

# National 5 Poetry Question

Choose a Question from the list  
that you feel fits *At Marsden Bay* –  
Copy this in to your jotter

# Introduction

- Make it very clear how you are answering the question.
- Explain what the poems theme is.
- Remember to include the title and the author.
  - *Include a sentence or two about the theme if you want, as a hook for the essay.*
  - *Include a Quote as a mini title if you want.*

# Example Introductions...

- Peter Reading's *At Marsden Bay* is a poem which features a memorable place, namely the titular 'Marsden Bay'. The poem goes in to great scientific detail to make this location very memorable, but then, furthers this impression by using the location as a symbol for nature, and how mankind (as represented by four yobs) destroys it due to their ignorance.

# Example Introductions...

- How we treat the environment is a crucial aspect of modern life. At the start of the twenty first century mankind poses a very real threat to life on earth, as we pollute and destroy the vital eco-systems that sustain us. Often this is done out of sheer ignorance, as we consume fossil fuels and cut down forests with-out considering the future repercussions. A poem which deals with this aspect of modern life is Peter Reading's *At Marsden Bay*. In this poem Reading uses the beach and birds as symbol for nature and then four boys to represent mankind, showing through their ignorance how easily it is for us to wreck the environment.

# Main Body Section One

- In order to set up the **dramatic event** in stanza three, Reading must first *win our sympathy for the birds and and the beach*. He does this by using a **scientific tone** in stanza one, and describing in great detail the formation of the beach and the birds who live there. This tone *allows the reader to learn about the location and as we grow knowledgeable we respect it more*. The first 6 lines , the ‘**magnesium carbonates**’ that were ‘**silted**’ here in the ‘**Permian period**’. Here **the word choice** is very scientific, also the writer uses **enjambment** to emphasis words such as ‘**stratum**’, ‘**silted**’ and ‘**carbonates**’.

- He then progresses to tell us it is not a seagull, but uses the grand label 'Rissa trydactlya'. The description of the bird in particular makes us sympathetic to them as they 'colonise' the cliff edge, *suggesting they are part of a great society*; they are in 'pairs' suggesting a loving family life, and Reading uses onomatopoeia to let us hear the difference between the species as they call 'kit-e-wayke' and 'uk-uk-uk'. By noticing these difference we, the readers, too come to appreciate the birds more and therefore are more **shocked by the dramatic conflict** in stanza three.

# Main Body Section One

## Example 2

- The location in the poem is Marsden bay. Reading makes this memorable in stanza one, by encouraging the reader to learn about it, he does his by going in to great detail and by using a scientific tone. He begins by explaining how the landscape formed, how the 'magnesium carbonates' that were 'silted' here in the 'Permian period'. Here **the word choice** is very scientific, also the writer uses *enjambment* to emphasis words such as 'stratum', 'silted' and 'carbonates'. This forces us to think about how old the beach is, and how long it took to form. Then he goes on to describe the wild life that inhabits the place, instead of calling them simply 'seagulls' he uses the scientific name 'Rissa Trydactlya' to show he knows a lot about them, it also makes them sound more important and encourages the readers to have respect for them.. He adds to this sense of respect by saying as they 'colonise' the cliff edge, *suggesting they are part of a great society*; they are in 'pairs' suggesting a loving family life, and Reading uses *onomatopoeia* to let us hear the difference between the species as they call 'kit-e-wayke' and 'uk-uk-uk'. This all gives a sensory description of the location and makes it very memorable.

# Main Body 2

- Topic sentence explaining how stanza two helps answer your question.
- Analyse and explain what happens in stanza two.
- Try to mention; The Stereotype (how it is created), How we are made to dislike the boys, the enjambment, structure of the stanza (it mirrors the previous – description followed by sound), the use of onomatopoeia.

# Main Body Three - Example

- After introduction the two main elements (the beach which represents nature and the boys who symbolize mankind) Reading shows how they come in to **conflict** with terrible results for the environment. To make this effective Reading uses Free Indirect Style, this is where he take words that the boys would use and ‘drops’ them in to his narrative. For example: “Gibbo grubs up a Magnesium Limestone/ chunk” Here the poet is still using his scientific tone, but he allows us to hear Gibbo’s words (“Grubs” and “chunk”). This clearly shows us Gibbo’s ignorance towards the location – it his these ancient cliffs are just ‘chunks’. It gets worse though. Gibbo and his ‘pustular pals’ then move on to attack the ‘Rissa trydactlya’, or as they see them ‘poultry’ or just a ‘lump’ to be “seized” and swung around their heads. The conflict is made particularly graphic and shocking by the poets word choice.

- Lots of the words he ‘drops’ in from the boys are verbs – highlighting how violent they are; “biffing an incubating kittiwake / full in the sternum—an audible slap”. Here the word ‘slap’ and ‘biffing’ – the violent words are from the boys, while the scientific words – which highlight how little the boys actually understand – show the pain and suffering the bird must actually be in. Because Reading has spent time making us learn about and respect the birds we are horrified by the boys actions, and because we understand that this bird is a mother (‘incubating’ her eggs) and now is suffering as her ‘sternum’ maybe broken we see that this conflict is caused by the boys – and symbolically mankind’s – ignorance of the world around them.

# Stanza Three

- Explain – The use of Free Indirect Style.
- How the readers are supposed to react.
- The sound effect (go in to as much detail as you can – alliteration, repetition of sounds, assonance etc...)
- The simile – how it creates a contrast to the pervious simile.
- Why the writer reminds us of the age of the beach at the very end.
- *And make sure you relate this to the question you are answering.*

# Conclusion

- Repeat title and author.
- Restate which question you have been answering. (*so basically repeat a sentence from the introduction*)
- Briefly recap the essay.
- If you started with a quote / hook – return to it.

# Conclusion Example

- In conclusion *At Marsden Bay* by Peter Reading is a poem which highlights the important feature of modern life – the destruction of the environment. Reading uses the location to represent the environment, and the yobs to symbolize mankind, before showing us, through his use of Free Indirect Style, how mankind's ignorance leads to nature's destruction.