

***Choose a poem which has a surprising or interesting or emotional ending. State what the ending is and how the poet, through skilful use of poetic technique has made it surprising or interesting or emotional ending***

Marsden Bay is a rather scientific poem by Peter Reading who is a pretty unknown writer. It has an interesting ending where a beach and its inhabitants that the reader should have come to respect gets vandalised and attacked by the 'yobs' who the reader should now feel extremely unsympathetic towards. The ending would be trivial and not surprising and interesting if the reader did not despise the boys and respect the beach. Peter Reading then furthers the interest of the ending with an ambiguous view that keeps the reader thinking after they have read the poem.

In stanza one the writer writes in a very scientific tone calling the seagulls by their scientific name 'rizza trydactlya'. When the writer does this he is telling us more about the birds and generally when you know a lot about something you have a greater level of respect for it.

The writer uses the same technique when describing the beach by stating the period the beach is from and describing it to fine scientific detail; "limestone cliff face" and "Permian period".

The writer then uses a metaphor to describe the seagulls comparing them to 'tracer bullets'. This shows them to have sophistication shared only by modern complex pieces of equipment. This should further the reader's sympathy and respect towards the birds.

The word choice of 'colonizes' adds to this effect showing the birds to be almost human having complex networks of families this similarity to ourselves should make us once again feel respect towards the birds.

Using the same theory that the more you know about something the more you respect you feel towards it, the writer describes the nose the birds make; "kittiwake". This furthers our understanding of the birds and makes us feel more respect towards them.

Throughout most of stanza 2 the writer retains this scientific tone, as he introduces a new group of characters that could be best described as 'casuals'. The writer never uses any such word though he just creates a

stereotypical 'casual' image that the reader will immediately feel unsympathetic towards. He describes them to wear "Army store combat jackets" which have bad enough connotations on their own. "Army" and "combat" have violent connotations and make these characters unsympathetic and these connotations also foreshadow the violent ending that is still to come. He furthers the image of their attire with 'balaclava' and 'boots' and 'jeans'.

Similarly to what he did with the birds Peter Reading then describes how the youth communicate. There is an obvious Newcastle accent that is difficult to understand and what can be understood of it is swearing "gibbogerofforillgetchayafugga". This should further the reader's lack of respect towards these 'yobs' after hearing the bad language.

It is only after this build up that in stanza three the interesting and surprising part can take place. It is here that the youths go down on to the beach and begin to vandalise it. This should draw great emotion from the reader.

It is now that the readers can see the boy's opinion of the beach as the writer makes their thoughts known with free indirect style. The boys describe the birds as 'poultry' as the from the 'rizza trydactlya' that we the reader have come to respect.

Peter Reading then uses a mixture of assonance and onomatopoeia to draw emotion and surprise and interest from the reader. The use of the word 'crepitate' sounds like the shells breaking this is onomatopoeia and assonance with an open vowel sound that sounds like goo. "thick embryo goo". This brings more sadness as the baby birds are killed bringing more interest from the reader.

*The final lines of the poem are ambiguous, Reading informs us that this all happens "under a hail of hurled fossilized desert two hundred and eighty million years old."*

*This either means that the beach is so old and has been around so long that it will outlast the boys who are a minor interruption. Or, perhaps more disturbingly that the beach which has lasted in harmony with its inhabitants for so long as been irreparably disturbed by the one inhabitant who cannot live in harmony – man.*

*Reading has skilfully used this surprising and effective ending to highlight his theme. Mankind's ignorance, as represented by the boys and their lack of knowledge of the beach (the 'magnesium limestone' becomes just a 'chunk' in their hands, the 'rizza trydactyla' degraded to mere 'flung poultry') and how that ignorance leads them to destroy nature's harmony. Reading offers us a slight ray of hope with the ambiguity in the ending, perhaps showing through the whole poem that if we studied and came to understand nature, as the poet has done these events and worse maybe avoided.*

*Overall the poem 'At Marsden Bay' has an effective ending which highlights the theme through use of contrast, free indirect style and ambiguity.*

This is a good essay. It clearly follows the second part of the question, and tells us the ending of the poem right away before explaining how the whole text has been building up to this. They analyse the poem well and show clear knowledge of the text. They oddly, seem to ignore the symbolism in the poem, but other than that do well. This would receive a 17/18.