National 5: Set Text (Poetry)

Norman MacCaig: Common Themes/Techniques

* Love
* Identity
* Isolation/Loneliness
* Relationships
* Frustration
* Anger
* Grief
* Loss
* Suffering/Pain
* Nature
* Mortality
* Fear
* Man’s Capacity for Destruction
* Violence
* Dangers of Modern World
* Strong emotions
* Sentence Structure/Enjambment
* Sound effects
* Imagery
* Symbolism
* Contrast



**THEMES**

**Love **

Which poems does this them occur in?

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

**‘Aunt Julia’**: MacCaig’s deep affection for his Aunt Julia is made clear through his grief, his frustration at his inability to communicate with her, and his affectionate tone for her.

Key Quotes:

1. “while her right hand drew yarn/ marvellously out of the air.”
2. “Hers was the only house…”
3. “But I hear her still…”

**‘Visiting Hour’**: MacCaig is visiting his dying loved one in hospital. He knows that it’s probably the last time he will see her, and he is struggling to control his emotions.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/feel, until/ I have to.”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: The cop is clearly in love with his wife and addresses her with affection in the poem. It is clear that their love provides a warm and pleasant atmosphere at home.

Key Quotes:

1. “when he said, ‘See you, babe’ to his wife,/he hoped it, he truly hoped it”
2. “…whom ‘Hiya, honey’ is no cliché.”

**Identity **

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

 ‘Aunt Julia’

**‘Assisi’**: The beggar is judged because of the way that he looks. We find that we too judge the beggar, and don’t expect his inner beauty.

Key Quotes:

1. “tiny twisted legs”
2. “…said Grazie in a voice as sweet/as a child's when she speaks to her mother...”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: As soon as the cop puts on his uniform he takes on a “tough guy” persona, in order to survive the horrors of his job. He must be able to separate his working life and his home life.

Key Quotes:

1. “He is a gorilla…”

**Isolation/Loneliness** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

 **‘Assisi’**: Clearly, the beggar is isolated within ‘Assisi’ as he is ignored by those who are in a position to help him. It’s as if he is invisible to the outside world.

Key Quotes:

1. “Sat, slumped like a half-filled sack/…outside the three tiers of churches…”
2. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside…”

**‘Aunt Julia**: MacCaig felt isolated when his aunt was alive as he could not communicate with her. In her death, he feels isolated in that he will never get this opportunity back.

Key Quotes:

1. “I could not answer her - / I could not understand her.”
2. “Hers was the only house…”
3. “By the time I had learned a little…absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”

**‘Visiting Hour**: In ‘Visiting Hour’ the speaker feels isolated on his visit to the hospital. Furthermore, his dying loved one is isolated within their illness.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel”
2. “She lies/ in a white cave of forgetfulness.”
3. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: The cop feels isolated from the rest of civilised society as he battles against criminals.

Key Quotes:

1. “See you, babe” to his wife,/ he hoped it, he truly hoped it.”
2. “he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.

**‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: Although surrounded by millions of people in New York, the persona feels lonely in their hotel room, far removed from the world around them.

Key Quotes:

1. “This morning I watched from here”
2. “Midnight has come in/ from foreign places.”
3. “I lie in bed, between/ a radio and television set.”

**‘Basking Shark**: The speaker is isolated in enabling his change in thinking.

Key Quotes:

1. “He displaced more than water.”
2. “Swish up the dirt and, when it settles, a spring/Is all the clearer.”
3. “I saw me, in one fling,/Emerging from the slime of everything”
4. “So who’s the monster?”
5. “The thought made me grow pale…”

**Relationships** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Basking Shark’

 **‘Assisi’**: in this poem, MacCaig looks at the **relationship** between the tourists, the Priest, and the beggar.

Key Quotes:

1. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the word.”
2. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside, whose eyes wept pus…”

 **‘Aunt Julia’**: It is clear that MacCaig has a close bond with his Aunt Julia, as demonstrated by the frustration and grief that he feels in their permanent separation.

Key Quotes:

1. “I could not answer her - / I could not understand her.”
2. “Hers was the only house/ where I’ve lain at night/ in the absolute darkness/ of a box bed, listening to/ crickets being friendly.”
3. “She was brown eggs....“
4. “But I hear her still…”
5. “…with so many questions/ unanswered.”

**‘Visiting Hour’**: MacCaig shows the strength the persona has with his loved one in hospital as he is overcome with grief as this may be their final meeting.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.”
2. “…distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”
3. “…books that will not be read/ and fruitless fruits.”

**‘Basking Shark**: The relationship that the persona builds, briefly, with the shark, forces him to re-evaluate human’s and their stance in society.

Key Quotes:

1. “He shoggled me/ Centuries back.”
2. “Swish up the dirt and, when it settles, a spring/ Is all the clearer.”
3. “I saw me, in one fling,/Emerging from the slime of everything”
4. “So who’s the monster?”

**Frustration** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Aunt Julia’

 **‘Assisi**: The reader is left feeling frustrated on behalf of the beggar – he is ignored by those who are in a position to help him, and by those who claim to be following God’s word.

Key Quotes:

1. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the word.”
2. “I understood/ the explanation and/ the cleverness.”
3. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside, whose eyes wept pus…”

 **‘Visiting Hour’**: Pain and frustration is explored in ‘Visiting Hour’ as MacCaig forces us to look at the cruelty of the dying process.

Key Quotes:

1. “…distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

 **‘Aunt Julia’**: The persona’s **frustration** is clear as he could not communicate with his auntie, due to the communication barrier, whilst she was alive. Now that she is dead, he will never be able to.

Key Quotes:

1. “I could not answer her - / I could not understand her.”
2. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”
3. “…getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

**Anger **

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

 **‘Assisi’**: **Anger** is felt as the poet overlooks the scene unfolding, knowing that there are people who should be helping the defenceless beggar, but who choose to ignore him.

Key Quotes:

1. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/ fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the word.”
2. “I understood/ the explanation and/ the cleverness.”
3. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside, whose eyes wept pus…”

 **‘Aunt Julia**: the narrator is angry because he will no longer be able to communicate with his auntie. He could not communicate with her before her death due to the language barrier.

Key Quotes:

1. “I could not answer her - / I could not understand her.”
2. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”
3. “…getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

**Grief** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

**‘Aunt Julia’**: The poem focuses on the **grief** that the persona feels after the death of his auntie.

Key Quotes:

1. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”
2. “But I hear her still, welcoming me/ with a seagull’s voice…”
3. “…getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

 **‘Visiting Hour**: MacCaig focuses on the impending grief that the persona feels as he goes to visit his loved one in hospital for, what is probably, the last time.

Key Quotes:

1. I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.”
2. “…distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

**Loss** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

 **‘Assisi’**: Here, MacCaig focuses on the loss of compassion within society, and our lack of empathy for others.

Key Quotes:

1. “The dwarf with his hands on backwards/ sat…outside the three tiers of churches built/ in honour of St Francis, brother/ of the poor…”
2. “I understood/ the explanation and/ the cleverness.”
3. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/ fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the word.”
4. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside, whose eyes wept pus…”
5. “…said Grazie in a voice as sweet/ as a child’s when she speaks to her mother/ or a bird’s when it spoke/ to St Francis.”

**‘Aunt Julia**: In ‘Aunt Julia’, MacCaig explores the **loss** the persona feels after the death of his auntie.

Key Quotes:

1. “ - I can see her strong foot,/ stained with peat…”
2. “Hers was the only house/ where I’ve lain at night…listening to/ crickets being friendly.”
3. “She was buckets/ and water flouncing into them.”
4. “Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic/ very loud and very fast.”
5. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”
6. “But I hear her still, welcoming me/ with a seagull’s voice…”
7. “…getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

 **‘Visiting Hour’**: In this poem, MacCaig focuses on the impending death of the persona’s cherished loved one.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.”
2. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: In ‘Brooklyn Cop’, MacCaig explores the **loss** of civilized behaviour.

Key Quotes:

1. “…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.”
2. “when he said, “See you, babe” to his wife,/ he hoped it, he truly hoped it.”
3. “Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
4. “…what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
5. “…gorilla with a nightstick…”
6. “Who would be him…whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to?”
7. “And who would be who have to be/ his victims?”

**‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: In this poem, MacCaig focuses on the **loss** of humanity within society.

1. “…a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect...”
2. “But now Midnight has come in/ from foreign places.”
3. “Its uncivilised darkness/ is shot by a million lit windows, all/ ups and crosses.”
4. “…police cars and ambulances racing/ to broken bones…”
5. “…harsh screaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalks.”
6. “The frontier is never/ somewhere else. And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

**‘Basking Shark’**: In ‘Basking Shark’, MacCaig deals with our **loss** of closeness to nature.

Key Quotes:

1. “…this decadent townee/ Shook on a wrong branch of his family tree.”
2. “Swish up the dirt and, when it settles, a spring/ Is all the clearer.”
3. “I saw me, in one final fling/ Emerging from the slime of everything.”
4. “So who’s the monster?”

**Suffering** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: The beggar in ‘Assisi’ is clearly in pain and is **suffering** due to his different deformities.

Key Quotes:

1. “The dwarf with his hands on backwards…”
2. “…sat slumped like a half-filled sack…”
3. “…on tiny twisted legs from which/ sawdust might run…”
4. “…he had the advantage of not yet being dead.”
5. “…the ruined temple…”
6. “…whose eyes/ wept pus…”
7. “…whose back was higher than his head…”

 **‘Aunt Julia’**: MacCaig demonstrates the theme of suffering as the persona is upset about the death of his auntie and the finality of their separation.

Key Quotes:

1. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”
2. “…getting angry, getting angry…”
3. “…with so many questions/ unanswered.”

**‘Visiting Hour**: In ‘Visiting Hour, MacCaig displays suffering as he is struggling to cope on a visit to hospital to visit his dying loved one.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.”
2. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: In this poem, MacCaig explores the theme of suffering through his depiction of the ugliness of violence. He uses the setting of New York City streets to do this.

Key Quotes:

1. “…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.
2. “Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
3. “…what clubbings, what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
4. “…whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to.”
5. “And who would be who have to be/ his victims?”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: Similarly to ‘Brooklyn Cop’, MacCaig explores the ugliness of New York City life and the violence that goes hand in hand with this.

Key Quotes:

1. “…the Empire State Building, that/ jumbo sized dentist’s drill.”
2. “…uncivilised darkness…”
3. “…wildest of warhoops…”
4. “…police cars and ambulances racing/ to broken bones…”
5. “…the harsh screaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalks.”
6. “And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

**‘Basking Shark’**: Here, MacCaig explores the ugliness of detachment from nature:

Key Quotes:

1. “…this decadent townee…”
2. “I saw me, in one fling,/ Emerging from the slime of everything.”
3. “So who’s the monster?”

**Nature** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: In ‘Assisi’, MacCaig, explores the theme of **nature** through his references to birds and the varying relationships of people to them.

Key Quotes:

1. “…St Francis, brother/ of the poor, talker with birds…”
2. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/ fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the Word.”
3. “…or a bird’s when it spoke/ to St Francis.”

 **‘Aunt Julia’**: In this poem, MacCaig focuses on **nature** through the natural landscape and Aunt Julia’s clear connection to the natural world.

Key Quotes:

1“I can see her strong foot,/ stained with peat…*”*

2“She was buckets/ and water flouncing into them.”

1. “She was winds pouting wetly/ round house-ends.”
2. “She was brown eggs…”
3. “…a sandy grave/ at Luskentyre.”
4. “…with a seagull’s voice…”
5. “…peatscrapes…”

**‘Visiting Hour**: in this poem, MacCaig focuses on the relationship between life and death, and the **natural** cycle of this.

Key Quotes:

1. “A withered hand/ trembles on its stalk.”
2. “Eyes move/ behind eyelids too heavy/ to raise.”
3. “…black figure in her white cave…”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: Here, MacCaig focuses on the difference between violence and human nature.

Key Quotes:

1. “Built like a gorilla, but less timid…”
2. “…what clubbings, what gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
3. “…gorilla with a nightstick…”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: Nature is explored in this poem as MacCaig explores the difficulty of nature thriving in an urban environment.

Key Quotes:

1. “…a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect…”
2. “…the wildest of warwhoops continually ululating through/ the glittering canyons and gulches…”
3. “And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

**‘Basking Shark’**: In this poem, MacCaig explores the difference between animal and human nature.

Key Quotes:

1. “That roomsized monster with a matchbox brain.”
2. “I saw me, in one fling/ Emerging from the slime of everything.”
3. “So who’s the monster?”

**Mortality** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

**‘Assisi’**: Here, mortality is explored in that the beggar is alive, however, he appears to have little else in his favour.

Key Quotes:

1. “…over whom he had the advantage/ of not being dead yet.”

**‘Aunt Julia’**: Morality is explored in ‘Aunt Julia’ as it is clear that the persona is grieving, and feels remorseful about his inability to communicate with his auntie when she was alive.

Key Quotes:

1.“By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave…””

1. “But I hear her still, welcoming me/ with a seagull’s voice…”
2. “…getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

**‘Visiting Hour**: in this poem, MacCaig explores morality as he looks at, what we assume will be, the final visit to a dying loved one in hospital.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel until/ I have to.”
2. “She lies/ in a white cave of forgetfulness.”
3. “Into an arm wasted/ of colour a glass fang is fixed,/ not guzzling but giving.”
4. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”
5. “…black figure in her white cave…”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: in this poem, the cop faces the possibility of death on a daily basis. He never knows when he is going to see his loved one for the last time.

Key Quotes:

1. “…when he said, “See you, babe” to his wife,/ he hoped it, he truly hoped it.”
2. “Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence.
3. “…what clubbings, what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
4. “Who would be him/…whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to?”
5. “And who would be who have to be/ his victims?”

**Fear** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Basking Shark’

 **‘Visiting Hour**: In ‘Visiting Hour’, the persona’s **fear** about their loved ones impending death is evident.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until, I have to.”
2. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: MacCaig explores fear in this poem as he acknowledges the cop’s worries about the violence involved in his job, and whether or not he will return home after going to work.

Key Quotes:

1. “…when he said, “See you, babe” to his wife,/ he hoped it, he truly hoped it.”
2. “He is a gorilla/ to whom “Hiya, honey” is no cliché.”
3. “Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
4. “Who would be him…/whose home is a place/he might, this time, never get back to?”

**‘Basking Shark’**: The persona is initially scared when he is confronted with the mammoth basking shark.

Key Quotes:

1. “To stub on oar on a rock where none should be…”
2. “It is a thing that happened once (too often to me.”
3. “He displaced more than water.”

**Man’s Capacity for Destruction** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Basking Shark’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

**‘Assisi’**: In ‘Assisi’, MacCaig explores man’s capacity for destruction by focusing on a society which does not look after its most vulnerable.

Key Quotes:

1. “I understood/ the explanation and/ the cleverness.”
2. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/ fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the Word.”
3. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside…”

**‘Basking Shark’**: In this poem, MacCaig looks at humans and how careless we are. We think we are the superior race, however, this is not the case.

Key Quotes:

1. “He shoggled me/ Centruries back…*”*
2. “So who’s the monster?”
3. “The thought made me grow pale/ For twenty seconds…”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: In this poem, MacCaig explores man’s distruction by looking at the violence encountered every day by a Brooklyn cop.

Key Quotes:

1.“…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.”

1. “…should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
2. “…what clubbings, what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
3. “…whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to.”

**‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: Here, we are exposed to the dangers that exist in living in a large city, explored through the setting New York City.

Key Quotes:

1. “Its uncivilised darkness/ is shot at by a million lit windows, all/ ups and crosses.”
2. “…the wildest of warwhoops…”
3. “…glittering canyons and gulches…”
4. “…police cars and ambulances racing/ to broken bones…”
5. “…harsh screaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalks.”
6. “And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

**Violence** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

**‘Brooklyn Cop**: Here, the persona is faced with **violence** every day through the dangerous locations he is explored to through his work, and the **violent** criminals he encounters.

Key Quotes:

1. “Built like a gorilla but less timid…”
2. “…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.”
3. “…should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
4. “…what clubbings, what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
5. “Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick…”
6. “…whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to.”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: In ‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’, MacCaig looks at the violence of inner city life.

Key Quotes:

1. “Its uncivilised darkness/ is shot at by a million lit windows, all/ ups and crosses.”
2. “…the wildest of warwhoops…”
3. “…glittering canyons and gulches…”
4. “…police cars and ambulances racing/ to broken bones…”
5. “…harsh screaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalks.”
6. “And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

**Dangers of the Modern World **

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: ‘Brooklyn Cop’ focuses on the corruption and danger which can arise within a modern society.

Key Quotes:

1. “…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.”
2. “…should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
3. “…what clubbings, what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
4. “Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick…”
5. “…whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to.”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: In this poem, the persona is faced with a scary, modern world which has many flaws because of its modernity.

Key Quotes:

1. “…a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect/ the Empire State Building…”
2. “Its uncivilised darkness/ is shot at by a million lit windows…”
3. “I lie in bed, between/ a radio and a television set, and hear/ the wildest of warwhoops…”
4. “…glittering canyons and gulches…”
5. “…police bones, the harsh schreaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood flazed on the sidewalks.”
6. “And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

 **‘Basking Shark’**: The persona in this poem focuses on how selfish society can be – we often forget that we are not the superior race. We are all equal to the other animals and mammals on this earth.

Key Quotes:

1. “He shoggled me/ Centuries back…”
2. ”…this decadent townee/ shook on a wrong branch of his family tree.”
3. “So who’s the monster?”

**Strong Emotions **

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: The strong emotion of anger/frustration is felt through the persona who watches the beggar being continually ignored. The emotion of empathy is also explored as it looks at the lack of empathy within society.

Key Quotes:

1. “…sat slumped like a half-filled sack…”
2. “I understood/ the explanation and/the cleverness.”
3. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside….”

**‘Aunt Julia’**: In this poem, the strong emotions of regret, grief and anger are focused on as the persona explores the death of his auntie.

Key Quotes:

1. “I could not answer her - / I could not understand her.*”*
2. “Hers was the only house/ where I’ve lain at night…”
3. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave.”
4. “But I hear her still, welcoming me/ with a seagull’s voice…”

**‘Visiting Hour**: The strong emotions in this poem is grief and isolation.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.”
2. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”
3. “…books that will not be read/ and fruitless fruits.”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: in ‘Brooklyn Cop’, the main emotion is fear. The cop goes to work every day, unsure of whether he will return, due to the dangers involved in his job.

Key Quotes:

1. “…when he said, “See you, babe” to his wife…”
2. “Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick,/ whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to?”

**‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: In this poem, MacCaig explores the emotions of isolation and helplessness.

Key Quotes:

1. “This morning I watched from here…”
2. “I lie in bed, between/ a radio and a television set…”
3. “…police cars and ambulances racing/ to broken bones.”
4. “…harsh screaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalks.”
5. “And no stockades/ can keep midnight out.”

**‘Basking Shark’**: ‘Basking Shark’ explores the strong emotions of fear and

Key Quotes:

1. “Is a thing that happened once (too often) to me.”
2. “He displaced more than water.”

**TECHNIQUES**

**Sentence Structure/Enjambment** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: Enjambment is used in ‘Assisi’ in order to emphasise the poor treatment of the beggar, the pain he is in, and the contrast between his ugly exterior and his beautiful surroundings.

Key Quotes:

1. “…hands on backwards/ sat, slumped like a half-filled sack.”
2. “…tiny twisted legs from which/ sawdust might run,/ outside the three tiers of churches built/ I honour of St Francis…”
3. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/ fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the Word.”
4. “It was they who had passed/ the ruined temple outside, whose eyes/ wept pus…”

**‘Aunt Julia’**: In ‘Aunt Julia’, MacCaig uses enjambment to show his frustration/upset with the passing of his auntie, and dashes in order to show how in tune his auntie was with the natural world/how practical she was.

Key Quotes:

1. “I could not remember her - /I could not understand her.*”*
2. “- I can see her strong foot,/ stained with peat…”
3. “Hers was the only house/ where I’ve lain at night…”
4. “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave…”
5. “But I hear her still, welcoming me/ with a seagull’s voice…”
6. Getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

**‘Visiting Hour**: Here, enjambment is used to show the distressed felt by the persona who is visiting his loved one in hospital for, what they believe to be, the last time.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.”
2. “She lies/ in a white cave of forgetfulness.”
3. “And between her and me/ distance shrinks till there is none left/ but the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”
4. “…leaving behind only/ books that will not be read/ and fruitless fruits.”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: In ‘Brooklyn Cop’, MacCaig uses enjambment in order to show us the violence faced by cops every day in Brooklyn, and the fear that they feel.

Key Quotes:

1. “…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.”
2. “This morning,/ when he said, “See you, babe” to his wife,/ he hoped it, he truly hoped it.”
3. “Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through into violence, what clubbings, what/ gunshots between Phoebe’s Whamburger/ and Louie’s Place.”
4. “Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick,/ whose home is a place/ he might, this time, never get back to.”
5. “And who would be who have to be/ his victims?”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: in this poem, MacCaig looks at the dangers of the modern world and the violence of inner New York City. He also explores isolation through his use of enjambment and dashes.

Key Quotes:

1. “…like a damaged insect/ the Empire State Building…”
2. “Its uncivilised darkness/ is shot at by a million lit windows, all/ ups and crosses.”
3. “I lie in bed, between/ a radio and a television set…”
4. “…the wildest of warhoops continually ululating through/ the glittering canyons and gulches –/ police cars and ambulances racing/ to broken bones.”
5. “…the harsh screaming/ from coldwater flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalks.”
6. “And no stockades/ can keep the midnight out.”

**‘Basking Shark’**: In ‘Basking Shark’, MacCaig explores his realision about humans and their destructive nature through his use of enjambment and short sentences. He also uses dashes, parenthesis and rhetorical questions to explore the effect this encounter had on his perspective.

Key Quotes:

1. “…Is a thing that happened once (too often) to me.”
2. “ But not too often – though enough.”
3. “He displaced more than water.”
4. “He shoggled me/ Centuries back – this decadent townee/ Shook on a wrong branch of his family tree.”
5. “I saw me, in one fling, Emerging from the slime of everything.”
6. “So who’s the monster?”

**Sound** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: Here, MacCaig uses alliteration in order to emphasise the pain that the beggar must be in, and the fact that people who can help him, choose to ignore him.

Key Quotes:

1. “…sat, slumped like a half-filled sack…”
2. “…clucking contentedly…”

 **‘Aunt Julia’**: In this poem, MacCaig uses sound in order to bring Aunt Julia to life and show how self-sufficient she is, how domesticated she is, and how in tune with nature she is.

Key Quotes:

1. “She was winds pouring wetly…”
2. “She was brown eggs, black skirts…”

 **‘Visiting Hour**: In ‘Visiting Hour’ the harsh g sound used by MacCaig reveals the persona’s shock at seeing his loved one attached to the drip.

Key Quotes:

1. “…a glass fang is fixed, / not guzzling but giving.”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: Sound is used by MacCaig here in order to convey the violence faced by the cop as he tries to do his daily job.

Key Quotes:

1. “…clubbings…”
2. “…Whamburger…”

**‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: Similarly to ‘Brooklyn Cop’, onomatopoeia is used here in order to replicate the violence of the poem.

Key Quotes:

1. “…wildest of warwhoops…”
2. “…ululating…”
3. “…gulches...”
4. “…screaming…”

**‘Basking Shark’**: MacCaig uses sound in order to show the shock of the encounter on MacCaig, the size of the shark, and the impact that it came to have on him.

Key Quotes:

1. “…stub…”
2. “…slounge…”
3. “…roomsized monster with a matchbox brain.”
4. “…shoggled…”
5. “…swish…”

**Imagery** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: MacCaig uses imagery in ‘Assisi’ in order to emphasise the dwarf’s inner beauty, his pain, and the hypocrisy of the church.

Key Quotes:

1. “…slumped, like a half-filled sack…”
2. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly, fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the Word.”
3. “…the ruined temple outside…”

**‘Aunt Julia’**: In ‘Aunt Julia’, MacCaig uses imagery in order to create a clear picture of Aunt Julia as someone who is pragmatic, has a close bond with nature, and is very practical.

Key Quotes:

1. “She was buckets/ and water flouncing into them.”
2. “She was winds pouring wetly…”
3. “She was brown eggs, black skirts/ and a keeper of threepenny bits...”
4. “…a seagull’s voice…”

**‘Visiting Hour**: Imagery is used by MacCaig in ‘Visiting Hour’ in order to show how close MacCaig’s loved one is to death, along with the grief that he feels.

Key Quotes:

1. “She lies/ in a white cave of forgetfulness.”
2. “A withered hand/ trembles on its stalk.”
3. “...a glass fang is fixed”
4. “…the distance of pain that neither her nor I/ can cross.”
5. “…black figure in her white cave…”
6. “…fruitless fruits…”

**‘Brooklyn Cop’**: Imagery is used to show how intimidating the cop is in appearance, as he has to maintain a persona when he is out at work, faced with violence every day.

Key Quotes:

1. “Built like a gorilla.”
2. “…thick fleshed, steak coloured…”
3. “…with two hieroglyphs in his face...”
4. “…gorilla with a nightstick…”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: The sheer size of the Empire state Building is focused on through the imagery used by MacCaig along with the ugliness of the modern world.

Key Quotes:

1. “…a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect…”
2. “…that jumbo sized dentist’s drill...”

 **‘Basking Shark’**: In this poem, imagery is used in order to show the effect that the experience had on MacCaig, the scale of the shark, and its inability to harm compared to adults.

Key Quotes:

1. “…on a sea tin-tacked with rain…”
2. “…that roomsized monster with a matchbox brain.”
3. “…emerging from the slime of everything.”
4. “So who’s the monster?”

**Symbolism** 

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: Symbolism is used here in order to show the hypocrisy of the church and St Francis’ beliefs to help those less fortunate than himself is symbolised by the church.

Key Quotes:

1. “…three tiers of churches…”
2. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly, fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the Word.”

 **‘Aunt Julia’**: Aunt Julia herself is symbolic of a way of life that has died, and MacCaig’s grief is symbolic of the love one has for family members.

Key Quotes:

1. “She was buckets/ and water flouncing into them.*”*
2. “She was winds pouring wetly...”
3. “…getting angry, getting angry/ with so many questions/ unanswered.”

 **‘Visiting Hour**: The hospital environment is used to symbolise death and the grief that goes along with this:

Key Quotes:

1. “What seems a corpse/ is trundled into a lift and vanishes/ heavenward.”
2. “…the distance of pain that neither she nor I/ can cross.”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: The cop symbolises the violence and danger of New York streets.

Key Quotes:

1. “Built like a gorilla…”
2. “…he walks the sidewalk and the/ thin tissue over violence.”
3. “Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through/ into violence…”
4. “And who would be who have to be/ his victims?”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: MacCaig uses the setting of New York City in order to symbolise the dangers of the modern world.

Key Quotes:

1. “…a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect…”
2. “…that jumbo sized dentist’s drill...”
3. “…harsh screaming/ from cold water flats, the blood/ glazed on the sidewalk.”
4. “The frontier is never somewhere else.”

**‘Basking Shark’**: In this poem, MacCaig symbolises the (so-called) superiority of humans and how dangerous humans are, through his depiction of the shark.

Key Quotes:

1. “…that roomsized monster with a matchbox brain.”
2. “So who’s the monster?”

**Contrast **

Which poems does this theme occur in?

‘Assisi’

‘Aunt Julia’

‘Visiting Hour’

‘Brooklyn Cop’

‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’

‘Basking Shark’

**‘Assisi’**: Contrast is used to show the outward beauty of the church, compared to the ugliness of the dwarf. It is also used to show the contrast between the beggar’s outer attractiveness and his inner beauty. It is also used to show how powerful the church is, and how weak the beggar is.

Key Quotes:

1. “…hands on backwards…” “three tiers of churches”
2. “…tiny twisted legs…” “…said Grazie in a voice as sweet/ as a child’s when she speaks to her mother…”
3. “…over whom/ he had the advantage/ of not being dead yet.” “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly, fluttered after him as he scattered/ the grain of the Word.”

**‘Aunt Julia’**: MacCaig uses darkness to contrast the happiness he felt with his aunt, to the darkness he feels having to accept her death.

Key Quotes:

1. “Hers was the only house/ where I’ve lain at night/ in the absolute darkness/ of a box bed listening to crickets being friendly.” “By the time I had learned/ a little, she lay/ silenced in the absolute black/ of a sandy grave…”

 **‘Visiting Hour**: Contrast is used here in the vulnerability and emotion that MacCaig feels, and the strength of the nurses. He also uses contrast in the slightness of the nurses, coupled with their inability to carry huge emotional weight.

Key Quotes:

1. “I will not feel, I will not/ feel, until/ I have to.” “…their eyes/ still clear, after/ so many farewells.”
2. “Nurses walk lightly, swiftly, here and up and down... their slender waists…” “…carrying their burden/ of so much pain…”

 **‘Brooklyn Cop’**: MacCaig uses contrast to show the cop’s brutish nature at work, and his gentler side to home.

Key Quotes:

1. “Built like a gorilla but less timid…”
2. “…when he said, ‘See you, babe’ to his wife, he hoped it, he truly hoped it.”

 **‘Hotel Room 12th Floor’**: The quietness of the persona’s hotel room contrasts with the chaos outside on the streets of New York City.

Key Quotes:

1. “I lie in bed, between/a radio and a television…”
2. “…hear/the wildest of warwhoops continually ululating through/ the glittering canyons and gulches.”

 **‘Basking Shark’**: The shark may appear physically menacing; however, contrast is used in order to show that it is actually harmless.

Key Quotes:

1. “That roomsized monster with a matchbox.”
2. “So who’s the real monster?