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| http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/sites/default/files/imagecache/poet_profile/poet_images/Morgan,%20Edwin%20copyright%20www.edwinmorgan.com_.jpg  Edwin Morgan Study Pack  **Use this to help prepare for the context questions in the National 5 Critical Reading paper.** | Abstract  This pack contains annotated poems, revision tasks and practise questions.  Ms Kirkwood  National 5 English: Critical Reading Paper |

**TRIO**

* ‘Sharp’ – negative connotations. The speaker is feeling ‘cold’ both externally and internally.
* Morgan gives us the time of day and year to help set the scene.

Present tense and realism – makes it more realistic and vivid as it is like we are watching it happened too

* Group of 3 pupil that are connected/in harmony.
* 3 Kings/wise men in the Christmas story

Coming up Buchanan Street, quickly, on a sharp winter evening

a young man and two girls, under the Christmas lights-

* Makes us think of 3 kings following a star or presents under a tree. This suggests that the trio are like a present to the speaker bringing the gift of joy and happiness.
* The dash is the start of parenthesis

The young man carries a new guitar in his arms,

Repetition of ‘carries’ shows that all of these objects are being protected and cared for by their owners. They show a contrast with the ‘cold’ gifts given by the 3 kings.

the girl on the inside carries a very young baby,

‘are laughing’ 🡪 present tense which shows it’s happening in the moment. Makes it more realistic and vivid.

Metaphor - “cloud” = togetherness, the trio’s breath joins together

Warmth of their breath compared to cold air makes a literal cloud but metaphorically the cloud shows us the warmth and bond of friendship between them.

Creates a ‘heavenly’, ‘angelic’ image

and the girl on the outside carries a Chihuahua.

And the three of them are laughing, their breath rises

in a cloud of happiness, and as they pass

Colloquial/informal – a contrast to the previous image and shows that they are just ordinary people – these are not ‘kings’

the boy says, “Wait till he sees this but!”

The Chihuahua has a tiny Royal Stewart tartan coat like a tea pot-holder,

- Link to baby Jesus and the nativity

- ‘white’ has connotations of innocence

- ‘bright’ = alert, interested, excited by the world

- Simile = “fresh” and “sweet” positive connotations, “favour” normally associated with a gift hidden in a cake – shows the baby is giving gift of joy.

Chihuahua = mix of Scottish and foreign as Scottish coat but Mexican dog. Suggestion that Scotland a place where foreigners can become part of our nation?

Simile – reminds us of warmth or silly/funny image

the baby in its white shawl is all bright eyes and mouth like

favours in a fresh sweet cake,

‘swells’ and ‘milky’ have connections to the idea of pregnancy. Shows the guitar is capable of producing as joy and happiness through music.

the guitar swells out under its milky plastic cover, tied at the neck

with silver tinsel tape and a brisk sprig of mistletoe.

- Allusion to Orpheus (Greek) – talented and could charm all living things, saved his lover from Hades and the Underworld by getting her to follow his music. Allusion suggests that music is powerful. -- Repeated use of exclamation marks-like Morgan is shouting with joy, optimism

‘silver’ – connotations of precious.

‘mistletoe’ – connotations of love and romance. Line structure mimics the function of mistletoe

Orphean sprig! Melting baby! Warm Chihuahua!

The vale of tears is powerless before you.

Whether Christ is born, or is not born, you

Doubt over what to believe – Morgan is suggesting that the joy and happiness that celebration brings is more important. This is similar to *Good Friday.*

put paid to fate, it abdicates

Allusion to a hymn, troubles and problems are simply a part of life. Morgan suggesting that the three objects mentioned have the power to lift us out of such sadness.

under the Christmas lights.

‘abdicates’ - Word choice and position. Associated with royalty giving up power. Suggestion is that fate has decided to give up in the face of these three objects.

Consider line layout –and how it emphasises the meaning of the word ‘abdicates’

Monsters of the year

go blank, are scattered back,

can’t bear this march of three.

-And the three have passed, vanished in the crowd

End of parenthesis. The dashes enclose the whole encounter which could indicate protection of the trio. It could also indicate that this is a brief ‘extra’ moment which is still important to him.

‘monsters of the year’ - Metaphor for the cruelties in life – the love and happiness of the trio will defeat all of these.

(yet not vanished, for their arms they wind

the life of men and beasts, and music,

Suddenly the moment is over, but it still has a lasting effect on the narrator.

laughter ringing them round like a guard)

Simile shows that the ordinary aspects of life – human joy and laughter – is just as important as any religious significance at Christmas

at the end of this winter’s day.

Morgan’s final message – love human life is special and sacred, with or without religion.

**GOOD FRIDAY**

The time Jesus was said to have died

The Friday before Easter Sunday, and the day on which Jesus was crucified and died.

Word choice – ‘lurches’ - The bus is changing gears/turning a corner. It moves in a sudden, jerky way which is similar way to the inebriated man.

Enjambment: mimics the movement of the bus – your eyes lurch between the lines in the same way the bus moves around the corner.

Three o’clock. The bus lurches

‘flops’ – word choice – shows lack of control/ungainly

round into the sun. ‘D’s this go –‘

he flops beside me – ‘right along Bath Street?

Dash shows narrator’s missing speech – his voice is not important 🡪 the focus is the ‘working man’

- Oh tha’s, tha’s all right, see I’ve

Use of Glaswegian/Scots helps to set the scene. In addition, it shows his speech is slurred (D’s instead of Does).

The dash shows that the flow of conversation is interrupted, either because of the movement of the bus, or the concentration of trying to sit down.

got to get some Easter eggs for the kiddies.

I’ve had a wee drink, ye understand –

ye’ll maybe think it’s a – funny day

Dashes in his speech:

* Pauses/hesitation
* Natural speech pattern
* More realistic – the reader can ‘hear’ him
* Shows he is losing train of thought.

to be celebrating – well, no, but ye see

Justifying himself – he’s anxious about the way that he’s seen

I wasny working, and I like to celebrate

when I’m no working – I don’t say it’s right

Repetition – reinforces his insecurity and desire to be understood.

I’m no saying it’s right, ye understand - ye understand?

Non-standard spelling and grammar 🡪 ‘hear’ his Glaswegian accent which makes thae character more realistic and vivid.

But anyway tha’s the way I look at it -

I’m no boring you, eh? – ye see today

take today, I don’t know what today’s in aid of,

He doesn’t need to know in order to celebrate. Similar to ‘Trio’. The joy and happiness that the day brings is more important.

whether Christ was – crucified or was he –

rose fae the dead like, see what I mean?

Key theme:

* Attitudes towards the working class
* He undermines himself
* Morgan is critical of this attitude towards the ‘working man’

You’re an educatit man, you can tell me -

- Aye, well. There ye are. It’s been seen

time and again, the working man

has nae education, he jist canny – jist

hasny got it, know what I mean

The man is unsteady and unpredictable 🡪 his movements mirror the unpredictable way he was speaking.

he’s jist bliddy ignorant – Christ aye,

Abrupt and sudden movement of the bus mirrors the abrupt and sudden end to the conversation.

bliddy ignorant. Well– ‘ The bus brakes violently,

he lunges for the stair, swings down – off,

into the sun for his Easter eggs,

‘very nearly’ 🡪 his legs are not steady.

The structure mimics the man’s movements helping to make the character more realistic and vivid.

Ends on a light-hearted/humorous tone.

on very

nearly

steady

legs.

***In the Snack Bar* by Edwin Morgan**

At the beginning the man is feared by the onlookers in the café.

Snake like associations, continues the ominous atmosphere

Alliteration creates a harsh sound

Lots of people would be aware of the old man, but only a ‘few’ look up when they hear the sound that suggests he needs help

1 A cup capsizes along the formica,

slithering with a dull clatter.

A few heads turn in the crowded evening, snack-bar.

Suggests a real effort, almost mechanical

An old man is trying to get to his feet

Transferred epithet – it is really the man who is ‘dismal’ and he is made that way because of his hump

Personification – makes the hump seem like an evil thing to be feared

5. from the low round stool fixed to the floor.

Slowly he levers himself up, his hands have no power.

He is up as far as he can get. The dismal hump

looming over him forces his head down.

Simile- trapped, frustrated, angered, distressed and others are frightened of him

He stands in his stained beltless gabardine

Jacket with no belt – shows that he is not well cared for

10. like a monstrous animal caught in a tent

in some story. He sways slightly,

They can’t see him, creates a sense of mystery, uncertainty, connotations of darkness and evil. It also dehumanises the man as his face - .the thing we most easily relate to – is hidden and nothing more than ‘shadow’.

his face not seen, bent down

in shadow under his cap.

Even on his feet he is staring at the floor

15. or would be, if he could see.

**2. Start to feel sympathy for the old man**

**Conveys his blindness but also that he ventures out a lot.**

I notice now his stick, once painted white

but scuffed and muddy, hanging from his right arm.

Long blind, hunchback born, half paralysed

**The list of his aliments creates an impact as it is climactic – used for emphasis**

he stands

20. fumbling with his stick

and speaks:

**The dashes are used to emphasise his stutter/nervousness/ dependency on others emphasis**

'I want - to go to the - toilet.'

**Dashes used to emphasise his stutter/nervousness/ dependency on others emphasis**

Repetition- shows how slowly they are moving

‘drift’, suggests a lack of purpose

It is down two flights of stairs, but we go.

I take his arm. 'Give me - your arm - it's better,' he says.

25. Inch by inch we drift towards the stairs.

A few yards of floor are like a landscape

to be negotiated, in the slow setting out

Hyperbole, or metaphor, emphasises how long everything is taking to complete

Simile – multiple obstacles, terrains, to be traversed; highlights how everyday experiences are so challenging for him

time has almost stopped. I concentrate

my life to his: crunch of spilt sugar,

30. slidy puddle from the night's umbrellas,

table edges, people's feet,

Structural – list, emphasising how lots of everyday activities prove to be obstacles and challenging

Alliteration and onomatopoeia being used to create a sinister feel for the snack bar

hiss of the coffee-machine, voices and laughter,

smell of a cigar, hamburgers, wet coats steaming,

and the slow dangerous inches to the stairs.

35. I put his right hand on the rail

Highlights how desperate and dependant the man is on the help of people he does not know. The short sentence emphasises his desperation

Repetition – emphasises the time that it takes to make the journey down the stairs, but also mimics the repetitive motion of climbing stairs

and take his stick. He clings to me. The stick

is in his left hand, probing the treads.

I guide his arm and tell him the steps.

And slowly we go down. And slowly we go down

40. White tiles and mirrors at last. He shambles

Word choice highlights the contrast between the white toilet and the dark old man, makes him seem sinister again – connotations of black and white

uncouth into the clinical gleam.

Onomatopoeia, highlights the actual sound of him going to the toilet, pathetic defenceless and generates pity

I set him in position, stand behind him

and wait with his stick.

His brooding reflection darkens the mirror

45. but the trickle of his water is thin and slow,

Metaphorical, conveys how pathetic the state of his life is- can’t even go to the toilet properly or by himself

an old man's apology for living.

Painful ages to close his trousers and coat -

It is taking so long that it uncomfortable, connotations of pain - hyperbole

I do up the last buttons for him.

Dashes– suggest has not been allowed to do so before, suggests he is a burden

He asks doubtfully, 'Can I - wash my hands?'

50. I fill the basin, clasp his soft fingers round the soap.

He washes feebly, patiently. There is no towel.

I press the pedal of the drier, draw his hands

Connotations of climb, positive, going up- hopeful, but also hard work.

Sentence structure, repetition, emphasises the points above

gently into the roar of the hot air.

Onomatopoeic, sinister atmosphere, sounds terrifying

But he cannot rub them together,

55. drags out a handkerchief to finish.

He is glad to leave the contraption, and face the stairs.

He climbs, and steadily enough.

Alliteration, emphasises his endless determination through the repeated sounds

The words also highlight his determination to live life, regardless of the length of time that everyday tasks take to complete

Survival is the most important thing – you should never be ‘defeated’ by life.

He climbs, we climb. He climbs

with many pauses but with that one

60. persisting patience of the undefeated

Repetition emphasises the length of time

which is the nature of man when all is said.

And slowly we go up. And slowly we go up.

The faltering, unfaltering steps

Contrasting words

– shows that the old man is weak but ‘unfaltering’ shows he is determined.

- emphasises the scale of the task for the old man.

take him at last to the door

65. across that endless, yet not endless waste of floor.

I watch him helped on a bus. It shudders off in the rain.

Personification - The bus, like the man, is unsteady.

The conductor bends to hear where he wants to go.

He needs to do this to survive, but it is difficult to do and the narrator and the reader pity him.

Wherever he could go it would be dark

Literally – he can’t see, therefore ‘dark’

Metaphorically – his life is difficult and a struggle.

and yet he must trust men.

70. Without embarrassment or shame

he must announce his most pitiful needs

He is ignored and people only see his disability rather than the man – makes us feel pity and guilt.

in a public place. No one sees his face.

Does he know how frightening he is in his strangeness

Simile – Just as wet leaves are fragile, useless and weak, so his hands are powerless and clinging to the stick.

Theme:

* Poor treatment of the disabled
* Human fear of things that are different.

under his mountainous coat, his hands like wet leaves

75. stuck to the half-white stick?

His life depends on many who would evade him.

But he cannot reckon up the chances,

Transferred epithet - he is blind, not his ‘hump’.

having one thing to do,

Theme:

* The plight of the disabled –he has to have complete trust in people who avoid him and are frightened of him and he has no choice.

to haul his blind hump through these rains of August.

80. Dear Christ, to be born for this!

Theme:

* The world is unfair
* Human endurance – suffering and the nature of it
* Raises the question – why do people have to suffer?
* Makes the reader reflect on the difficulties faced by the disabled.

Rains – emphasises the dark and depressing mood.

Winter

Deterioration and death are two prominent ideas in the opening line of the poem. ‘Decay’ ad ‘dies’ contribute to an idea of aging and, eventually, passing away.

More negative verbs

Repetition of ‘goes’ and ‘gone’ – reinforces the idea of the passing of time. Negative verbs. Note: present tense!

The year goes, the woods decay, and after,

many a summer dies. The swan

Metaphor – links with this idea of life ebbing away. Usually a swan is a beautiful creative, but here it is haunting = dark imagery.

on Bingham’s pond, a ghost, comes and goes.

It goes, and ice appears, it holds,

bears gulls that stand around surprised,

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 – feels unsettling

blinking in the heavy light, bears boys

when skates take over swan-tracks gone.

There seems to be a contradiction in the way the ice is pictured here. In line 8 it is said to be ‘swan-white’ but in line 9 it ‘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.

After many summer dyes, the swan-white ice

glints only crystal beyond white. Even

He is a poet, however, and even he can’t find it. It’s as if the winter is so bleak that it has depressed him and drained the poetry out of him.

dearest blue’s not there, though poets would find it.

I find one stark scene

Word choice – negative connotations of violence and conflict

cut by evening cries, by warring air.

The muffled hiss of blades escapes into breath,

More repetition of negative verbs associated with death and the passing of time (fades)

hangs with it a moment, fades off.

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 disappear.

This poem has had a swan, some gulls, and a group of skating boys, but they are all gone now. Only the woods are left but even they are decaying.

Fades off, goes, the scene, the voices fade,

the line of trees, the woods that fall, decay

and break, the dark comes down, the shouts

run off into it and disappear.

Even artificial, human attempts at creating light have been defeated

At last the lamps go too, when fog

Light, which is always a metaphor for something positive, has gone. In its place we have another metaphor - ‘monstrous’ fog.

drives monstrous down the dual carriageway

out to the west, and even in my room

The poem is now leaving the world of nature.

and on this paper I do not know

about that grey dead pane

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.)

‘sees nothing’ can be interpreted as the idea that no-one will ever see death coming

‘nothing sees’ can be interpreted as the idea that death does not care who it comes for – it takes life away without caring or thinking about who it is taking.

of ice that sees nothing and that nothing sees.

Edwin Morgan

**SLATE**

These words are in present tense while everything else is in past tense. Morgan is trying to **make** **Scotland seem eternal.**

The speaking voice is outside history, looking in.

There is no beginning. We saw Lewis

laid down, where there was not much but thunder

Morgan **personifies** Scotland itself, giving it human actions. He also **embodies** Scotland, giving it a living body, so that it is not just a chunk of geology.

and volcanic fires; watched long seas plunder

All this use of embodiment and personification supports Morgan’s overall theme. He is saying that even without people, Scotland is alive and vibrant, full of energy and purpose.

‘thunder..volcanic…plunder’ – connotations of violence. He is making the point that Scotland had to experience conflict and violence to be made into something beautiful and better.

faults; laughed as Staffa cooled. Drumlins blue as

bruises were grated off like nutmegs; bens,

and a great glen, gave rough back we like



All these sound effects draw our attention, and also give us a sensory experience: we don’t just read the poem with our eyes but also almost hear it. This has the effect of making us feel more involved in the poem.

The sound effects support Morgan’s overall message about the vital importance of Scotland by making it feel lively, vibrant and noisy, and by making Scotland feel like something we just have to pay attention to.

He is making the point that Scotland had to experience conflict and violence to be made into something beautiful and better

to the think the ages must streak, surely strike,

seldom stroke, but raised and shaken, with tens

of thousands of rains, blizzards, sea-poundings

shouldered off into night and memory.

The newly created Scotland is empty and hungry without us. A nation isn’t really made by geology; a nation is made by its people and by what they do.

Memory of men! That was to come. Great

in their empty hunger these surroundings

A rainbow is a glorious and hopeful thing, but a sorry one too because you only get a rainbow with rain. Morgan uses the **metaphor** of the rainbow to admit that the hope of a more independent future for Scotland comes after the failed referendum

threw walls to the sky, the sorry glory

of a rainbow. Their heels kicked flint, chalk, slate

Although this is the title of the poem, it only appears in the actual text as the final word. Sometimes things only come together at the last minute; it may take a long time for Scotland’s destiny to be fulfilled.

The expression ‘to kick your heels’ means to be waiting, perhaps impatiently. Scotland is still waiting for a better future.

**Rhyme Scheme:** **‘Slate’ as a sonnet:** Every line has exactly 10 syllables. There is a rhyme scheme: ABBA CDDC EFG EFG

**Hyena**

Short sentence. Present tense – sense of immediacy

Shows the patience of the hyena.

Addressing the reader – “you”- intimidating and threatening tone which unsettles the reader.

Few resources – life is difficult in this environment. Life is tough, but so is the hyena

I am waiting for you.

Kraal indicates a human settlement, but it has been destroyed. The reader is made to question *how* and *why* it has been destroyed. Is it the harshness of the environment or is this an indication of the destructiveness of humanity?

I have been travelling all morning through the bush

and not eaten.

I am lying at the edge of the bush

on a dusty path that leads from the burnt-out kraal.

alliteration – emphasises ‘fierce’ – indicates danger.

I am panting, it is midday, I found no water-hole.

I am very fierce without food and although my eyes

Repetition of ‘s’ (sibilance) – gives an almost hissing noise which sounds aggressive and threatening.

are screwed to slits against the sun

you must believe I am prepared to spring.

Threat – hyena is primed and ready - he is an opportunistic predator

Direct rhetorical question to reader. Does he care about the answer?

What do you think of me?

3 similes comparing the hyena to Africa. This could show that the hyena thinks a lot of itself – thinks it is as important as a whole continent. It could also show that the hyena is perfectly evolved and adapted to suit its environment, unlike humans who try to change the environment to suit themselves. Figurative language emphasises the harsh environment from which the hyena must try and eke out a living

I have a rough coat like Africa.

I am crafty with dark spots

like the bush-tufted plains of Africa.

I sprawl as a shaggy bundle of gathered energy

like Africa sprawling in its waters.

List. Descriptive words give clearer, more vivid impression of hyena’s movements. ‘Slaver’ – not very pleasant but hyena doesn’t care; he doesn’t need to pretend to be anything else.

I trot, I lope, I slaver, I am a ranger.

I hunch my shoulders. I eat the dead.

Short, blunt sentence. Designed to shock and disgust the reader. Hyena is proud of his nature.

Another **rhetorical question** – the hyena is playing with the reader and encouraging them to consider the his character

Do you like my song?

Moonlight usually connected to beauty, but here it is ‘hard and cold’ – highlights the brutal environment.

When the moon pours hard and cold on the veldt

**Metaphor -** the hyena compares itself to a servant of night. Associations of darkness and shadows with subterfuge and shady business. Nocturnal. Lurking in the darkness.

I sing, and I am the slave of darkness.

Over the stone walls and the mud walls and the ruined places

and the owls, the moonlight falls.

Describing human constructions and destruction – hyena is described as sinister, but is it really humans with all of their ‘ruined places’? ‘broken drum’ – destruction, ‘bristle’ – senses threat of humans.

I sniff a broken drum. I bristle. My pelt is silver.

I howl my song to the moon – up it goes.

Would you meet me there in the waste places?

Another question. Another challenge. Or maybe a sinister invitation?

The hyena is trying to intimidate the reader. Emphasising that it is a devious and patient creature.

Its skill as a scavenger is evident - feasting on the deadliest predator in Africa. Humour in this statement.

It is said I am a good match

for a dead lion. I put my muzzle

**Repetition** of ‘golden’ contrasts the beauty of the lion with the ugliness of the hyena.

at his golden flanks, and tear. He

is my golden supper, but my tastes are easy.

He is a scavenger – he isn’t fussy and will eat anything he can.

I have a crowd of fangs, and I use them.

Oh and my tongue – do you like me

**Metaphor -** emphasises the number of strong teeth in the creature’s powerful jaw. Savagery. Menacing tone.

when it comes lolling out over my jaw

very long, and I am laughing?

The hyena’s howl is often described as laughing. He dispels this. **Short sentence** for emphasis. Very abrupt.

I am not laughing.

But I am not snarling either, only

Tells the reader that he isn’t trying to threaten – attacking human view of him. He says he is just following his nature.

panting in the sun, showing you

what I grip

carrion with.

**Repetition** of the word ‘waiting’ from the first stanza – emphasises the hyena’s patient nature.

I am waiting

**Repetition of ‘for’**– continues the idea that the hyena is a creature of opportunities. It, at times, relies on accidents and weakness – it preys on the vulnerable.

for the foot to slide,

for the heart to seize,

Sounds menacing, but detailing ways that death can come naturally. The hyena does not ‘fight to the death’ – he eats the already dead. Makes us question if the hyena is as brutal and menacing as he seems or are humans and other creatures more brutal because they ‘fight to the death’.

for the leaping sinews to go slack,

for the fight to the death to be fought to the death,

for a glazing eye and the rumour of blood.

I am crouching in my dry shadows

till you are ready for me.

**Word choice -** reveals the instinctual savage and barbaric nature of the hyena. It lives this way not through choice but through necessity.

My place is to pick you clean

and leave your bones to the wind.

Words **directed at the reader** emphasise the cold, menacing, calculating nature of the hyena and its savage potential. However, ultimately, it is just following its nature and the poem forces us to question our view of hyenas and to question who really are the savage creatures – hyenas or humans?

Comparison for the Final Question

**Key Ideas – The passage of time/ inevitability of change**

**Slate:** “the sorry glory of a rainbow”, “Their heels kicked flint, chalk, slate”- Morgan is impatient for an independent Scotland, but he thinks that change is inevitable. The repletion of ‘slate’ at the end of the poem indicates that he thinks things will come together in the end.

**Winter:** “The year goes, the woods decay” – time will always pass and bring death and new life with it.

**Key Ideas: The cruelty/brutality of nature:**

**In the Snack Bar:** “Dear Christ, to be born for this” – shows that life is unfair and cruel.

**Winter:** “grey dead pane/of ice that sees nothing and that nothing sees” – ultimately, death comes to everything and it does not care about who it takes.

**Slate:** “rains, blizzards, sea poundings” – nature is brutal

**Hyena:** “I found no water hole” – Africa is a tough and unforgiving environment that is hard to survive. Life for the hyena is tough.

**Key Ideas: Patience/Determination**

**In the Snack Bar:** “With that one/ persisting patience of the undefeated /which is the nature of man when all is said” – life is about survival and continuing with determination.

**Hyena:** “I am waiting” – the hyena has to be patient in this environment if it is going to survive

**Slate:** “the sorry glory of a rainbow” – despite the disappointment of the failed referendum, Morgan is determined that Scotland will have its ‘rainbow’, i.e., that Scotland will be an improved nation.

**Key Ideas: Joy and happiness**

**Trio: “**vale of tears is powerless before you/Whether Christ is born, or is not born,” – the joy and happiness of the trio will do more to dispel unhappiness than the religious significance of the holiday. Morgan says it doesn’t matter whether you believe in the religious aspect or not, it is togetherness that is the most important thing.

**Good Friday: “**I don’t know what today’s in aid of,/ whether Christ was – crucified or was he –/

rose fae the dead like, see what I mean?” – the religious significance doesn’t matter to this man, yet he is happy all the same showing that the holiday has come to mean more to people.

**Key Ideas: The treatment of the disabled/uneducated**

**In the Snack Bar:** “a few heads turn in a crowded snack bar” – hardly anyone cares about this man. He has to rely on the help of strangers, but many don’t notice him or care about him.

**Good Friday: “**the working man / has nae education, he jist canny – jist /hasny got it, know what I mean / he’s jist bliddy ignorant” – the man undermines himself and it is clear that this is a prevailing attitude towards the ‘working man’. Morgan is critical of this view.

**Task: Establish further links between the key ideas in the poems.**

**Language - Present tense:**

**In the Snack Bar**: “*The cup capsizes*” – creates realism and helps to make the scene more vivid for the reader.

**Trio**: “*Coming up Buchanan Street*”, “are laughing” – helps to give the Trio a sense of life and vitality. Makes the scene more vivid.

**Good Friday**: “*The bus lurches/round into the sun*” – creates a sense of immediacy and the reader is able to better relate to the events in the poem.

**Winter:** “*a summer dies*” – makes it sound as though this is happening now. Makes the poem more relevant and immediate.

**Slate:** only the opening line is present tense – “*There is no beginning*” – has the effect of making Scotland seem eternal.

**Hyena:** “*I am waiting for you*” – gives a sense of immediacy and threat.

**Task: Establish further links between the language techniques used in the poems. For example, look at realism, imagery, sound techniques, effective openings, effective conclusions etc.**

Part One of Critical Reading: Context Questions on Poetry:

Questions on the given poem:

Use the following formula when asked to analyse any techniques in the poem:

Worth one mark

* Identify technique and quote
* This suggests….

Worth one mark

* This is effective because…

*For example (the following question is on ‘Trio’):*

***Questions***

*1. Explain* ***one*** *way in which the first 2 lines provide an effective opening to the poem.* ***(2)***

* *The poet uses word choice and setting in the opening line "sharp winter evening".*
* *The word ‘sharp’ suggests that it is painfully cold and gives the reader the time of day and year in which this scene is taking place.*
* *This is effective because it creates an image of the coldness as being aggressive; it also gives the indication that the narrator feels negative - he is internally, as well as externally, cold. This helps the reader understand the conditions and mood of the poem at the start - it is more realistic and vivid for us.*

One of the questions may also ask you to **summarise** what happens in the poem or in certain lines. This must be done **in your own words**.

The last question:

1. - Identify which poems you will be comparing and say what they have in common.

- Comment on this commonality

1. From the given poem (the one that the other 4 questions were on):

* Identify technique and quote it
* This suggests…/ This emphasises….
* This is effective because…(this must link to the question)

1. From another poem

* Identify technique and quote it
* This suggests…/ This emphasises….
* This is effective because…(this must link to the question)

1. From another poem

* Identify technique and quote it
* This suggests…/ This emphasises….
* This is effective because…(this must link to the question)

**Worked Comparison Question**

*‘In the Snack Bar’ explores important social issues. With close textual reference, discuss in what ways this poem is similar to another poem or poems by Morgan you have studied. You may refer to ideas and/or language in your answer.*

**Step 1: Mention the specific area of commonality and include what poem(s) you will be discussing. (2 marks)**

* ‘In the Snack Bar’ and ‘Good Friday’ by Edwin Morgan are both poems which explore the lack of concern society has for those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.
* ‘In the Snack Bar’ follows a severely disabled man in his attempt to navigate a Glaswegian snack bar, ignored by most around him. ‘Good Friday’ shows the lack of assurance even the narrator can give a man as he drunkenly asks about the nature of religion during Easter.

**Step 2: Make a specific reference to the poem in front of you (quote) and link to the question – mention techniques and effect. (2 marks)**

* In ‘In the Snack Bar’ Morgan portrays the infirm man who is mostly ignored by those around him. Only “a few heads turn” when the man knocks over a cup in his efforts to stand up. Here, Morgan’s use of the contrast of the word “few” in the “crowded” snack bar **suggests** the lack of notice or care the customers have for the man, even in his “long blind, hunchback born, half-paralysed” state. **This is effective because** Morgan draws our attention to with his list of the man’s ailments later in the poem, clearly indicating how vulnerable and weak this man is.

**Step 3: Make a reference to another poem and link to the question – again, mention techniques and their effect. (2 marks)**

* In ‘Good Friday’, the man who “flops” down beside our narrator is also vulnerable, in the sense that he is drunk during the day (“3pm”) and is self-conscious over his lack of education (“he’s jist bliddy ignorant”). The repetition used in some of his questions, such as “ye understand – ye understand?” **emphasises** his need for understanding and acceptance from this stranger on a bus. Morgan also uses parenthesis here to break up this line, indicating the man’s broken language due to his drunken state. **This is effective because** it helps the reader to infer that the narrator, and others he may address, have not given him the reassurance that he needs.

**Step 4: Make a reference to another poem and link to the question – again, mention techniques and their effect. (2 marks)**

* Despite repeated questions from the man, such as “I’m no boring you, eh?” and “see what I mean?”, the narrator never appears to reply to him – unlike the narrator who actively helps the old man in ‘In the Snack Bar’. The constant questions **emphasis**e the man’s need for reassurance, but in providing no response, Morgan **effectively** highlights how society is willing to ignore the desire

**Now You Try – *In the Snack Bar* and *Trio***

* ‘In the Snack Bar’ and ‘Trio’ are both poems that establish use techniques effectively to create setting, capture a moments in the present tense and involve a journey of the poem.
* ‘In the Snack Bar’ takes place in a crowded café, as an old, disabled man attempts to make his way to the downstairs toilet, amidst the ignorance of those around him. Moran uses this incident to make a comment on the apathy of society in relation to the vulnerable.
* ‘Trio’ observes the journey of three friends travelling through Buchannan Street at Christmas time under the Christmas lights, as they are observed by an unknown narrator who takes joy from the event.
* Both ‘In the Snack Bar’ and ‘Trio’ have a sense of immediacy through use of the present tense.
* *In the Snack Bar*: *“A* ***cup capsizes along the formica****”* suggests that the falling cup seem more urgent and allows the reader to feel involved in the action. The use of alliteration here helps us to picture the cup rolling and we can almost hear the hard ‘c’ sound, which grabs the reader’s attention. “Capsizes” make the action seem quite dramatic, although ironically nobody seems to care. This is effective as it represents the lack of care that society has for what is happening around them, which is the point Morgan is making.
* Similarly, in *Trio*: “***Coming up Buchanan St***” makes the reader seem involved as you feel as though you are there witnessing the bustling city centre crowds. We can relate to the setting as it is a well-known, commercial street. The inverted word order places emphasis on ‘coming up’ depicting the action first and giving the sense that the trio are moving up through the street. This is effective as it shows they are excited to be in this setting, as reinforced by the adverb ‘quickly’.

**Now you finish off this answer to get the full 8 marks.**

***Another example:***

*Choose another poem by Morgan which, in your opinion, opens in an effective way.*

***Referring closely to the opening lines*** *of the poem and the poetic techniques employed,* ***show how Morgan’s openings provide a good introduction to his poems****.* ***(8)***

* *In both “Trio and “Good Friday” Morgan’s use of present tense, sound techniques and clearly establishing setting makes the opening realistic and effective because the reader is able to relate to the scene and picture it more clearly.*
* *The opening of “Trio” is effective as the reader is given a clear time setting and is given a sense of the atmosphere: “sharp winter evening”. This suggests that it is painfully cold and the reader is given a clear indication of the time of year and day. This is effective because the word ‘sharp’ has many negative connotations and not only does the reader understand that it is incredibly and uncomfortably cold, it also helps them to understand the emotions of the narrator – he is feeling cold both externally and internally and this effective sets up the change that he will go through upon seeing the trio. The fact that is “winter evening” is also effective as it helps to establish the setting and allows the reader to fully picture the scene.*
* *The opening of “Good Friday” is also effective as Morgan uses word choice and enjambment to create a more realistic and vivid scene and to involve the reader in the poem: “the bus lurches/round into the sun”. This suggests that the bus is making a sudden, jerky movement as it turns the corner. This is effective because the reader can relate this movement to the drunk man who has got on the bus; similar to the jerky movements of the vehicle, the man is unsteady on his feet. The enjambment helps to make this even more vivid and realistic as it mimics the movement of the bus – the reader’s eye ‘lurches’ between the lines in the same way that the bus moves round the corner. This helps the reader better understand the character of the ‘working man’ and involves them more deeply in the poem.*
* *“Good Friday” also makes use of Glaswegian dialect and dashes to create a vivid image of the central character of the poem: “D’s this go – /he flops beside me – ‘right along Bath Street?’” This suggests that the man is Glaswegian, is slurring his speech and helps give a clearer sense of his movements. This is effective because the shortened ‘D’s’ rather than ‘Does’ helps to set the scene in terms of setting – it is clearly a Scottish character – and shows that the man’s speech is slurred. This helps to give the reader a clearer image of the character and shows that he has been drinking or celebrating. The dashes help to create realistic dialogue as they create natural pauses in the speech. The reader is left wondering if the man is interrupting the flow of his conversation because of the movement of the bus, or because of the concentration of trying to sit down. This helps to create a more realistic character that the reader can relate to.*

**Revision: Task One**

**Summarise:** You should be able to summarise (**using your own words**) the following:

**Trio**

The events in the poem.

What the three people are carrying.

The change in the narrator’s feelings.

What the narrator feels the trio are providing.

The main ideas and themes in the poem.

**Good Friday**

The events in the poem.

What the man tries to discuss with the narrator.

The man’s actions.

The main ideas and themes in the poem.

The image that is created of the drunk man.

**In the Snack Bar**

The events in the poem.

The actions performed in each individual stanza.

The main ideas and themes in the poem.

The narrator’s thoughts and feelings towards the man and disability in general.

**Winter**

The events in the poem

The mood in the poem

The deeper meaning of the poem

The stages of winter described in the poem (i.e. the different things that decay and leave)

**Hyena**

The main topic of each stanza

The overall impression given of the hyena

The deeper meaning of the poem (main ideas/themes)

**Slate**

The main events of the poem

The poet’s deeper feelings towards Scotland

The deeper meaning/themes/ideas expressed in the poem.

**Revision Task Two:**

**Practise Questions**

**Trio:**

**1.** Look at lines 1―2. Show how the poet’s use of language effectively brings the scene to life. **(2)**

**2.** Examine **three** examples of how the poet uses language to create a positive atmosphere in lines 6―14. **(6)**

**3.** (a) Identify **two** of the central concerns of the poem. **(2)**

(b) How effective do you find any aspect of lines 15―27 in enforcing either of these two concerns? You may refer to ideas and/or language. **(2)**

**Good Friday**

1. The author gives this poem a sense of reality. Show how this is achieved in the first 3 lines. **(2)**
2. How does the writer’s use of language in lines 6-16 (“I’ve had a wee drink…see what I mean?”) show the man’s need to communicate? **(3)**
3. With close reference to lines 6-23 (“I’ve had a wee drink…bliddy ignorant. Well –“) explain how the poem shows at least one belief Morgan has about Easter and/or the church. (**3)**
4. Show how two examples of the poet’s use of language in lines 23 to the end (“The bus brakes…steady legs”) create an effective ending to the poem. **(4)**

**In the Snack Bar (lines 1-34)**

**1.** (*a*) Identify two of the poem’s main ideas or central concerns that are introduced in this extract. **(2)**

(*b*) Show how any two examples of the poet’s use of language in stanza 1 help to make these concerns clear to readers. **(4)**

**2.** Explain how the poet’s own role in what is happening in the snack-bar changes from stanza 1 to stanza 2. **(2)**

**3.** Look at lines 23—34. Show how the poet uses language to emphasise the difficulty of the start of the journey to the toilet. **(4)**

**Winter**

1. Show how any two of the poet’s uses of word choice effectively contribute to the main ideas or concerns of the poem. **4**

2. Show how any two of the poet’s uses of sound effect techniques effectively contribute to the main ideas or concerns of the poem. **4**

3. How effective do you find any two aspects of the last six lines as a conclusion to the poem? Your answer may deal with ideas and/ or language. **4**

**Hyena**

1. Show how any two of the poet’s techniques in stanzas one and two convey the hyena’s beliefs about himself. **4**

2. Show how any two of the poet’s techniques in stanzas one and two convey the hyena’s opinions of humanity. **4**

3. How effective do you find any two aspects of the final stanza as a conclusion to the poem? Your answer may deal with ideas and/ or language. **4**

**Slate**

1. Show how any two of the poet’s uses of word choice effectively contribute to the main ideas or concerns of the poem. **4**

2. Show how any two of the poet’s uses of sound effect techniques effectively contribute to the main ideas or concerns of the poem. **4**

3. How effective do you find any two aspects of the last four lines as a conclusion to the poem? Your answer may deal with ideas and/ or language. **4**

**Revision Task Three:**

**The last question:**

**Answer the question below for the following combinations:**

* **“Good Friday” being compared to “Trio”**
* **“Good Friday” being compared to “In the Snack Bar”**
* **“Trio” compared to “In the Snack Bar”**
* **“Trio” compared to “Good Friday”**
* **“Winter” compared to “In the Snack Bar”  
  “Winter” compared to “Slate”**
* **“Hyena” compared to “In the Snack Bar”**
* **“Hyena” compared to “Slate”**
* **“Slate” compared to “In the Snack Bar”**

*Question: With close textual reference, show how the ideas and / or language of this poem are similar or different to another poem or poems by Morgan which you have read.*