



GCSE English
Revision notes 2020/2021

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Reading Non-fiction

Often in the English GCSE exam you are asked to compare two articles, evaluating which is the most effective for a particular purpose.

Usually you will be directed to examine:

- **Presentation**
- **Language**
- **Content**

The following is a list of the sorts of things you should be looking for when commenting on a text. It is not an exhaustive list, but should cover the main areas.

Remember that the key to getting a good mark is not identifying these things; it is your analysis of their purpose and effectiveness.

Presentation	Language	Content
Photographs; headlines and subheadings;	The Purpose of the writing is crucial. This can be to:	Is the content fact-based or opinion-led?
Bullet points; illustrations; cartoons and diagrams; graphs and grids;	Instruct; Persuade; Describe	Is the piece detailed or short?
Boxes; bold, italic, large or small type; upper case or fancy fonts, colour or black and white.	Inform; Entertain; Discuss.	Is the piece interesting or dull?
Is it written in a genre/form such as a letter, or article?	The purpose will affect whether the writing is	
	Complex, technical or simple	
	Formal or informal (such as using slang and abbreviations)	
	Literal or poetic / figurative	
	Factual/objective, or opinion based or emotive.	

Writing to Argue, Persuade, Instruct

Organising your argument

When planning to write your argument it is a good idea to use a for/against box.

For your work to reach the highest marks you will need to have considered both sides of the argument, although you can come down heavily on one side in your conclusion.

You should argue against and ideally undermine each point of the opposition's argument.

You should finish by re-enforcing your case with your most compelling argument.

Address the reader/audience directly; confronting them with the choice between the two sides is a powerful way to finish.

Evidence

It's essential that you back-up what you say with evidence. Use facts, figures, research data and quotes.

It is highly recommended that you use the reading material in the first part of the exam (question 1) as a source of quotes/facts/figures/research. If this is not possible then make up some! But try to keep them believable.

Remember: you must use some facts and figures to support and re-enforce your argument.

Writing in a genre

The exam question will always ask you to write with a specific purpose in a specific style for a specific audience. This is known as writing in a genre.

Genres often used:

Newspapers - Headlines, These need to be attention grabbing, short and punchy.

Sub-Heading, Usually the subheading is more balanced, factual and informative than the headline. In your opening paragraph you should try to address the who, what, where, when, how questions.

Magazines: These are freer in their layout. The language is less conventional than that used in newspapers. Remember that this is though dependent on the audience.

Letters: You must set out a letter using the correct formal conventions.

Varying sentences and punctuation

Use a variety of sentences. Short, emphatic sentences should be mixed with longer more complex ones. By leaving the subject to the end you can also use suspenseful sentences.

It is important that you use a wide range of punctuation correctly.

Make sure you use: Colons before a list; Speech or quotation marks; Question and exclamation marks. Students rarely use semi-colons; examiners like to see them used.

Persuasive Techniques

Repetition:

Modern politicians often make use of this ancient technique to hammer home a point. The repetition can have an emphatic, powerful, confident, effect.

Tony Blair used it in 'Education, education, education', Julius Caesar used it in 'I came, I saw, I conquered', and Winston Churchill rallied the country with ' . . . We shall fight them on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. . '

Questions:

Questions help to engage the reader in your text; they make the readers think for themselves.

Other Language devices:

Third person address, using the pronoun 'you' as if you are speaking directly to the reader.

Using the language of logical arguments: Propositions are opening statements that you are going to develop upon Emotive language

Standard English

Standard English is formally and grammatically correct English. It is the written equivalent of wearing a smart suit.

You are expected to use Standard English in all you English exams. This means not using slang, informal, or chatty language, and it means making sure such things as your verbs are in agreement.

Only use non-standard forms when you are writing direct speech. That way the examiner can see that you're consciously adapting language to create specific effects.

Writing to Describe

Sensual Imagery

Writers often use description in an attempt to allow their readers to imagine characters, moods and settings.

One way of making these descriptions effective is by appealing to the readers' senses. Your readers should be able to see and feel and taste the world you are describing.

Sight: A writer should aim at creating a kind of film of images running through a text, so that their readers can imagine themselves there.

Sound: Details of sounds can be particularly effective in creating atmosphere.

Smell: Our sense of smell is strongly linked to our memory. Smells can instantly conjure up a feel of a particular place or time.

Touch: For readers to believe in the world you are creating, it is important that this world is physical, that it has textures.

Alliteration is when two or more words in a line begin with the same letter or sound.

Onomatopoeia is when the sound of a word re-enforces its meaning. Words such as crash, slither, scrape, whizz, boom are onomatopoeic. They are words bursting with energy and liven up any writing.

Varying sentences

You should adapt the length of your sentences to fit the subject you are describing.

Long sentences can be used to **slow** a description down to create a sense of relaxation or time **dragging**.

Short sentences are more **punchy, quick** and **dynamic**, and are good for describing dramatic events or action.

Rhythm: Repeated use of short sentences will create a choppy, staccato rhythm. Longer sentences will create a more fluid, fluent rhythm.

Sentences in which the subject is kept to the end are sometimes called suspenseful, because the reader has to wait to see who or what the subject is. These suspenseful sentences can be used to create effects.

Verbs and Vocabulary

Verbs are action words. They are the athletes of language and should be energetic and expressive. Selecting the right verb can bring a piece to life.

Using verbs together can also create a quick pace and a sense of excitement, especially if the previous sentences have been long and slow.

Vocabulary means your choice of words. To get a good grade it is essential that you chose your vocabulary, such as your verbs, carefully.

An **adjective** is a word that describes a noun.

A **noun** is a thing, a place or a name.

Three General Rules on using Adjectives:

- Don't use two adjectives that mean the same thing. Find a better adjective instead.
- Use one adjective per noun, unless you have a good reason.
- Don't use words that intensify or weaken the adjective.

Similes and Metaphors

Similes are when you compare two things by saying that one is like the other.

A **metaphor** is a more concentrated form of simile, in which one thing is said to be the other.

Personification is a special type of metaphor where something that is not alive is given human emotions.

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Poetry of Ted Hughes

Work and Play

Subject

Work and Play contrasts the world of the swallow with that of people.

It is also about our ideas of what 'work' and 'play' mean, and our values.

Attitude

Hughes' attitude is expressed by the tone of the poem.

Hughes praises and celebrates the swallow, whilst criticising the people. He dislikes the ugliness and stupidity of the people, who seem alien and a pollutant in the natural world. Hughes sees the swallow as the perfect expression of the beauty and harmony of nature.

Style

Hughes main device is **contrast**. Contrasts run through the poem, in each stanza the swallow and people are compared.

Hughes uses a lot of metaphors, and sensual imagery. We see 'nude as tomatoes', hear 'screech', taste 'grit', smell 'Inhaling petroleum', and touch 'jab' the action of the poem.

The varying rhythm and line length help to create the contrast

Hawk Roosting

Subject

Hughes personifies a hawk. He describes it as a survivor and a killer. He compares the hawk's freedom to act on instinct with the way we are ruled by thoughts, arguments and regulations.

Attitude

The hawk's attitude is arrogant; its tone is menacing, confident, absolute, and boastful. The hawk sees itself as like a king, or a god or an executioner.

Hughes's attitude is more difficult to tell. He leaves the poem open for the reader to decide on how to react to this fierce spirit. Could we just laugh at the small hawk's grand deluded view of itself?

Style

Almost every image refers to the hawk's control and confidence. Everything revolves around the hawk. Look at the number of times 'I', 'me' or 'my' is used.

There are lots of short, factual sounding statements in the poem, and a lot of full stops.

These help to convey the bird's certainty.

Wind

Subject

The poem is about how extreme weather can make even modern man feel frightened and vulnerable and part of the natural environment.

The wind may be a metaphor for the power of creativity.

Attitude

The wind is frightening, but the tone of the poem is one full of excitement, awe, and anticipation.

Hughes isn't criticising the wind. Although perhaps he is criticising human for forgetting how powerful nature can be.

Style

The poem is packed with sensual imagery, metaphor, simile, and personification. Every line has a strong, vivid image in it.

The form of the poem, the fluid lines and stanzas matches the way the wind moves the landscape.

Tractor

Subject

The poem is about a real life incident when Hughes had to rescue a tractor. It tells us about what farmers have to put up with, and manages to make the British weather sound powerful and dangerous.

Attitude

The poet suffers a lot of pain in this poem and vents some frustration and anger on the 'stupidity' of the tractor.

But the end of the poem appears celebratory. The rescue of the tractor has been quite an adventure, a great achievement. The last line suggests the range of emotions the poet feels, but ends with elation.

Style

Hughes uses many of his favourite devices. The poem is brimming with sensual imagery and figurative language.

Again Hughes a change in the form at the end of the poem for dramatic purposes, and to suggest a change in feelings.

The Warm and the Cold

Subject

The poem is about how nature adapts easily to adverse weather, and about how man suffers in it. Presumably the farmer is on a 'spit' because he is worrying about his cattle or crops, and is powerless to help them.

Attitude

The tone of the poem seems to be one of gentle wonder. The images of the animals are all of comfort and warmth. And even the potentially grotesque image of the tortured farmers seems rather comic.

Style

Hughes mainly shows us his talent for thinking of fresh and arresting similes in this poem.

But as in all the poems he also employs metaphor and personification.

Once again he cleverly adapts his form to underscore the ideas in the poem.

Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy

War Photographer

Subject

Duffy's poem is about how we deal with the suffering of others, who might be far away. It takes the character of a war photographer to represent someone more involved and committed than we are.

Attitude

Duffy appears to admire the photographer, and be critical of the rest of us.

The poem is powerfully anti-war. However, elsewhere Duffy does not spell out her feelings, she allows readers to make their own judgements.

The form however suggests she is pessimistic about things changing for the better.

Style

Duffy uses the symbolic association of ordinary language. So that a simple word like 'dust' can carry lots of possible meaning.

She also includes some powerful imagery to shock us out of our complacency.

The use of a repetitive form suitably supports the ideas in the poem.

Valentine

Subject

This is a wonderful, original, clever love poem. In it Duffy rejects clichéd ideas of love and expresses how her love is:

Original, clever, intense, romantic, emotional, truthful, fierce, possessive, faithful, free and dutiful.

Attitude

The tone of the poem is genuine, confident, seductive, intimate, and at the end pulls away to sound a note of warning and seems to admit some weakness.

Style

Duffy manages to make the poem sound like a spoken voice, despite the fact that she uses structures it around an elaborate and imaginative extended metaphor. A difficult feat to pull off!

Stealing

Subject

Duffy's subject is a young boy, or is it a girl? She/he has been let down by society in some way. Because they have nothing to do and no way of improving their self-respect they turn to petty mindless crime.

Attitude

We will all have different attitudes to this character depending on our own viewpoints. A daily Mail reader for instance is unlikely to have much sympathy, whereas a Guardian reader might have too much, perhaps.

Duffy certainly, however, gives the character enough complexity to suggest she has some sympathy. His final, aggressive question, for instance, is meant to make us stop and think.

Style

This is a Dramatic Monologue, and in it Duffy cleverly captures the rhythms of speech.

The language is plain, ordinary, 'unpoetic', and so suits the speaker.

The form of the poem is loosely regular (6, 5line stanzas), as if it is attempting to order itself. The fact that there is no change or development in form might suggest how this character is trapped in his world, with his fear, his loneliness and his delusions.

Before you were mine

Subject

The vocabulary of the poem suits the fact that it is meant to be spoken: It is simple and straightforward.

However there is a lot of visual imagery, appropriate for a poem inspired by a photo.

The self-centredness of the child its impact of its mother's life is suggested by the poem starting with 'I' and ending with 'mine'.

The form of the poem doesn't change. Perhaps this is because that there is inevitability to the loss of glamour and youth. It is a process we all go through and cannot change.

Attitude

The tone of the poem is at times tender and warm

But there is also something slightly ominous. For instance in the repetitions of 'Before you were mine.'

Duffy seems to be able to see the relationships from both sides, aware of what the mother by having her child.

The reference to 'your ma' also suggests how these relationships are circular, passing from one generation to the next.

Style

The poem appears to be one about Duffy's mother and how the poet would like to have known her when she was a glamorous young woman.

There seems to be some regret about how the baby changed its mother.

The possessive tone of the baby and its self-centredness also suggests the poem is about how children change and come to rule their parents' lives.

In Mrs. Tilcher's Class

Subject

The poem celebrates childhood and a wonderful, imaginative, loving teacher. Everything in the first two stanzas is magical, warm, colourful and exciting. The first line gives the impression that they felt like they really were travelling up the Blue Nile. Even the books are 'Enthralling'!

The second half of the poem introduces more complex feelings, although mixed still with comedy and Mrs. Tilcher's warmth.

The final line suggests excitement, opportunity, fresh horizons, 'split open' and perhaps some emotional turmoil.

After all the summer holidays are about to start.

Attitude

The tone of the poem is one of warmth, affection, and of love.

It communicates the headlong excitement of being young.

The final stanza introduces a slightly more troubled tone, but there is still the sense of wonder and enthusiasm for life.

Style

Duffy brings the poem to life by using a lot of sensual imagery. We can see, hear, touch, taste, even smell, the world she describes.

There are lots of exact contemporary details, such as the milk, the gold star, and the pole for opening the window. These help to establish the time as well as the place.

Duffy uses figurative language, and these images all relate to the world and perspective of a child, whose idea of heaven is a 'sweet shop'.

Duffy subtly changes the form to suggest the changes for the child as she grows up.

Poetry of Simon Armitage

I am very bothered when I think . . .

Subject

This is a love poem but also a confessional piece. Not only has Armitage to confess the crime of maiming the young woman, perhaps now his wife, but also the fact that clever excuses came, and come, too readily to him: 'Don't believe me, please!'

In effect he's saying watch out for me; help me to be honest.

Attitude

This is clearly an incident the poet feels guilty about.

Or could 'bothered, as in 'I can't be bothered', be sarcastic?

The pain he describes is though very real; it makes you wince when reading it.

But there is also a note of tenderness and warmth, in the last line in particular.

Style

A sonnet, but an unconventional one. He adapts the form to suit the unusual subject matter: his unusual form of love.

The sensual imagery makes the scene vivid and painful.

The rhymes create the emphatic rhythm, and help to put some pattern, order and control on strong heart-felt emotions.

Poem

Subject

This poem is about how there is good and bad in all of us, and how it should be difficult to judge people fairly.

It is about how we judge people, inevitably, from the outside.

It deals with the problems of how we weigh one bad act against other good ones, and it makes us think about whether we should forgive people, or whether we should hold the bad things they have done against them.

Attitude

Armitage seems to avoid offering his feelings about this character. He lays out the details in a simple, factual sort of way.

But he makes sure one line stands out.

The balance at the end is, perhaps his own view.

Style

Armitage cleverly uses repetition and ordinary language.

Ironically he uses the form of a sonnet, more usually associated with love.

He uses contrast effectively. Using positive things, 'and praised his wife for every meal she made.' To make the negative as surprising and shocking as possible:

'And once, for laughing, punched her in the face.'

It Ain't what you do

Subject

The poem is about the choices we make in our lives and how we are often attracted to adventure.

Armitage suggests however that it is the experiences not the places that really matter.

The vagueness of the last stanza, 'I guess', 'That feeling, I mean' seems to refer to the vague feeling everyone gets sometimes, of wanting a different life. That awareness that we could be doing more and living more fully.

Attitude

There is a slightly wistful tone to the poem, as Armitage imagines what he might have done and remembers what he has.

The vague sensation of the last stanza conveys this state of mind: thoughtful, and slightly nostalgic.

Style

Armitage again uses ordinary everyday language.

He uses repetition of 'I have', 'I have not' to create a sort of mantra, a kind of rhythmical chant.

Armitage also shows his skill at bringing experiences to life, through his use of accurate details, sensual imagery, and subtle variations of rhythm.

About his Person

Subject

The subject of this poem appears to be how difficult it is to understand other people's lives.

Although at first it seems we might be able to piece together this character and his story the 'clues' prove to be very tricky.

Like 'Poem', 'I am very bothered' and 'It ain't what' it deals with questions of identity. What makes us us; our actions, our belongings, our desires?

Perhaps too the poem is questioning how death is treated in popular crime fiction, where the whodunit element is more important than the human suffering it usually revolves around.

Attitude

The use of puns and the detective element of the poem might encourage us not to take it too seriously.

But the **subtle suggestions of violence coupled with the last lines make us feel some genuine emotion** for this character who has lost love and his life:

'No gold or silver,

but crowning one finger

a ring of white unweathered skin.

That was everything.'

Style

The form of the poem imitates a police list.

The language cleverly avoids being pinned to one meaning. The details are elusive, we cannot complete the picture. Armitage achieves this through using puns, and language that hints at metaphorical meanings.

The rhymes move from being half rhymes to full ones in the middle of the poem to half rhymes again.

This creates the sense of things not being quite resolved, all the pieces not quite fitting together. The half rhymes at the end draw attention to themselves, allowing us to stop and think about their meaning.

Poetry from Other Cultures - Part One

Search for My Tongue

Content

The poem can either be simply read as being about one person's experience of moving to a foreign country and speaking two languages.

Or it can be seen as using language to represent the struggle of colonial experience. By trying to control the language colonisers tried to control the thoughts, feelings, values and ideas of the people they colonised. The poem shows how the native culture survives, at a deep level, and is able to overthrow in the end the invading culture.

Attitude

The attitude of the poet is difficult to read in this poem. Clearly there is a sense of wonder about the re-flowering of the native language, and the imagery of rotting suggests some of the pain of losing access to your mother tongue.

The poem however is quietly, subtly rebellious.

It celebrates the overthrowing of a foreign language/power and the resurgence of native language/culture.

Style

Bhatt uses a mixture of language in her poem. There is the conversational of the opening, the extended metaphor of language being like a plant, and there is also the use of Gujarati. This is a word that my computer doesn't even provide a spell-check for.

The language works by concentrating attention on the metaphor and by making us hear but not understand the Gujarati.

Unrelated Incidents

Content

The poem shows that people have prejudices for and against particular accents and dialects.

As language is a big part of culture and identity the poem is also about how 'Middle England' sees itself as superior to other regions.

Attitude

Although this seems at first a funny satirical poem, it is also deeply felt and angry.

The BBC accented newsreader is shown to be aggressive, actively taunting the viewer and suppressing their language: 'belt up'

It is difficult to tell who is speaking the second half of the poem, and this perhaps reflects the mutual feelings of hostility. The middle class presenter is hostile because he thinks the Glaswegian inferior; the Glaswegian is hostile as a result of this.

Style

Leonard manages to convey the way the Glaswegian accent sounds by writing phonetically.

His rejection of the claims and values of the 'standard' view is also represented by his unconventional punctuation.

He makes his point by being perfectly understandable despite not following any rules for 'correct' English.

The paired down form of the poem suits this unfancy, realistic, straight-talking language. There are no breaks, no doubts, the poem is as solid as the views and culture it represents.

Half-Caste

Content

The poem is about prejudice. It attacks people for holding racist, separatist views. It shows these views to be offensive and poorly thought through. In particular Agard homes in on how language can be used to re-enforce racist thinking, using the word 'half-caste' to illustrate his point. This word was commonly used until fairly recently and shows that racist views can reach wider into society than is comfortable to acknowledge.

Attitude

The poem is a powerful expression of Agard's anger and frustration with racist thinking.

The tone is one of confrontation, of a clear challenge to racist people to try to justify their opinions.

Despite the strong feelings there is also humour in the poem. The opening image, for example, is jokey, absurd. Agard also uses irony in the fourth stanza.

Style

Agard uses a mixture of language. The poem is clearly written in an Afro-Caribbean dialect, but this is modified so that it is easily understandable to other English users.

Lines like 'ah rass', and 'some o dem' are mixed with the standard 'I'm sure you'll understand.'

The form and rhythm of the poem is irregular. Agard imposes his own voice and the rhythms of West Indian culture on English language and poetry.

Blessing

Content

The poem is about an incident where a pipe bursts and a whole community rush to collect the water.

At first it seems just an exciting occasion vividly brought to life.

However from the first line there is a sense of something darker, and harder hitting.

The layers of the poem reflect the way different people will see the same scene / culture differently.

Attitude

The poet appears at first to be objective, describing but not commenting on the incident.

And to some extent she leaves the reader to decide the feeling and meaning of the poem.

Perhaps though there is horror and pity in that opening image of skin cracking 'like a pod'.

To me the poem seems like a lament for the poverty of these people and for the value system that keeps them poor, yet humble and thankful.

Style

Dharker uses sensual imagery to evoke the scene, and builds the rhythm of the poem into a crescendo at the bursting of the pipe.

She uses an extended metaphor, comparing water to a god.

She makes lines intentionally ambiguous, uncertain, so that the scene can be interpreted in more than one way.

Charlotte O'Neil's Song

Content

The poem is about oppression, specifically here the suffering of ordinary servant girls in Victorian England. It shows how hard their lives were, little better than prisoners or slaves, doing the lowliest work, at the beck and call of their masters.

The poem contrasts the working girl with the idle employer, and shows the injustice of a system that spilt the rich and the poor into master and servant.

Attitude

Fiona Farrell obviously sympathises with the servant's lives. It is written from Charlotte O'Neil's perspective.

The emphatic repetition, the empty justifications of such an unjust system and the defiance in the last stanza all convey a sense of anger.

Style

The language used is appropriate to the voice of the poem; a young Victorian servant girl. It is simple and straightforward.

The form is also simple, using the rhythms and end-stopped rhymes of songs.

Most of the poem is a list of the jobs these girls had to do.

The decisive, long-suffering tone of the poem creates its power.

Poetry from Other Cultures - Part Two

Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan

Content

The poem is about how Alvi felt as a young girl about her cultural identity.

She felt English, but was attracted to Pakistan, and confused and even repelled by it.

There are some feelings of guilt about this uncertain attitude. There is a general sense of a young person trying to work who they are.

The clothes are made to sound vibrant and attractive, but this is balanced by the final stanzas, where we hear more negative things about the poet's 'home' country: For example 'conflict', and 'beggars'.

Attitude

This is a poem specifically about the poet's feelings and attitudes.

Alvi, as a young girl, felt a mixture of emotions about her cultural identity:

Wonder, excitement, inadequacy, guilt, confusion, attraction, awe, discomfort, and alienation - many emotions common to teenagers.

Style

The poem uses a lot of visual detail to make us see the brightness and colour of Pakistan.

This use of visual detail is appropriate in a poem about how someone sees them self.

The personal nature of the poem is shown by the number of times the poet uses the pronouns 'I', or 'my'.

The form of the poem is irregular, with lines starting at different places, and being of different lengths. This creates a slightly unsettled, fluid feel to the poem, reflecting the poet's feelings about her identity.

Ogun

Content

The poem is about the feelings of the poet towards his uncle. The uncle is a highly skilled craftsman, but he is poor because the world prefers cheaper mass-produced furniture.

This makes the uncle turn inwards; he finds deep within himself a sense of ancient anger, an anger that is no good to him.

Attitude

The poem is full of praise for the uncle and anger at the way he has been neglected by the world. The poet feels pity for the terrible effects the neglect and poverty has had on his uncle.

The poet appears to understand the uncle's situation but feels powerless to help.

Style

Brathwaite uses sensual imagery, enjambment, onomatopoeia and alliteration to create the sights and sounds of the workshop.

Later he employs a metaphor of a journey to explain the process of the sculpting.

The final image of the idol is very vivid and visual.

An Old Woman

Content

The poem is about a revelatory experience in which the poet/character changes their perspective completely.

At first the beggar annoys the poet. He is aloof, distant and thinks of her as a pest.

But the image of her suffering utterly changes his view. Suddenly it is him who feels humble and small in comparison to the beggar woman.

Attitude

The poem is about the poet's thoughts and feelings. The poet passes through a considerable range of emotions, from irritation to the almost mystical, religious experience of the concluding stanzas.

The poem is also about how all of us judge, or misjudge each other.

Hence the use of the second person pronoun in 'You've seen it already', and 'You know how old women are.' Through this we are made to evaluate our own attitudes to the poor and vulnerable, and perhaps feel some guilt too.

Style

The poem's language splits into two halves: The bored, ordinary language of the first half, and the elaborate metaphorical language of the second.

Repetition is used in both halves but to very different effects. The repetition in the second half conveys the transfixed wonder of the poet watching the scene change:

'And the hills crack/ And the temples crack./ and the sky falls.'

The fact that the form remains constant subtly helps to make convincing the idea that it is the same character experiencing both halves of the poem.

Hurricane Hits England

Content

The poem is about the experience of coming to terms with a new life and a different culture. It is about how we adapt to new circumstance and can temporary lose sight of who we are.

The character in the poem has felt disconnected from her environment because it seems so different.

The storm is a metaphor for a big event that re-connects the character with her full sense of herself and her cultural heritage. This re-connecting also extends to the two places.

She realises at the end of the poem that there is continuity between her experience and between England and the West Indies.

She realises that beneath the surface differences human experience is the same.

Attitude

The character initially feels separate from her new environment and from aspects of herself. The poem is about re-connection.

The feelings are of confusion, empowerment, excitement and release.

The character feels unchained by the end of the poem. She has regained a full sense of who she is and where she lives. She feels a part of things, natural in her new environment and home.

Style

Nichols uses a lot of poetic devices to convey the drama of the inner and outer storms.

The exuberance and energy of the poetry matches the character's feelings.

Repetition is used to create a sense of immediacy and excitement

The poem is like a way of thinking. The character asks a lot of questions. After the first stanza it is in the present tense, so that we feel the emotions at the same time as the character does.

Nothing's Changed

Content

The poem is about the state of South Africa and the poet's feelings about it.

Africa had obviously hoped to see improvements after the fall of the Apartheid government. Instead he sees things have hardly changed.

In some ways they have got worse. The barriers and racism are now subtler, and perhaps therefore more difficult to confront.

The poem ends with the poet's hands burning for violence to destroy all the injustice he can see.

Attitude

The poem is full of anger. It is a protest, and a cry of pain.

Rather than the white culture feeling guilt and making some kind of recompense for its years of oppression and murder, the 'brash' restaurant symbolises confidence, even arrogance, certainly not shame.

Style

The poet uses sensual imagery to convey the sense of the surrounding. The opening line is 5 separate monosyllables that we see 'small, round', touch 'hard', and hear 'click'.

In the second stanza he uses repetition and a lengthening line to convey the build-up of his anger, and how it consumes every part of him.

The stanza on the 'whites only inn' is in the middle of the poem.

There are a lot of full stops used in the poem, with the last one sounding final, unanswerable, certain:

'Nothing's changed.'



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