**Mr Brown’s Annotation Section 1 -**

* Poem feels quite negative from the start. The first three **verbs** are ‘*goes*’, ‘*decay*’ and ‘*dies*’, and there are **repeated** uses of ‘*goes*’ at the end of line 3 and start of line 4.
* Morgan’s other **word choice** emphasises this bleak mood. His **metaphor** of the swan as a ‘*ghost*’ ties in with ‘*dies*’ and is reinforced by *alliteration* with the **g** sound in ‘*goes*’. Although only one ‘*year*’ is going in line 1, ‘*many a summer dies*’ in line 2, so we are losing a lot more than we ever had.
* Good is going, dying, or decaying: what we get back in return is not much compensation. The swan, ghostly at best, eventually goes and, in return, ‘*ice appears, it holds*’.
* Ice survives and holds on when other warmer, livelier things like woods, summer and the swan do not.
* The ice ‘*bears gulls*’ which at least are alive, but are not as gracious and beautiful as the swan. And, they don’t feel sure of the ice – they ‘*stand around surprised*’ by the sheer oddness of being able to stand on water they’d normally be floating in.
* Morgan shows the gulls ‘*blinking in the heavy light*’. ‘*Heavy light*’ is an **oxymoron**, a figure of speech when two words that contradict each other are used together. It’s a good description of the quality of daylight you can see in winter, when the sky seems low and brooding, but it also has an unsettling effect, emphasising the surprise of those gulls who cannot quite trust or understand the ice.
* This isn’t a static scene we are watching, but a scene that is changing over time in front of our eyes. First the ice ‘*appears*’, then it ‘*holds*’ strongly enough to support gulls, then it is strong enough to bear the weight of ‘*boys’.* There is **alliteration** here with four uses of the **b** sound in lines 5 and 6 to draw our attention to another unsettling effect. Although these boys are the first human life in the poem, they don’t seem fully alive. It is not them who is in charge of their actions; instead their *‘skates take over*’.
* **Contradiction** in the way the ice is pictured: line 8 = ‘*swan-white*’; line 9: ‘*glints only crystal beyond white*’. The colour has gone. It is as if Morgan creates that first, positive colour, then pulls back from it again.
* This first scene of the poem (though remember, Morgan does not divide it into sections or stanzas) ends on another description that it is really about not having something to describe: ‘*Even dearest blue’s not there*’. Something that is ‘*dearest*’, that is loved and valuable, is ‘*not there*’. The writer does say ‘*poets would find it*’, but this is odd too. Morgan IS a poet, and we ARE reading a poem, but he seems to be denying this. It’s as if the winter is so bleak that it has depressed him and drained the poetry out of him, so that he cannot see things as a poet normally sees them.

**Section 2 - Lines 11 to 18: ‘I find . . . disappear.’**

* Line 10 ended by saying ‘*poets would find*’ the missing ‘*dearest blue*’. Now line 11 begins by telling us what this speaker, who is denying being a poet, finds: ‘*one stark scene*’. The **word choice** of ‘*stark*’ tells us what we are meant to think of what we see – we are meant to view this scene as barren, bleak and desolate.
* Although the poem has a **first person narrator**, we don’t know this until the writer uses ‘*I*’ at the start of line 11, which is almost half way through the poem. Like making the boys seem less active than their own skates, this is another way that humanity is made to feel unimportant in the poem.
* The first 10 lines used a number of colour words, therefore referring to the sense of sight. This second section of the poem introduces another sense, **sound**. These sounds are often not pleasant. The scene is ‘*cut by evening cries*’. The **word choice** of ‘*cut*’ suggests violence, and though ‘*cries*’ could just mean shouts, it makes us think of someone crying and being upset or hurt. This negative connotation is backed up by the phrase ‘*warring air*’ in line 11, which again suggest violence and conflict.
* Lines 13 and 14 almost seem to be describing a death, as breath fades away:

*‘The muffled hiss of blades escapes into breath*

*hangs with it a moment, fades off’*

* ‘*Fades*’ here is another **negative verb**, like the uses of ‘*goes*’ and ‘*decay*’ we saw earlier. It is also **repeated** twice more in line 15 to emphasise this negativity, and we find ‘*goes*’ used again in line 15 and ‘*decay*’ in line 16.
* This is the point where humanity leaves the poem. First the ‘*voices fade*’ in line 15 as the boys seem to skate further away. Then in lines 17 and 18:

‘*the dark comes down, the shouts*

*run off into it and disappear*’

* + The darkness here seems to be more powerful than the children. It feels deliberate as it ‘*comes down*’ and the boys become not people but just noises, ‘*shouts*’, who disappear into it.
* This poem has had a swan, some gulls, and a group of skating boys, but they are all gone now. The only living thing we seem to have left is the ‘*woods*’ in line 16, but they are decaying, falling and breaking, hardly full of life.

**Section 3 - Lines 19 to 23: ‘At last . . . nothing sees.’**

* The first two words of line 18 seems to introduce a **summing up**. ‘*At last the lamps go too*’. Even artificial, human attempts at creating light have been defeated.
* Light, which is always a **metaphor** for something positive, has gone. In its place we have ‘*monstrous*’ fog. We have also left the world of nature behind and now are now driving ‘*down the dual-carriageway*’ and ‘*out to the west*’. The idea of ‘*the west*’ here has **connotations** of a place that is unknown or unexplored, even lawless or dangerous: think of explorers heading into the west, or shoot-outs in the wild west.
* We end up in a very small space, ‘*in my room/ and on this paper*’. This is the second, and last, time that the narrator speaks in a personal way, but what he says suggests that he feels vulnerable and helpless. He is in his room and writing on paper, admitting that he is a writer after all, so he should be the expert. He should be in command of his situation but instead he tells us ‘*I do not know*.’
* What doesn’t he know?

‘*about that dead grey pane*

*of ice that sees nothing and that nothing sees.*’

* + This is an odd thing for him to say. He does know about the ice, because he described it for us earlier in the poem. He just does not seem to feel that he has got to grips with it, or engaged with it, perhaps because it is ‘*dead*’ and like a man-made ‘*pane*’ of glass rather than like something natural.
* The ending is very **nihilistic**. This means that it is bleak, that it is interested in nothingness (we see the word ‘*nothing*’ repeated within the final line.)