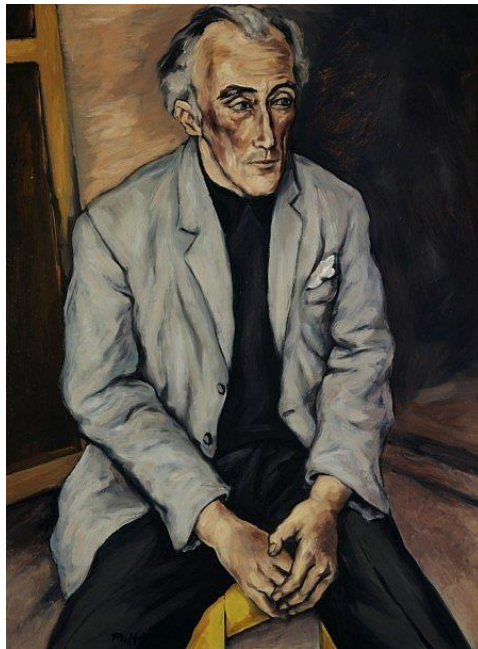


NORMAN MacCAIG

National 5: Revision Booklet



Pupil Name:

Class:



Visiting Hour

The poet is visiting a very ill relative in hospital, and tries to avoid his emotions on his way to the ward. When he arrives and sees her, he is overcome by grief and anguish. When he leaves at the end of the visiting hour, he feels helpless and seems to believe there is no hope that she will recover.

Visiting Hour

Word choice: "hospital smell" is something everyone is familiar with.

The **hospital smell**

combs my nostrils

as they go **bobbing along**

green and yellow corridors.

Metaphor/word choice: the smell is overpowering – it becomes a comb brushing against his nose harshly. This is a playful image – he has not seen the patient yet, so is 'keeping it together' at this point.

Word choice: colours have connotations of sickness, which further stresses the poet's discomfort in these surroundings.

What seems a **corpse**

is trundled into a lift and **vanishes**

heavenward.

Word choice: 'corpse,' 'vanishes' and 'heavenward' have connotations of death, which suggest that this is what the poet is beginning to think about as he walks through the corridor.

Enjambment: the poet takes a new line to give these 'key' words more emphasis. 'Heavenward' even gets a line to itself.

I will not feel, I will not

feel, until

I have to.

Repetition: Poet seems to be chanting to himself – trying to control his emotions.

Nurses walk lightly, swiftly,

here and up and down and there,

their slender waists **miraculously**

carrying their burden

of so much pain, so

many deaths, their eyes

still clear after

so many farewells.

Structure: the unusual word order is **emphasising** the **number of nurses** he sees and how busy they are.

Word choice: the poet **admires** the **difficult job** nurses have facing death regularly. "Miraculously" suggests he cannot understand how they do it.

Repetition of "so" emphasises the number of unpleasant situations the nurses have to deal with.

Ward 7. She lies
 in a **white cave of forgetfulness**.
 A **withered hand**
trembles on its stalk. Eyes move
 behind eyelids too heavy
 to raise. Into an arm **wasted**
of colour a glass fang is fixed,
not guzzling but giving.
 And between her and me
 distance shrinks till there is none left
 but the **distance of pain that neither she nor I**
can cross.

Structure: A minor sentence (non-sentence) draws attention to this **turning point** in the poem. The speaker has arrived at his destination.

Metaphor: suggesting the white curtains are cave-like. This shows the isolation of the woman, and the poet's exclusion from her.

Metaphor: suggesting the woman's body is brittle and frail, by comparing it to a dying flower.

Word choice: "withered", "trembles", "wasted" all suggest the patient is close to death.

Metaphor/alliteration: suggesting the IV drip is **vampire-like**. The horror in this image is shocking, which shows the poet's grief.

Enjambment: Poet uses the **gap between lines to emphasise distance** between patient and visitor.

She smiles a little at this
black figure in her white cave
 who **clumsily** rises
 in the round **swimming waves of a bell**
 and **dizzily** goes off, growing fainter,
 not smaller, leaving behind only
books that will not be read
 and **fruitless fruits.**

Metaphor: contrast in colours highlights distance between patient and visitor. "Black figure" could relate to **grim reaper** - returning to the poet's thoughts of death.

Word choice: Bell rings to mark end of visiting hour. "clumsily", "dizzily" "swimming waves", all suggest poet is **struggling with his emotions now**.

Paradox/oxymoron: the patient's inability to eat the fruit or read the books establishes their **utter lack of life**. The paradox highlights how desperate and hopeless the speaker's situation is and ends on a **sad note of despair**.

KEY THEMES

- **Facing Death (either the dying person, or the relative)**
- **Isolation/loneliness surrounding death or illness**

THEMES CONNECT WITH: *Aunt Julia, Memorial.*

Memorial

This poem is an elegy - a poem that is a lament for the dead - for a beloved person in MacCaig's life. That person is probably MacCaig's sister, Frances, who died in 1968 as this poem was published in 1971. Memorial is a sad (sombre) poem about how the sense of loss of the poet's dear one has taken over every aspect of his life. Her death, he makes clear, stays with him constantly.

Memorial

Everywhere she dies. Everywhere I go she dies.

No sunrise, no city square, no lurking beautiful mountain

but has her death in it.

The silence of her dying sounds through

the carousel of language, it's a web

on which laughter stitches itself. How can my hand

clasp another's when between them

is that thick death, that intolerable distance?

She grieves for my grief. Dying, she tells me

that bird dives from the sun, that fish

leaps into it. No crocus is carved more gently

than the way her dying

shapes my mind. – But I hear, too,

the other words,

black words that make the sound

of soundlessness, that name the nowhere

she is continuously going into.

Repetition: Poet repeats "everywhere" and "no" to create a **striking** opening to the poem. These words emphasise that, in his mind, he cannot escape his loved one's death.

Metaphor/paradox: Poet uses paradox to show this silence is **so intense it impacts as a loud noise would**. As a poet, **words** are hugely important but what he saw as a fun, bright, colourful and musical ride is now silenced by her death.

Metaphor: Her death is a **web** - he is **unable to free himself** from its hold. The word "stitches" suggests this hold is very strong.

Enjambment: Poet indicates the "intolerable distance" by **separating this over many lines to show distance** between himself and his lost loved one.

Metaphor: Compares her death to a crocus (flower) - beautiful, natural and fragile.

Tone/structure: Poet changes tone here to a **bleak and dark tone of hopelessness**.

Word choice/paradox: becomes much darker- these black words suggest a nothingness- the poet believes there is nothing after death.

Ever since she died
she can't stop dying. She makes me
her elegy. I am a walking masterpiece,
a true fiction
of the ugliness of death.
I am her sad music.

Paradox: Does not immediately make sense, reflecting the confusion the poet feels about death. Poet is saying that his loved one dies over and over again in his mind.

Metaphor: Poet compares himself to being a written lament - he himself has become a tribute to her life, perhaps at the loss of his own identity.

“masterpiece” is a strange word choice as a masterpiece is traditionally seen as perfect.

“true fiction” is an oxymoron as fiction cannot be true. The poet uses these confusing contrasts to emphasise his confused state in losing her.

KEY THEMES

- **Facing Death (either the dying person, or the relative)**
- **Isolation surrounding death/illness**

THEMES CONNECT WITH: *Aunt Julia, Visiting Hour.*

Aunt Julia

Norman MacCaig's Aunt Julia lived on Scalpay, a small island off the coast of Harris in the Outer Hebrides. Aunt Julia lived a traditional, hardworking life on a croft and she spoke only her native Gaelic language. Julia is described through a series of striking metaphors that show how the young narrator connects her with elements of nature: with the earth, with water and with air. The last stanza introduces a tone of regret. The reason for this regret is that only after Julia's death did the poet learn enough Gaelic to be able to communicate with her.

Aunt Julia

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic

very loud and very fast.

I could not answer her —

I could not understand her.

She wore men's boots

when she wore any.

— I can see her strong foot,

stained with peat,

paddling with the **treadle of the spinning wheel**

while her right hand **drew yarn**

marvellously out of the air.

Hers was the only house

where I've lain at night

in the **absolute darkness**

of a box bed, listening to

crickets being friendly.

Word choice/repetition: Poet begins with affectionate childhood memories of Aunt. Repetition of “very” and “I could not” highlight how difficult/impossible it was to communicate with his Aunt.

Word choice: The fact that she “wears men’s boots when she wore any” suggests a woman that is **practical**. Her work is **physically demanding**, both out of doors and within her house.

Structure: The **long line** “paddling with... spinning wheel” highlights the length of time the spinning process takes or the yarn being drawn out. Aunt Julia is always shown to be moving, **emphasising her hard-working, active nature**.

Word choice: “drew yarn **marvellously** out of the air” conveys the sense of magic or illusion about the task in the eyes of the poet as a child. It suggests he admired her.

Word choice: The poet shows **affection** in his description of his Aunt. Despite the typically frightening “absolute darkness”, the poet seems very **comfortable and safe**. This is clear when the **crickets are shown to be “friendly”**.

She was buckets
and water flouncing into them.

Metaphor: The poet feels his Aunt is **so close to nature that she is a part of it**. She is shown to be linked directly to both the wind and the rain.

She was winds pouring wetly
round house-ends.

Word choice: The poet also links Julia to a collection of simple domestic objects. These objects show her to be **natural, traditional and careful with money**.

She was brown eggs, black skirts
and a keeper of threepennybits
in a teapot.

Repetition: The poet returns to the opening lines of the poem, **providing a hint that we are coming to the end of the text**.

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic
very loud and very fast.

Tone: This is a turning point in the poem, as the tone changes here to one of **regret and frustration**.

By the time I had learned
a little, she lay
silenced in the absolute black
of a sandy grave

Word choice: In contrast to the liveliness and activity of Julia's working life, death has **silenced** her. "absolute black" is a reminder of the "absolute darkness" in stanza 3 but this time the darkness is of no comfort.

at Luskentyre. But I hear her still, **welcoming me**

Word choice: Julia is still so connected to nature in his mind that **he hears her in the sounds of nature**, even after death. In other words, nature reminds him of her.

with a seagull's voice
across a hundred yards
of peatscapes and lazybeds
and **getting angry, getting angry**
with so many questions
unanswered.

Repetition: The repetition of the word "**angry**" in these final three lines suggests MacCaig is very frustrated. He is both angry at the questions left by the death of his Aunt but he is also mourning the death of a traditional Scottish way of life. Here he is warning us to hold onto the culture and heritage of the island way of life. He is afraid if we allow it to die, like Aunt Julia, then it too will be lost forever.

KEY THEMES

- Facing Death (either the dying person, or the relative)
- Nature and man's connection to nature

THEMES CONNECT WITH: *Visiting Hour, Memorial.*

'Sounds of the Day' reflects upon the end of a relationship. The poem opens with natural sounds, before the sound of a closing door signals a turn to a darker, more reflective focus.

Sounds of the day

When a **clatter** came,

it was horses crossing the ford.

When the **air creaked**, it was

a lapwing seeing us off the premises

of its private marsh. A **snuffling puff**

ten yards from the boat was the tide **blocking** and

unblocking a hole in a **rock**.

When the **black drums rolled**, it was water

falling sixty feet into itself.

When the door

scraped shut, it was **the end**

of all the sounds there are.

You left me

beside the quietest fire in the world.

I thought I was hurt in my pride only,

forgetting that,

when you plunge your hand in freezing water,

you feel

a bangle of ice round your wrist

before the whole hand goes numb.

Sound techniques: Poet uses a range of sound techniques to emphasise the variety and energy of nature.

Onomatopoeia: "clatter", "creaked", "snuffling puff".

Alliteration: "Clatter came", "snuffling puff".

Assonance: "blocking", "unblocking", "rock". Nature is shown to be alive and full of sound in contrast to the next stanza.

Metaphor: Black drums create a strong image of a storm coming; colour represents grief and death, while drums rolling create sense of impending doom.

Metaphor: The poet uses the closing of the door to mark the end of a relationship. The word "scraped" is an unpleasant painful example of onomatopoeia to mark an end to all sounds.

Word choice: poet exaggerates using extremes, "end of all sounds," to intensify impact of loss he is feeling. Marks the end of the poet's enjoyment of sounds, and perhaps life.

Structure: Poet uses a single sentence to add impact to this statement. Enjambment used effectively to add directness in the line "You left me". Poet again uses exaggeration in "quietest fire". Paradox of a fire that makes no noise adds to this image of loss and loneliness.

Metaphor: Stark contrast in imagery; here it is frozen water in comparison to the flowing, living water of stanza one.

"bangle of ice" helps to capture and describe the intensity of the raw and painful sense of loss experienced. Just as a bangle is restrictive and remains with you, so too does the feeling of loss.

KEY THEMES

- **Loss (either through the end of a relationship, or a bereavement)**
- **Nature and man's connection to nature**

THEMES CONNECT WITH: *Aunt Julia, Visiting Hour, Sounds of the Day, Memorial*

On a holiday to Assisi, the poet Norman MacCaig goes on a guided tour of the church dedicated to St Francis of Assisi. A beggar is sitting outside and is ignored by the priest and tourists who are looking at Giotto's paintings. MacCaig wonders why the priest is looking after the needs of the tourists and is ignoring the needs of the dwarf. He realises that 'inner beauty' of the dwarf captures the spirit of St Francis better than the church or the priest.

Assisi

The dwarf with his hands on backwards

sat, slumped like a half-filled sack

on tiny twisted legs from which

sawdust might run,

outside the three tiers of churches built

in honour of St Francis, brother

of the poor, talker with birds, over whom

he had the advantage

of not being dead yet.

Word choice/Imagery: Poem begins with a **negative and demeaning** description of beggar. "Hands on backwards" catches the reader's attention as it seems wrong. Highlights his deformities. Simile comparison to "half-filled sack" suggests he is less human- a discarded object.

Metaphor: continues idea of dwarf as inanimate object. He is an object that is falling apart.

Contrast/juxtaposition: Poet contrasts broken structure of beggar with powerful structure of church.

Contrast: MacCaig lists great achievements of St. Francis in order to further contrast between Saint and beggar. Use of the word "yet" is a reminder that the only advantage beggar has over Saint will soon be gone.

A priest explained

how clever it was of Giotto

to make his frescoes tell stories

that would reveal to the illiterate the goodness

of God and the suffering

of His Son. **I understood**

the explanation and

the cleverness.

Theme of Hypocrisy: Inside the church, the priest tells simplified versions of Bible stories to satisfy tourists. He is a **hypocrite** as he should be helping the suffering of the beggar outside.

Bitter tone: The speaker is unimpressed by the efforts of the priest to discuss the paintings. "cleverness" highlighted at end of line - ironic as the speaker does not think it is very clever.

A rush of tourists, **clucking contentedly**,
fluttered after him as he scattered
the grain of the Word. It was they who had passed
the **ruined temple** outside, whose eyes
wept pus, whose back was higher
than his head, whose lopsided mouth
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.

Metaphor: comparing priest to farmer scattering seed for chickens. This negative image suggests the tourists have no personality and are unable to think for themselves.

Metaphor: dwarf now directly contrasted with the "grand" church – he is a "ruined temple" by comparison.

Structure: Poet **lists** a number of deformities the beggar has to further highlight his ugliness. This contrasts with the **list** of achievements of St. Francis in verse 1.

Simile: comparing the dwarf to a child is one of innocence – he is to be pitied. Despite all the horrific deformities of the dwarf, he has inner beauty which is unexpected. He is thanking those who pass by, whether they help him or not.

Structure: The poet ends with St. Francis as the final image. A reminder that his message of helping the poor appears to have been lost.; the church was built in his honour, but the priest and the tourists are not **practicing** the kindness he devoted his life to.

STRUCTURE: Free verse. Each stanza deals with a different part of MacCaig's experience:
Verse 1 - The dwarf
Verse 2 - The priest
Verse 3 - The tourists & then back to the dwarf

TONE: Bitter and cynical towards the church and tourists.

KEY THEMES

- **Hypocrisy of the Church**
- **Poverty**
- **Isolation of the disabled/ill**

THEMES CONNECT WITH: *Visiting Hour (isolation).*

The poet is in a rowing boat out at sea. It is raining. He hits what he thinks is a rock, but it is actually a basking shark. The shark rises out of the water. This experience makes the poet think about where he (and all humans) came from. He suddenly realises that although the shark is huge in size, it is not as dangerous as humans can be.

Basking Shark

Repetition: (“**To stub**”, “**to have**”) adds drama and engages the reader.

To **stub** an oar **on a rock** where none should be,

Metaphor: Comparison suggests both the force and stillness of the shark.

To **have** it rise with a **slounge** out of the sea

Word choice: onomatopoeic “slounge” suggests sheer size of shark

Is a thing that happened once (**too often**) to me.

But not too often - though enough. I count as gain

Word choice: “met” suggests he is no longer shocked. “tin-tacked” uses alliteration and metaphor to create effective image of shower.

That once I **met**, on a sea **tin-tacked with rain**,

That **roomsized monster with a matchbox brain**.

Exaggeration: “roomsized,” Contrasts with “matchbox brain”. Shows the poet’s humour that although large, these sharks are not dangerous.

He displaced more than water. He shoggled me

Centuries back - this **decadent townee**

Shook on a wrong branch of his family tree.

Word choice: The shark’s movement causes the water to move violently shifting the boat. The poet is also saying that the shark has caused him to question his place in evolution. “shoggled” and “townee” are informal words creating a humorous self-mocking tone. He sees himself as a “townee”, cut off from the natural world.

Swish up the dirt and, when it settles, a spring

Is all the clearer. I saw me, in one fling,

Emerging from the **slime of everything**.

Word choice: Takes the poet back to the origins of all life; we are all part of the slime. ‘slime’ emphasises how basic everything was in the beginning.

So who's the monster? The thought made me grow pale

For twenty seconds while, **sail after sail**,

The tall fin slid away and then the tail.

Structure: Rhetorical question
The poet is left unsettled, asking questions about evolution and who the real monster is. He is saying that the real monster is human civilisation.
Final lines use punctuation to highlight beauty of shark. Compares shark to a ship’s sail.
Poet’s opinion of shark has changed throughout poem.

STRUCTURE : The poet uses rhyming triplets in this poem.

TONE: This rhyme adds a light-hearted tone to the poem. The tone only changes to a more fearful, serious tone in the final verse, “So who’s the monster?”

KEY THEMES

- **Nature and man’s connection to nature**
- **Man’s position within evolution**

THEMES CONNECT WITH: *Aunt Julia, Memorial, Sounds of the Day*

VISITING HOUR: Revision Questions

Use the following questions to help you revise 'Visiting Hour' for the exam.

1. Look at stanzas 1 & 2. Where does this poem take place? Write down an example of something the poet mentions that tells us this.
2. In stanza 2 the poet describes a patient being taken away in a lift. Quote two words he uses that connect the poem to the idea of death. Explain why you think he chooses to use these words.
3. Look at stanzas 1, 2 & 3. Explain how you think the speaker **feels** about being in the hospital. Include a quote to support your answer.
4. Look at stanza 4. Explain **in your own words** what the speaker thinks about the nurses he describes.
5. Look at stanza 5: "...in a white cave of forgetfulness". What might be 'white' within the hospital? What does the image of a cave tell us about how the woman is living in the hospital?
6. Look at stanza 5. The poet describes the patient as having "A withered hand" that "trembles on its stalk." What does a "withered stalk" make you think of? Why is this a good image to compare the patient's health to?
7. Look at stanza 5. The poet describes the patient's IV drip as a "glass fang". What creature is he comparing the drip to? What does this suggest about the way he sees the patient?
8. Look at line 35. The poet describes that he is 'growing fainter'. What two different meanings could we understand from this phrase?
9. Look closely at the end of stanza 5. The poet uses enjambment here just before the words "can cross". What could this 'gap' in the poem represent?
10. In the final stanza, the speaker describes himself as a "black figure in her white cave". Why might the woman only be able to see a "black figure?" What "black figure" do you think the poet is also making the reader aware of?
11. Look closely at the words used in the final stanza. Choose one word which tells us that the speaker is having physical difficulty after visiting the patient and analyse the effect this word has.
12. What is strange about the phrase "fruitless fruits?" What do you think this tells us about how the poet feels at the conclusion of the poem?

MEMORIAL: Revision Questions

Use the following questions to help you revise 'Memorial' for the exam.

1. Look at the first two lines of the poem. Explain how MacCaig uses a poetic technique to make this an effective opening.
2. Look at stanza one: "No sunrise, no city square, no lurking beautiful mountain/but has her death in it." What does this tell us about the poet's grief?
3. Look at stanza one. Explain what MacCaig means when he refers to the "carousel of language." In what way is language like a carousel?
4. Look at stanza one. The poet describes an "intolerable distance." How does he use structure to emphasise this distance?
5. Look at the final three lines of stanza one. **Use your own words** to explain the question the poet is asking.
6. Look at the first line of stanza two: "She grieves for my grief." Explain what poetic technique is being used here, and then explain what you think the poet means when he uses this phrase.
7. Look at stanza two: "...bird dives from the sun, that fish leaps into it." What does this image tell us about how MacCaig has been affected by his loss?
8. Look at stanza two. Explain what do you think the woman's dying has in common with a crocus.
9. Look at stanza two: "But I hear, too, the other words..." Quote two words the poet uses to convey his feelings of sadness here and analyse the effect of these.
10. In the final stanza, MacCaig uses the oxymoron "true fiction." Explain what an oxymoron is and what these two words – "true" and "fiction" – might be referring to.
11. Look at the final lines of the poem. The poet describes himself as an "elegy," a "fiction", and "her sad music." A memorial is usually a focus to a dead person – such as a gravestone. Who or what is the "memorial" referred to in the title of this poem?
12. Look at the **structure** of the poem **overall**. MacCaig uses free verse, with no obvious pattern in the length of the lines or the stanzas. How does this help to reflect the poet's mood, in relation to the poem's themes?

AUNT JULIA: Revision Questions

Use the following questions to help you revise 'Aunt Julia' for the exam.

1. Look at the first two lines of the poem. What technique does MacCaig use to immediately capture the reader's attention?
2. Look at stanza one carefully. Use your own words to explain the problem the poet had with his Aunt.
3. Look at stanza one: "...paddling with the treadle of the spinning wheel." How does MacCaig use structure to help the reader imagine his Aunt at work?
4. Look towards the end of stanza one. Quote a word MacCaig uses to describe Julia, and explain what it tells us about the way he saw her.
5. Look at stanza two. How do you think the poet felt when he visited Aunt Julia's house? Select a quote which supports your answer.
6. In stanza three, the poet uses a number of metaphors to compare Julia to various things, including different kinds of weather ("*She was...*"). Why might the poet have chosen to use metaphors rather than similes? Think about what difference it makes – *she was buckets* rather than *she was like buckets*.
7. Still thinking about the metaphors used in stanza three, what sort of person do these comparisons suggest Aunt Julia was?
8. Look at stanza five. What do you notice about these lines, and why do you think the poet has chosen to do this?
9. Look at the poet's word choice when he says "silenced in the absolute black." What does this suggest about his own views on death?
10. Explain in your own words what you think the poet means when he says "*but I hear her still, welcoming me with a seagull's voice.*"
11. Look at the final lines of the poem – "and getting angry, getting angry with so many questions unanswered." On a simple level, why are questions left unanswered when the poet stayed with his Aunt Julia?
12. Thinking about the same line again, what deeper, more important questions are not being answered for MacCaig?

SOUNDS OF THE DAY: Revision Questions

Use the following questions to help you revise 'Sounds of the Day' for the exam.

1. Look at the first line of the poem. The poet uses two techniques here. Say what these are and, for each one, explain the effect.
2. How does the idea of "a lapwing seeing us off the premises" help provide a hint about the personal experience at the centre of this poem?
3. "...the tide was blocking and unblocking a hole in a rock." What poetic technique is being used here, and what is the effect? (Think about the sound being described in these lines).
4. Look at line 8. Explain what "the black drums" are a metaphor for, and analyse how this is an effective comparison.
5. How does the poet use structure to emphasise the closing of "the door"? What is this a metaphor for?
6. Explain what you think MacCaig means when he writes "it was the end/of all the sounds there are."
7. Suggest two ways the poet emphasises the phrase "you left me." Why do you think he chose to emphasise this?
8. What poetic technique is being used when the poet states he has been left "beside the quietest fire in the world"? What is the effect of this technique?
9. Quote an example of word choice from the final stanza which suggests that the poet's relationship ended in a sudden or abrupt way.
10. The poet uses freezing water as an image in stanza four. What image does this **directly contrast** with in stanza one?
11. In the final stanza the poet uses the metaphor "a bangle of ice round your wrist." What do you think the "bangle" is a metaphor for?
12. MacCaig structures this poem using free verse. Why do you think he chooses to do this? In what way could the structure reflect his feelings and his experience?

ASSISI: Revision Questions

Use the following questions to help you revise 'Assisi' for the exam.

1. Each stanza of 'Assisi' has a different focus. Explain what (or who) each one is about.
2. Look at line 2 of the poem. Being "like a half-filled sack" makes the beggar seem **less human**. Who do you think might see him this way?
3. There are two examples of alliteration in the first three lines of the poem, which help draw the reader's attention to the beggar's deformities and his posture. Quote the two examples.
4. Look at line 5 of the poem. What important contrast does the poet introduce here? What effect does this contrast have on the beggar?
5. In line 9, the poet emphasises the word 'yet' by placing it at the very end of the stanza. How does this encourage the reader to feel sympathy for the beggar?
6. The priest is explaining to tourists about the story of God. He explains it in very simple terms (lines 13-15). Why might the priest be making this very simple? What does this suggest about the priest?
7. "I understood the explanation and the cleverness." This is a very short, straightforward statement. What does it suggest about MacCaig's attitude towards the priest?
8. In lines 18-20 of the poem, MacCaig uses imagery to describe the tourists. What does he compare them to? What does this suggest about how the poet feels about them?
9. Look at lines 24 - 25. What does the simile used in this part of the poem reveal to us about the beggar?
10. In the final stanza, MacCaig presents two conflicting descriptions of the dwarf – his alarming appearance contrasts with the 'sweetness' of his voice. Why do you think the poet does this? (Think about the points of view contained in the poem).
11. "...to St Francis." This is how the poem ends. What do you think MacCaig wants us to think about after we finish reading 'Assisi'?
12. The main themes of 'Assisi' are **poverty** and the **hypocrisy of the Church**. Choose one of these themes and, using your own words, sum up how the poem puts these across.

BASKING SHARK: Revision Questions

Use the following questions to help you revise 'Basking Shark' for the exam.

1. Consider the **tone** of the poem in lines 1 - 4. Do you think the poet is being completely serious when describing the encounter? Explain your answer.
2. The poet uses repetition in lines one and two by starting each line with the word "To...". Why do you think he uses repetition this early in the poem?
3. Reread lines 1-7. Write in your own words exactly what has happened- describe the scene and the events that take place.
4. In line 1, MacCaig uses imagery when he writes "*To stub an oar on a rock.*" In what way is it effective to compare a living shark to a rock?
5. Look at line 5 - "*on a sea tin-tacked with rain.*" Describe the image you **see** when reading this metaphor.
6. Look at lines 7 - 9. The poet describes that he has been "*shoggled centuries back*" on "*a wrong branch of his family tree*". What has the shark made the poet think about?
7. Look at line 8. A "*decadent townee*" is a person who lives a life of luxury and is from a town. This is the way the poet describes himself.
 - (i) Who is he comparing himself to?
 - (ii) What does this suggest about the differences between them?
8. Read lines 10-11. "*Swish up the dirt and when it settles, a spring is all the clearer.*" The poet is saying that if you mix up dirt, the water appears clearer once it has settled. What else could be clearer after this shark encounter?
9. The tone of the poem is general is light-hearted. However, the tone changes later in the poem. Select a quote that shows a more serious tone later in the poem.
10. Look at line 13. The poet uses a rhetorical question. Why do you think he uses this?
11. Look at the final two lines of the poem (lines 14 - 15). Explain two ways in which the poet uses structure to emphasise the shark's size in these lines.
12. The poet uses **rhyming triplets** to structure this poem. Think about the effect of this. Do you think it makes the poem more **serious** or **light-hearted**?