form suited to theme?
2. • Rhyme scheme
3. • Rhythms

1. • Fast or slow

Diction and use of punctuation

1. • Is the poem one sentence?
2. • Are there questions?
3. • Effects?
4. • Compare first and final lines

Poet's purpose and point of view

1. • Does style of poem suit the purpose?
2. • How did you feel after you read poem?

3. • Did you share the poet's experience?

Poetry is an art form

- 1. • there are no mathematical formulae or scientific proofs to explain poetry.
Your response is part of the creative experience but, of course, it must be based on the evidence expressed in the text.**
- 2. • opinion must be based on evidence**

quote the evidence to support your points