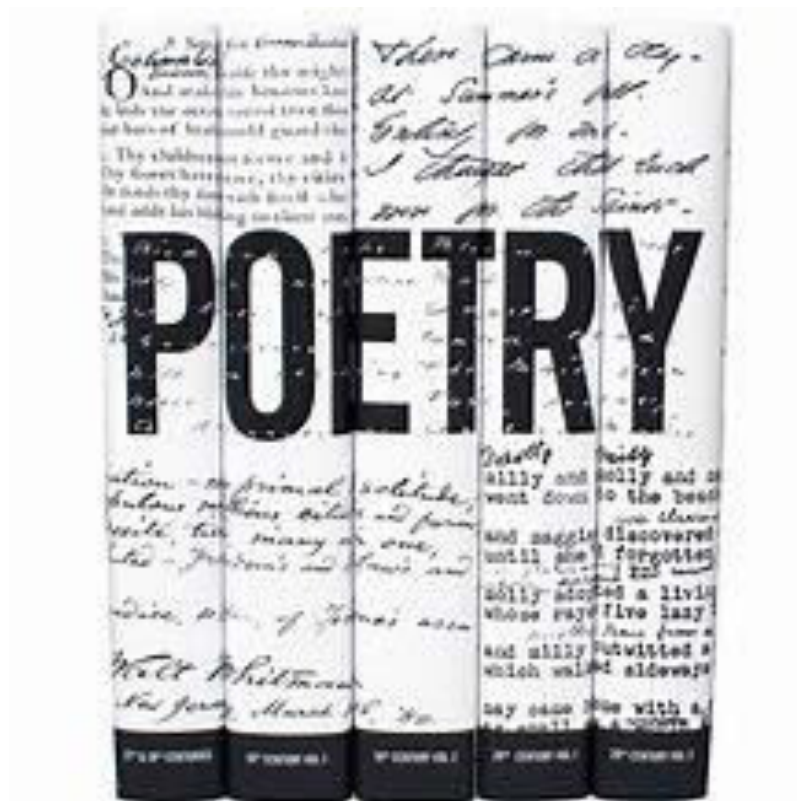




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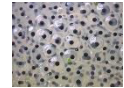
English Literature Revision Guide EDUQAS Poetry Anthology Notes



2024



Death of a Naturalist by Seamus Heaney



Who, what, where, when and why:

The poem is split into two parts. The first focuses on a childhood memory and the enjoyment that learning about frogs brings; a childhood curiosity is filled. The second part focuses on the present, and the narrator coming across frogs again. This time, they are sinister and gross, and he fears them. This is a coming-of-age poem that explores the idea that perception changes over time.

<p>Key Quotations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Warm thick slobber of frogspawn” – something that might be seen as disgusting as an adult seems exciting as a child. The language used shows that the narrator is an innocent child. • “A coarse croaking that I had not heard Before” – there has been a change in tone. What was once exciting to the young boy has now changed and become alien; he does not recognise the sound and the adjective “coarse” implies there was threat to it. • “The great slime kings were gathered there for vengeance” – “Great slimes kings” show the power has shifted to the frogs. They rule the flax-dam now.
<p>Context:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamus Heaney suffered loss as a child after his brother died in a car accident when he was four years old. This is just one of many of his poems dealing with the theme of a loss of innocence. • Heaney enjoyed nature and grew-up on a farm; the poem reflects his own childhood curiosity in the great outdoors.
<p>Structure:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first stanza, the speaker in the poem is excited about discovering new parts of nature and is joyful. • In the last stanza, it changes as he becomes more fearful of the nature around him. He is less excited about nature and more aware of the dangers it brings.
<p>Possible Themes and Links:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of innocence – <i>Afternoons</i> • Childhood memories – <i>Excerpt from The Prelude</i> • Passing of time – <i>As Imperceptibly as Grief, Excerpt from The Prelude and To Autumn</i> • Nature - <i>To Autumn, As Imperceptibly as Grief</i>

The "Death" that is referred to in the title is metaphorical – it alludes to a loss of innocence and childhood.

Flax is a type of plant.

Death of a Naturalist

'Heart' suggests that this is the central place to his childhood world.

The verbs, 'festered,' and 'rotted,' shows the decay of the plants – at this point it's exciting, but it could symbolising the rotting of his childhood innocence.

All year the flax-dam, festered in the heart Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragon-flies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied
Specks to range on window-sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until
The fattening dots burst into nimble-
Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mummy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs to
For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

The sun is personified to show relentless and harsh summer can be – especially looking back on the long, hot summers of childhood.

'Delicately' is interesting as it shows the appreciation and beauty the young narrator finds in something that others would find so disgusting.

'Best of all' shows the excitement at the grossest part of nature (childhood innocence). 'Slobber' highlights how gross it would be to other people.

'Jampotfuls,' 'jellied specks' and 'slobber' all show how innocent and naïve the speaker of the poem is.

A simplistic discussion of how tadpoles are formed again highlights the innocence of the speaker, and the teacher trying to preserve this.

'Wait' and 'watch' show how excited the speaker is. They cannot wait to see the miraculous transformation.

'Then' shows the shift in tone and innocence.

The speaker remembers the little facts about frogs that children tend to cling to.

'Invaded,' 'cocked on sods' and 'mud grenades' all suggest a war between the speaker and the frogs – symbolic of the moment children begin to grow-up.

Change in perception – no longer fascinating.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

'I had not heard before' shows the change in the speaker – the relationship has changed.

Seamus Heaney

He now sees the dangers of the world – his childhood innocence is lost.

'Great slimes kings' show the power has shifted to the frogs. They rule the flax-dam now.

'Clutch' implies that they are now a danger – do they want vengeance for him stealing the spawn?



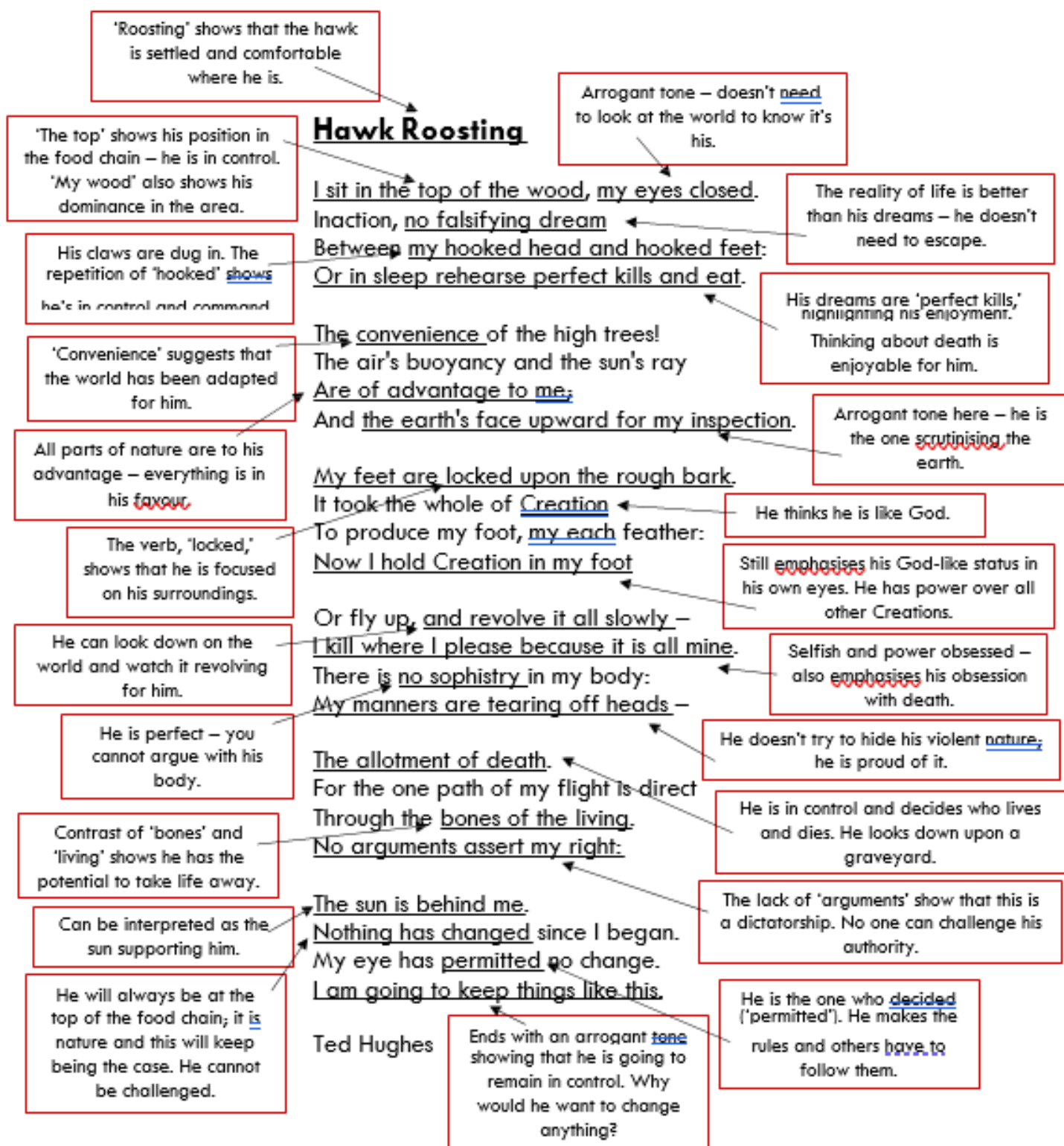
Hawk Roosting by Ted Hughes



Who, what, where, when and why:

The speaker throughout the poem is a hawk. He is proud of his place at the top of the food chain and enjoys the power this brings. He is quite cruel in his outlook but the poem displays the thoughts behind dictatorship and what it means to have power.

Key Quotations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “In sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat” – he enjoys killing so much he dreams about it. Every kill is “perfect” as he is so well-designed, he is unstoppable.• “Now I hold Creation in my foot” – arrogant tone. He is very self-assured and confident in himself. He knows he is at the top of the food chain.• “I am going to keep things like this” - shows the power that the hawk has. He is untouchable and at the top of the food chain. No-one can challenge them.
Context:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ted Hughes was Poet Laureate until his death in 1984. He wrote a lot of poems about the natural world.• Hughes has said that the poem was simply written to show a hawk’s natural way of thinking. He didn’t want to portray him as cruel, but simply as the way a hawk would naturally be.
Structure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The clearly organised structure of the six stanzas reflects the hawk’s control the lands around him.• The steady and calm pace to the poem shows the control of the hawk; he has a regular pace and will not be rushed or hurried by anyone.
Possible Themes and Links:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power and control – <i>Ozymandias</i>• The natural world – <i>To Autumn, Afternoons, Death of a Naturalist</i>





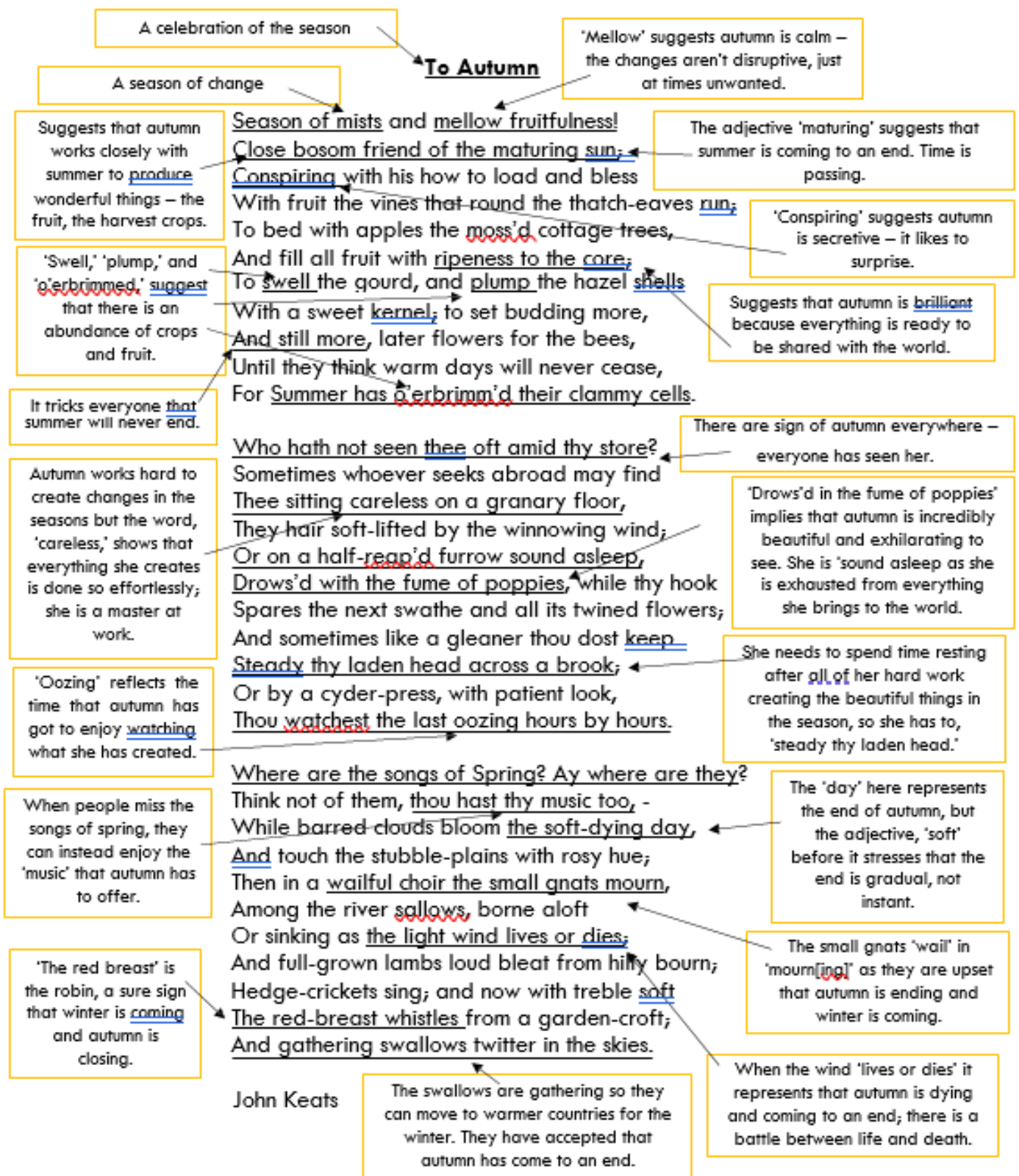
To Autumn – John Keats



Who, what, where, when and why:

The poem, 'To Autumn' by John Keats is an ode to autumn, meaning it is a poem which has been written in dedication to the season. There are three stages of the poem as Keats focuses on the ripe fruits that are ready to be harvested before moving onto the animals getting ready for hibernation. He ends the poem by focusing on the end of the season and the winter coming.

Key Quotations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Fill all fruit with ripeness to the core” - suggests that autumn is brilliant because everything is ready to be shared with the world. There is so much of everything that everyone can enjoy what it brings.• “On a half-reap’d furrow sound asleep” - she is “sound asleep” as she is exhausted from everything she brings to the world. She is so adept at bringing autumn to the world that she is able to take time.• “Where are the songs of Spring?” - when people miss the songs of spring, they can instead enjoy the “music” that autumn has to offer.
Context:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keats was a Romantic poet and wrote a lot about nature and the natural world. This ode shows his love of the natural world, especially as he personifies autumn all the way through.• The poem could be his way of trying to make a lasting impression – he doesn’t want to be like autumn which is fleeting. He wanted his memory to live on despite his early death at 25.
Structure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first stanza is a celebration and it suggests that autumn begins in a rich and calm way.• In the second stanza, Keats speaks directly to autumn and makes the suggestion that autumn is in no rush to move on.• The final stanza shows change, just as the season is changing from autumn to winter. Keats recognises this and is accepting of the fact he cannot control this.
Possible Themes and Links:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The passing of time – <i>Afternoons, Death of a Naturalist, As Imperceptibly as Grief</i>• The natural world – <i>Excerpt from The Prelude, Death of a Naturalist</i>





Excerpt from The Prelude by William Wordsworth



Who, what, where, when and why:

The poem is a magical description of a young boy's adventures outside on a cold evening. He ignores his mother's calls to come in and instead continues to play outside. There is a freedom to his playing, as his games remind him of hunting. The natural world provides a joyous experience to him. There is a sense of nostalgia to the poem as Wordsworth celebrates the innocence of childhood and the happiness of the freedom it brought.

Key Quotations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “It was a time of rapture: clear and loud” – there is something magical and enlightening about this evening. There is a sense that this day is life changing for the boy and he is on a journey.• “The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare” – the adventures the boy has on the ice is comparable to hunting.• “The orange sky of evening died away” – this represents the finality of the exciting day the boy has had and the end of childhood for Wordsworth as well; the wonder of evening and twilight is replaced with the darkness of night, and innocence is replaced with adult responsibility.
Context:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• William Wordsworth was another one of the great Romantic poets• The Prelude explores Wordsworth wonder at his childhood memories, exploring outside and having adventures during winter. It is nostalgic in tone.
Structure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The poem begins with the end of the day – the sun is setting and the warm lights of homes provide all the light they need.• In the middle of the poem, Wordsworth focuses on the adventures he had outside on the ice, playing chase whilst ice-skating.• The end of the poem sees the day come to a close, as the stars appear and the sun sets.
Possible Themes and Links:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The natural world, passing of time – <i>Death of a Naturalist, To Autumn</i>

This is a small part of a much longer poem – it is a narrative of his life.

Excerpt from The Prelude

Lots of description of winter – a time of change.

There is something magical and enlightening about this evening. There is a sense that this day is life changing for the boy and he is on a journey.

'Untir'd horse' creates the impression of boys who have yet to be tamed; they are wild and free and enjoying their childhood.

The adventures the boy has on the ice is comparable to hunting. It's a thrilling game for them all.

Nature is mimicking the sounds of the children's ice-skates on the ice. The simile allows the reader to see how wintry it is.

The 'sparkling' stars mimic the magic of childhood – everything is charming in childhood, and everything is an adventure.

And in the frosty season when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows through the twilight blaz'd,
I heed not the summons—happy time
It was, indeed, for all of us; to me
It was a time of rapture: clear and loud
The village clock toll'd six; I wheel'd about,
Proud and exalting, like an untir'd horse,
That cares not for his home—All shod with steel,
We hiss'd along the polish'd ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din,
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees, and every icy crag,
Tinkled like iron, while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

The cottage hints at a rural setting in the countryside.

'The twilight blaz'd' shows the warmth and cosiness of the cottages; it reflects the warm and happy feelings Wordsworth has of his childhood.

He ignores his mum's calls to come in; he's having too much fun.

All children were screaming and shouting in excitement.

The countryside is alive with music – all of nature's wonders create their own sounds of excitement.

The 'alien sound of melancholy' is an unknown sound to the boys – there is a sense of sadness from Wordsworth that these days are over and times of childhood innocence have passed.

William Wordsworth

This represents the finality of the exciting day the boy has had and the end of childhood for Wordsworth as well; the wonder of evening and twilight is replaced with the darkness of night, and innocence is replaced with adult responsibility.

Comprehension mini questions for each of the 4 poems.

Death of a Naturalist

1. In line 1, what did the flax-dam do?
2. In line four, what did the flax-dam do in the punishing sun?
3. Line 7 – what delicate, pretty animals are seen?
4. Line 8/9 – what is described as a ‘warm thick slobber’?
5. Lines 14/15 – what happened to the frogspawn he collected?
6. Line 23 – what were the fields rank with?
7. Lines 23 - 24 what did the angry frogs invade?
8. Line 27 - How are the frogs described now his feelings are changing?
9. Line 30 – how does Heaney make the frog sound dangerous?
10. Line 31 – 32 how do you know Heaney respects the frogs but thinks they could be dangerous?

Prelude

1. In line 1, what time of year the poem is set?
2. In line 4 how did he feel?
3. Line 6/7 – how did the village clock strike?
4. Line 8 – what animal did he turn around like?
5. Lines 9/ 10 – what are the children doing?
6. Line 13 – what group of animals are the children compared to?
7. Lines 14 – how did they move through the night?
8. Line 16 – the tone changes here. Which word tells us something else is happening, not just focusing on the beauty of nature?
9. Line 19/ 20 – how do we know there was a strange sound of sadness.
10. Line 22 – which phrase suggests the night is endless?

Hawk Roosting

1. In line 1, where does the hawk sit to show he is powerful?
2. In line four, what violent words are used, even while the hawk sleeps?
3. Line 5 – how do we know the hawk is excited by being covered by the high trees?
4. Line 5-7– what three things are of advantage to the hawk?
5. Lines 12 – how do we know the hawk feels powerful, what does he think he holds?
6. Line 14 – how does this line show the hawk is confident and arrogant?
7. Lines 16 – what phrase shows the hawk is a predator, and enjoys this?
8. Line 20 – what word shows people can no argue with the hawk’s opinion of himself?
9. Line 21 – how Hughes show the danger of the hawk’s attack?
10. Line 24 - how does the last line show the hawk remains in control?

To Autumn

1. In line 2, how do you know the sun has a good relationship with autumn?
2. In line 5, what word tells us there are a lot of apples?
3. Line 6-8 – list 4 words that show nature is sweet and appealing.
4. Line 10 – which phrase shows they think summer is endless?
5. Lines 14 – what word suggests the granary is a nice place?
6. Line 21 – how do we know nature/ autumn works for humans?
7. Lines 22 - what repeated word suggests time passes slowly?

8. Line 23 – what repeated word makes the speaker sound angry with spring?
9. Line 25 – how does Keats make it sound as though things are coming to an end?
10. Line 32 - how do you know Keats is showing winter is almost here?

Practice exam questions

Death of a Naturalist is a poem about the loss of childhood innocence. How does Heaney explore his views on this theme? Remember to refer to the contexts of the poem in your answer

(15 marks)

excerpt from The Prelude is a poem about the beauty and excitement nature brings. How does Wordsworth explore his views on this theme? Remember to refer to the contexts of the poem in your answer

(15 marks)

Hawk Roosting is a poem about the power of nature. How does Hughes explore his views on this theme? Remember to refer to the contexts of the poem in your answer

(15 marks)

To Autumn is a poem about the beauty of Autumn and the abundance of life. How does Keats explore his views on this theme? Remember to refer to the contexts of the poem in your answer

(15 marks)

You can make these in to the 25 mark questions by comparing two of the poems.