

*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 speaker's 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.  
"Tana. Ethiopia. Khartoum. Aswan."  
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 Tilcher's Class' how does the poet present the speakers feelings towards school?

24 marks

2. In both 'Last Lesson' and 'Mrs Tilcher'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 speaker's 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 fount 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

My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I  
going? A fusillade of question-marks.

Makrolon = toughened plastic

Fusillade = a series of shots fired rapidly one after another

1. In 'Belfast Confetti' how does the poet present the speaker's 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 speakers 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 speakers 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