First Frost by Andrei Vosnesensky

A girl is freezing in a telephone booth, huddled in her flimsy coat, her face stained by tears and smeared with lipstick.

She breathes on her thin little fingers. Fingers like ice. Glass beads in her ears.

She has to beat her way back alone down the icy street.

First frost. A beginning of losses. The first frost of telephone phrases.

It is the start of winter glittering on her cheek, the first frost of having been hurt.

Hard Frost by Andrew J Young

Frost called to the water Halt And crusted the moist snow with sparkling salt; Brooks, their one bridges, stop, And icicles in long stalactites drop. And tench in water-holes Lurk under gluey glass like fish in bowls.

In the hard-rutted lane At every footstep breaks a brittle pane, And tinkling trees ice-bound, Changed into weeping willows, sweep the ground; Dead boughs take root in ponds And ferns on windows shoot their ghostly fronds.

But vainly the fierce frost Interns poor fish, ranks trees in an armed host, Hangs daggers from house-eaves And on the windows ferny ambush weaves; In the long war grown warmer The sun will strike him dead and strip his armour.

1. In 'First Frost' how does the poet present the speakers feelings towards love?
24 marks

2. In both 'First Frost' and 'Hard Frost' the speakers describe the weather. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?
8 marks
Last Lesson of the Afternoon by D H Lawrence

When will the bell ring, and end this weariness?
How long have they tugged the leash, and strained apart,
My pack of unruly hounds! I cannot start
Them again on a quarry of knowledge they hate to hunt,
I can haul them and urge them no more.

No longer now can I endure the brunt
Of the books that lie out on the desks; a full threescore
Of several insults of blotted pages, and scrawl
Of slovenly work that they have offered me.
I am sick, and what on earth is the good of it all?
What good to them or me, I cannot see!

So, shall I take
My last dear fuel of life to heap on my soul
And kindle my will to a flame that shall consume
Their dross of indifference; and take the toll
Of their insults in punishment? — I will not!

I will not waste my soul and my strength for this.
What do I care for all that they do amiss!
What is the point of this teaching of mine, and of this
Learning of theirs? It all goes down the same abyss.

What does it matter to me, if they can write
A description of a dog, or if they can't?
What is the point? To us both, it is all my aunt!
And yet I'm supposed to care, with all my might.

I do not, and will not; they won't and they don't; and that's all!
I shall keep my strength for myself; they can keep theirs as well.
Why should we beat our heads against the wall
Of each other? I shall sit and wait for the bell.

Mrs Tilscher's Class by Carol Ann Duffy

In Mrs Tilscher's class
You could travel up the Blue Nile
with your finger, tracing the route
while Mrs Tilscher chanted the scenery.
That for an hour,
then a skittle of milk
and the chalky Pyramids rubbed into dust.
A window opened with a long pole.
The laugh of a bell swung by a running child.

This was better than home. Enthralling books.
The classroom glowed like a sweetshop.
Sugar paper. Coloured shapes. Brady and Hindley
faded, like the faint, uneasy smudge of a mistake.
Mrs Tilscher loved you. Some mornings, you found
she'd left a gold star by your name.
The scent of a pencil slowly, carefully, shaved.
A xylophone's nonsense heard from another form.

Over the Easter term the inky tadpoles changed
from commas into exclamation marks. Three frogs
hopped in the playground, freed by a dunce
followed by a line of kids, jumping and croaking
away from the lunch queue. A rough boy
told you how you were born. You kicked him, but stared
at your parents, appalled, when you got back home

That feverish July, the air tasted of electricity.
A tangible alarm made you always untidy, hot,
fractious under the heavy, sexy sky. You asked her
how you were born and Mrs Tilscher smiled
then turned away. Reports were handed out.
You ran through the gates, impatient to be grown
the sky split open into a thunderstorm.

1. In 'Mrs Tilscher's Class' how does the poet present the speakers feelings towards school?
24 marks

2. In both 'Last Lesson' and 'Mrs Tilscher's Class' the speakers describe their time at school. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?
8 marks
Ex-miner by Adrian Burke

The man next door to me was a miner
Until the dust filled his lungs like coal-sacks;
Now he’s good for nothing so he says.

Now he walks in slippers and leans on walls,
And eats the clean air while his eyes fix on
Reaching the bottom of his garden.

His wife hides the Woodbines* ‘for his own good’,
The pub’s half-a-day’s walk away for him
And it’s cruel crawling to the privy**.

So few pleasures remain to him
That he takes a grim-sour joy in rudeness
To neighbours: he savours the honorary title

Of old misery-guts like a vintage wine.
His other treat’s to stand upright each day
And not to bang his head against the sky.

*Woodbines = brand of cigarettes
**privy = outside toilet

Abandoned Farmhouse By Ted Kooser

He was a big man, says the size of his shoes
on a pile of broken dishes by the house;
a tall man too, says the length of the bed
in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,
says the Bible with a broken back
on the floor below the window, dusty with sun;
but not a man for farming, say the fields
cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.

A woman lived with him, says the bedroom wall
papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves
covered with oilcloth, and they had a child,
says the sandbox made from a tractor tire.
Money was scarce, say the jars of plum preserves
and canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar hole.
And the winters cold, say the rags in the window frames.
It was lonely here, says the narrow country road.

Something went wrong, says the empty house
in the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields
say he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars
in the cellar say she left in a nervous haste.
And the child? Its toys are strewn in the yard
like branches after a storm—a rubber cow,
a rusty tractor with a broken plow,
a doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they say.

1. In ‘Ex-miner’ how does the poet present the speakers feelings towards identity?
24 marks

2. In both ‘Ex-miner’ and ‘Abandoned Farmhouse’ the speakers describe people who are not well known to them. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings about the people they describe?
8 marks
The Explosion By Philip Larkin

On the day of the explosion
Shadows pointed towards the pithead:
In the sun the slagheap slept.

Down the lane came men in pitboots
Coughing oath-edged talk and pipe-smoke
Shouldering off the freshened silence.

One chased after rabbits; lost them;
Came back with a nest of lark's eggs;
Showed them; lodged them in the grasses.

So they passed in beards and moleskins
Fathers brothers nicknames laughter
Through the tall gates standing open.

At noon there came a tremor; cows
Stopped chewing for a second; sun
Scarfed as in a heat-haze dimmed.

The dead go on before us they
Are sitting in God's house in comfort
We shall see them face to face—

plain as lettering in the chapels
It was said and for a second
Wives saw men of the explosion

Larger than in life they managed—
Gold as on a coin or walking
Somehow from the sun towards them

One showing the eggs unbroken.

Belfast Confetti by Ciaran Carson

Suddenly as the riot squad moved in, it was raining exclamation marks,
Nuts, bolts, nails, car keys. A font of broken type.
And the explosion
Itself – an asterisk on the map. This hyphenated line, a burst of rapid fire ...
I was trying to complete a sentence in my head, but it kept stuttering,
All the alleyways and side-streets blocked with stops and colons.

I know this labyrinth so well – Balaclava, Raglan, Inkerman, Odessa Street –
Why can't I escape? Every move is punctuated.
Crimea Street. Dead end again.
A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon face-shields.
Walkie-talkies. What is

Makrolon = toughened plastic
Fusillade = a series of shots fired rapidly one after another

1. In 'Belfast Confetti' how does the poet present the speakers feelings towards the explosion?
24 marks

2. In both 'Belfast Confetti' and 'The Explosion' the speakers describe the impact an explosion has upon the community it happens to. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings about their impact?
8 marks
Love is a Losing Game by A Winehouse

For you I was the flame
Love is a losing game
Five story fire as you came
Love is losing game

One I wished, I never played
Oh, what a mess we made
And now the final frame
Love is a losing game

Played out by the band
Love is a losing hand
More than I could stand
Love is a losing hand

Self-professed profound
Till the chips were down
Know you're a gambling man
Love is a losing hand

Though I battled blind
Love is a fate resigned
Memories mar my mind
Love is a fate resigned

Over futile odds
And laughed at by the gods
And now the final frame
Love is a losing game

A Vow by Wendy Cope.

I cannot promise never to be angry;
I cannot promise always to be kind.
You know what you are taking on, my darling –
It's only at the start that love is blind.
And yet I'm still the one you want to be with
And you're the one for me – of that I'm sure.
You are my closest friend, my favorite person,
The lover and the home I've waited for.
I cannot promise that I will deserve you
From this day on. I hope to pass that test.
I love you and I want to make you happy.
I promise I will do my very best.

1. In 'Love is a Losing Game' how does the poet present the speakers feelings towards love?
   24 marks

2. In both ‘Love is a Losing Game’ and ‘A Vow’ the speakers describe the conflicted feelings that come with love. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings about their impact?
   8 marks
Kid by Simon Armitage
Batman, big shot, when you gave the order
to grow up, then let me loose to wander
leeward, freely through the wild blue yonder
as you liked to say, or ditched me, rather,
in the gutter ... well, I turned the corner.
Now I've scotched that 'he was like a father
to me' rumour, sacked it, blown the cover
on that 'he was like an elder brother'
story, let the cat out on that caper
with the married woman, how you took her
downtown on expenses in the motor.
Holy robin-redbreast-nest-egg-shocker!
Holy roll-me-over-in-the-clover,
I'm not playing ball boy any longer
Batman, now I've doffed that off-the-shoulder
Sherwood-Forest-green and scarlet number
for a pair of jeans and crew-neck jumper;
now I'm taller, harder, stronger, older.
Batman, it makes a marvellous picture:
you without a shadow, stewing over
chicken giblets in the pressure cooker,
next to nothing in the walk-in larder,
punching the palm of your hand all winter,
you baby, now I'm the real boy wonder.

Stanley by Lorraine Mariner
Yesterday evening I finished
with my imaginary boyfriend.
He knew what I was going to say
before I said it which was top of my list
of reasons why we should end it.

My other reasons were as follows:
he always does exactly what I tell him;
nothing in our relationship has ever surprised
me;
he has no second name.

He took it very well
all things considered.
He told me I was to think of him
as a friend and if I ever need him
I know where he is.

1. In 'Kid' how does the poet present the speaker's feelings towards being let down by his father?
24 marks

2. In both 'Kid' and 'Stanley' the speakers describe the way our expectations are not met in reality. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings about the people who don't live up to their expectations?
8 marks
Names
By Wendy Cope

She was Eliza for a few weeks
when she was a baby –
Eliza Lily. Soon it changed to Lil.

Later she was Miss Steward in the baker’s shop
And then ‘my love’, ‘my darling’, Mother.

Widowed at thirty, she went back to work
As Mrs Hand. Her daughter grew up,
Married and gave birth.

Now she was Nanna. ‘Everybody
Calls me Nanna,’ she would say to visitors.
And so they did – friends, tradesmen, the doctor.

In the geriatric ward
They used the patients’ Christian names.
‘Lil,’ we said, ‘or Nanna,’
But it wasn’t in her file
And for those last bewildered weeks
She was Eliza once again.

What I Regret
By Nina Cassian

... never having heard the voice of the Dodo bird ... 
... never having smelled the Japanese cherry trees ... 
... never having punished the lovers and friends that deserted me ... 
... never having asked for honours that I deserved ... 
... never having composed a Mozart sonata ... 
... never having realised that I'd live long enough to regret all the above ... 
... and much, much more ...

1. In 'Names' how does the poet present the speaker's feelings towards Eliza?
24 marks

2. In both 'Names' and 'What I Regret' the speakers describe feelings about growing old. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?
8 marks