

## Section C: Unseen poetry

Answer **both** questions in this section.

### ***Building Blocks***

I have been built out of bullies,  
With insults they moulded me.  
For a while I walled up my fears,  
And hid myself in poetry.

The house of books where I wandered,  
In rooms of brain-bright thought,  
Sheltered me brick by tender brick,  
And the hateful words they taught

I caught and made my own  
Confident concrete tower,  
To look down on the bullies,  
For the pen is a mighty power.

They laughed at the sensitive boy,  
And his guttering, spluttering tears,  
But bottled up bullies get old and cold,  
As they blunder the lonely years.

Oh bully boys that built me,  
Don't you know that girls find appealing  
Not louts who love to get plastered,  
But boys filled up with feeling?

Yes I was the prat that was good for a laugh,  
The skinny old git, the swot.  
Now I'm living my life with a beautiful wife,  
Free from the bully dry rot.

So thank you, bullies that built me,  
With all your crumbling hate,  
Out of this mess, came a success,  
And a man who has mastered his fate.

*Andrew Fusek Peters*

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In 'Building Blocks' how does the poet present the speaker's feelings towards the bullies?

**[24 marks]**

**Mother to Son**

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpet on the floor—  
Bare.  
But all the time  
I've been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,  
And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
Don't you fall now—  
For I've still goin', honey,  
I've still climbin',  
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Langston Hughes

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In both 'Building Blocks' and 'Mother to Son' the poets explore ideas about resilience and facing difficulties.

What are the similarities **and/or** differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

**[8 marks]**

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#### Words

I'm seven, and I'm dead bright,  
But words give me a fright.  
Words are bullies.  
Sneaky things. They gabble and lie.  
Sometimes trying to understand  
Them makes me cry. Words hurt.  
Words are all over the place.  
They get shoved in my face.  
I don't know why but  
Words make me cry.

I wish words were things  
You could hug,  
Or that they smelt nice.  
I wish they came in bottles  
Like fizzy drinks, or melted  
Like ice-cream. But they don't.  
Words are mean. They bully me.  
Lock me away  
From what I want to say.

I can't even ask for help,  
And I'm only seven  
(And a bit).  
Words spread nasty gossip.  
They must. Otherwise why  
Would people think I'm thick?

Words.  
They make me sick  
Inside.

*Brian Patten*

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In 'Words' how does the poet present the speaker's feelings towards words?

**[24 marks]**

**Childhood**

I used to think that grown-up people chose  
To have stiff backs and wrinkles round their nose,  
And veins like small fat snakes on either hand,  
On purpose to be grand.  
Till through the banisters I watched one day  
My great-aunt Etty's friend who was going away,  
And how her onyx beads had come unstrung.  
I saw her grope to find them as they rolled;  
And then I knew that she was helplessly old,  
As I was helplessly young.

Frances Cornford

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In both 'Words' and 'Childhood' the poets explore feelings about childhood and the experiences we have.

What are the similarities **and/or** differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

**[8 marks]**

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#### Love After Love

The time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
  
and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
  
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

**Derek Walcott**

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In 'Love After Love' how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about life and how to live?

**[24 marks]**

**The Laughing Heart**

your life is your life  
don't let it be clubbed into dank submission.  
be on the watch.  
there are ways out.  
there is light somewhere.  
it may not be much light but  
it beats the darkness.  
be on the watch.  
the gods will offer you chances.  
know them.  
take them.  
you can't beat death but  
you can beat death in life, sometimes.  
and the more often you learn to do it,  
the more light there will be.  
your life is your life.  
know it while you have it.  
you are marvelous  
the gods wait to delight  
in you.

Charles Bukowski

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2

In both 'Love after love' and 'The Laughing Heart' the poets explore ideas about living life and hope for the future.

What are the similarities **and/or** differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

**[8 marks]**

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#### Brothers

Saddled with you for the afternoon, me and Paul  
ambled across the threadbare field to the bus stop,  
talking over Sheffield Wednesday's chances in the Cup  
while you skipped beside us in your ridiculous tank-top,  
spouting six-year-old views on Rotherham United.

Suddenly you froze, said you hadn't any bus fare.  
I sighed, said you should go and ask Mum  
and while you windmilled home I looked at Paul.  
His smile, like mine, said I was nine and he was ten  
and we must stroll the town, doing what grown-ups do.

As a bus crested the hill we chased Olympic Gold.  
Looking back I saw you spring towards the gate,  
your hand holding out what must have been a coin.  
I ran on, unable to close the distance I'd set in motion.

**Andrew Forster**

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In 'Brothers' how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about his brother?

**[24 marks]**

### Poem For My Sister

My little sister likes to try my shoes,  
to strut in them,  
admire her spindle-thin twelve-year-old legs  
in this season's styles.  
She says they fit her perfectly,  
but wobbles  
on their high heels, they're  
hard to balance.

I like to watch my little sister  
playing hopscotch,  
admire the neat hops-and-skips of her,  
their quick peck,  
never-missing their mark, not  
over-stepping the line.  
She is competent at peever.\*

I try to warn my little sister  
about unsuitable shoes,  
point out my own distorted feet, the callouses,\*\*  
odd patches of hard skin.  
I should not like to see her  
in my shoes.  
I wish she could stay  
sure footed,  
sensibly shod.

*Liz Lochhead*

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In both 'Brothers' and 'Poem for my sister' the poets explore feelings about relationships with their siblings.

What are the similarities **and/or** differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

**[8 marks]**