Worldscapes Poetry

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with

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First Additional Language contextual questions

1. Explain why the dead men are described as “naked” (line 2). (2)
2. Compare lines 3 and 5. What do both these lines suggest about the fate of the soul, (in other words, what do these lines have in common)? (1)
3. Quote another line from the poem that echoes the thought expressed in line 6. (1)
4. Give two reasons why the poet chooses the word “windily” (line 12) to express the way in which the soul will not die. (4)
5. Match the word in Column A with the explanation in Column B. (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A racks</td>
<td>1 stretching machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B dominion</td>
<td>2 shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C sinews</td>
<td>3 supremacy and power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 cords of connecting tissue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Refer to stanza 2 and say if this statement is TRUE or FALSE. Give a reason for your answer.
   Evil will overcome the soul after death. (2)

7. Why do you think the poet chose the image of a flower in lines 22–23? (2)

Home Language contextual and essay questions

1. What is the effect of “And” in the title of the poem? (2)
2. Refer to line 4: “When all their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone”. Comment on the use of repetition in this line. (2)
3. a) What figurative device is used in line 6? (1)
   b) Explain why this device is effective. (2)
4. Account for the use of the monosyllabic words in stanza 1. (2)
5. What is suggested by the antithesis of “sinews give way” (line 13)  and “they shall not break” (line 14)? (2)
6. Show how the images, taken from nature, in lines 20–21 enhance what the poet has to say. (3)
7. Suggest what the refrain (“And death shall have no dominion”) adds to the poem as a whole. (2)
8. Essay question: Even though the title of this poem is adapted from a religious text, the poem’s interpretation of the afterlife is not religious in the traditional sense. Discuss the validity of this statement by referring to the choice of words/diction and images used in this poem. (10)
Suggested answers

An abandoned bundle – Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali (page 17)

First Additional Language
1. Lines 1–4 create an expectation in the reader that this is a poem about pleasant things, making the simile which follows all the more shocking for the reader because it is unexpected. (2)
2. It suggests heavy pollution and thus unpleasant smog. ✓ (1)
3. The houses surrounded by smothering smoke are compared to fish caught in a net. ✓ This tells us that the people are suffocating under their conditions but are unable to break free ✓/they are helpless and cannot do anything to change their situation. ✓ (2)
4. a) Wriggling/writhing/twisting/twitching ✓ (1)
b) The reader realises with horror that the baby is still alive and is struggling desperately to escape pain. ✓ (1)
5. a) Compassion/pity ✓ The word "Oh!" suggests that the speaker feels sorry for the infant. ✓ (2)
b) Jesus Christ ✓ (1)
c) Both Jesus and the baby were born to (probably) unwed mothers in lowly conditions. ✓/Jesus was born in a stable full of animal dung and this baby was born in a poor township and thrown away on human dung ✓ but this comparison also contrasts their situation effectively. Jesus was lovingly cared for by Mary, whereas this young mother rejects her responsibilities and abandons her child. ✓ (any two = 2)
6. The speaker is creating a strong visual image by referring to the colour of the blood twice. ✓/By emphasising the colour red, we can picture this horrifying scene. ✓ The scarlet tongue is a revolting image as the dogs’ tongues are covered in the baby’s blood — it is deliberately shocking because the reality is so shocking. ✓ (2)
7. "Its" is an impersonal pronoun which fits the theme of the dehumanising effects of these conditions. ✓/"Its" is the pronoun we would use for an animal and not a person, which suggests that the baby has no more value than an animal. ✓ The pronoun "its" keeps the reader from knowing the gender of the baby — it remains nameless and genderless and thus without identity. ✓ (any two = 2)
8. "melted" ✓ (1)

Home Language
1. It is effective because it conveys the despicable conditions under which these people live. ✓/The comparison of the mist and smoke to "pus oozing from a gigantic sore" suggests that the society is diseased and that this wound is septic. ✓ (2)
2. The word “red” emphasises the colour of the blood and gives it a strong visual impact. ✓/"bandanas of blood” — a bandana is a large scarf worn round the neck. This suggests that the dogs’ heads and necks are covered in so much blood that it looks as if they are “wearing” the baby’s blood. ✓ This image is particularly disturbing and will disgust the reader. (2)
3. The dashes place the explanation of what the corpse is in parenthesis so that it functions like an aside (something that at is not important). ✓ This explanatory aside is so matter-of-fact and is expressed in such simple language, that it becomes clear that this is a common occurrence. ✓ The fact that this aside is expressed in such an unemotive way and more importantly, does not express horror, makes it all the more shocking. ✓ (3)
4. Sarcastic. ✓ No one would sleep well on human waste. He says this to shock the reader. ✓ OR Compassionate. ✓ He clearly wishes that the baby will find peace and comfort, regardless of how it died. ✓ (2)
5. This image suggests that the mother is going to start a new life. "rays" suggests that her future looks bright — her life will be easier without the burden of a baby. ✓ The image "rising sun" is associated with a new day and thus a new beginning. ✓ (2)
6. The pleasant imagery in the last stanza contrasts with the distressing and savage imagery in the first four. This shows the antithesis between the mother’s alarming actions and her clear conscience. ✓ She ought to be wracked with remorse but instead has begun a new, guiltless life. ✓ This sharpens the reader’s sense of outrage ✓/the horrific imagery accurately conveys the awful conditions in this poor society and the abominable actions that affect the baby. ✓ The pleasant imagery purposefully contrasts with this so that the mother is not culpable for its death. ✓ This exoneration may seem impossible but it’s because the poet wants the reader to consider who is, in fact, to blame (the mother, or society in general?) ✓ (any three = 3)

7. Essay question:
• Every word in the title is relevant to the theme of the poem, which is the dehumanising effect that these social conditions have had on this society.
• “An” is an indefinite article suggesting that this could be any bundle, not a specific one.
• “An” also implies that this kind of bundle is a common occurrence in this society.
• The word “abandoned” is a stronger word than, for example, “thrown away” because it suggests desertion by someone who should be responsible for it.
• “Bundle” is an impersonal word as it implies possessions hastily gathered together.
• “Bundle” is also cleverly used in the title as the impersonal word does not reveal what the contents are. The reader is therefore shocked when he or she discovers the bundle is, in fact, a baby.
• All three words hide the fact that this is a tiny human life, which illustrates and reinforces the fact that human life has so little value in a society in which people are treated inhumanely and forced to endure dehumanising living conditions.
• The title is poignant because, by using such impersonal words, it emphasises that the baby, who will never have a name, is simply a victim of a social system which has failed its mother. (10)