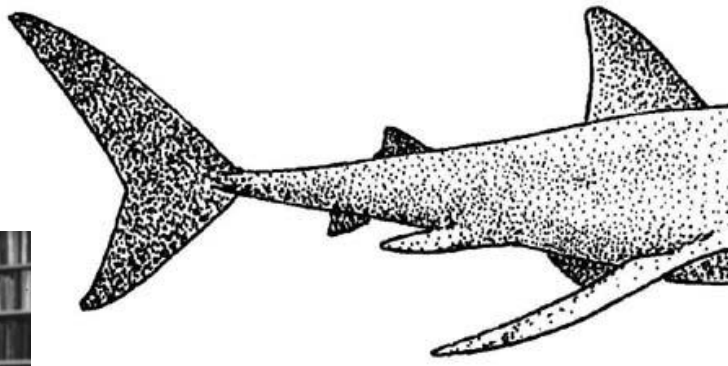
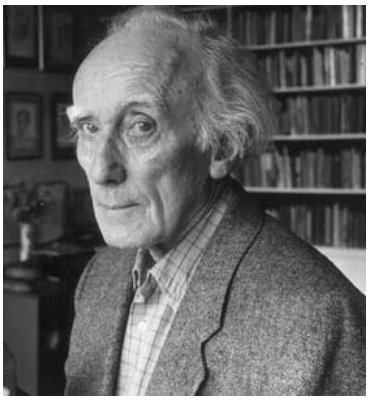
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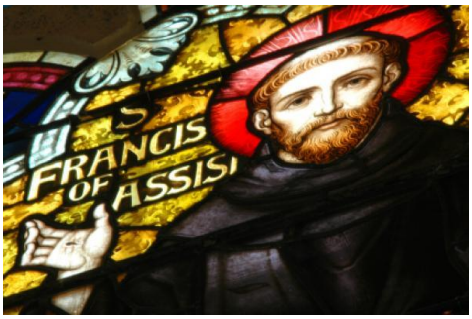














Higher Set Texts:
Norman MacCaig
Revision Booklet

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.**

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.

Word choice/Imagery: Poem begins with a negative and demeaning description of beggar. From the very start of the poem, "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/juxtaposition: Poet 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.

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 juxtaposed with church, "ruined temple".

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.

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.

<u>STRUCTURE</u> : Free verse used throughout poem in order to better convey poet's experience.

Verse 1 – The dwarf

Verse 2 – The priest

Verse 3 – The tourists – and back to the dwarf

<u>TONE:</u> Bitter and cynical towards the church and tourists.

Assisi Notes

Summary: In this poem the speaker describes a visit to the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy. The basilica is an important Christian landmark built in honour of St Francis of Assisi, a Catholic priest who decided to live a life of poverty after spending time with the poor.In the poem, MacCaig exposes the irony that this church, constructed to celebrate a man devoted to the poor, is now a symbol of hypocrisy.Instead of being a lasting monument to the original and noble philosophies of St Francis, it has become celebrated for its architectural merit and the priceless frescoes by the artist Giotto which are housed within it.

Structure: The poem is separated into three distinct stanzas which describe different scenes. In the first, the speaker introduces us to the dwarf begging outside the basilica.The second focuses on the priest who is acting as a tour guide while the third examines the tourists reaction to the dwarf. The portrait of this pitiful figure, which opens and closes the poem, is the most abiding image for the reader.The poem is written in free verse using irregular stanzas to create a conversational, accessible style. The language is deliberately unsophisticated and even at times monosyllabic. This again lends itself to the accessibility of the poem and is typical of MacCaig's work.

Themes: Hypocrisy, Emotions, Suffering, Poverty

Quotations

sat, slumped like a half-filled sack – simile

tiny twisted legs from which/sawdust might run – word choice

had the advantage/of not being dead yet. – word choice/tone

reveal to the illiterate the goodness/of God and the suffering/of His Son. – contrast/word choice

I understood/ the explanation and/the cleverness – word choice/short sentence

clucking contentedly – metaphor/onomatopoeia

fluttered after him. – word choice/metaphor

the grain of the Word. – metaphor

ruined temple – metaphor

a voice as sweet/as a child's when she speaks to her mother. – word choice

Links with: Basking Shark

Assisi Textual Analysis

1. By referring closely to lines 1-4,
analyse MacCaig's description of the man sitting outside the church, making it clear what effect the language used has on the reader. **2** marks

2. By referring closely to verse 2, identify and discuss the effect of the tone in the lines 'I understood/ the explanation and/ the cleverness.' **2** marks

3. By referring closely to the lines 18-20, analyse
how MacCaig portrays both the tourists and the priest as the guided tour progresses. **4** marks

4. MacCaig himself said that his poetry is often inspired by simple ideas: *'the memory of a place, an emotional experience, a person.'* 2 marks

5. By referring to 'Assisi' and at least one other poem, discuss how MacCaig takes simple, everyday experiences and, through his language techniques, builds towards bigger ideas and important themes his work. **10 marks**

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 the inability he had 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. 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.

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. Indeed the crickets are shown to be "friendly".

STRUCTURE : Writing in free verse helps to create a conversational style and tone, while the use of enjambment and repetition allow him to emphasise key aspects of the poem.

TONE: The tone of the poem is largely admiration for the poet's Aunt. The closing stanza uses a tone of anger and regret for missed opportunities.

She **was buckets**

and **water flouncing** into them.

She was winds pouring wetly

round house-ends.

She was b**rown eggs, black skirts**

and **a keeper of threepennybits**

in a teapot.

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.

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.

Repetition: The poet returns to the opening lines of the poem, indicating the beginning of a conclusion to the poem.

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic

very loud and very fast.

By the time I had learned

a little, she lay

silenced in the absolute black

of a sandy grave

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

with a seagull's voice

across a hundred yards

of peatscrapes and lazybeds

and **getting angry, getting angry**

with **so many questions**

unanswered.

Tone: The tone changes here to one of regret and frustration.

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. This time the darkness is of no comfort.

Word choice: Julia is still so connected to nature that he hears her in the sounds of nature, even after death.

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.

Aunt Julia Notes

Summary: 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. MacCaig sometimes described himself as three quarters Gaelic. He was born and brought up in Edinburgh, however, and knew Scalpay only from visits. He developed a deep affinity with the people, landscape and culture of Gaelic north-west Scotland from his visits there. As is evident in the poem, MacCaig felt a strong attachment to his Aunt Julia despite the language barrier that existed between them and this is one of the most memorable of his studies of Highland characters. Julia is next depicted in 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 before ending with a picture of the larger than life character calling to him still getting angry, getting angry/with so many questions unanswered. 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. Hence all the questions that he would have asked to her must now remain unanswered, just as her questions to him as a child had been.

Structure: This is an autobiographical poem so it makes sense that the poet employs a first person narrative stance. Like all MacCaig poetry, part of its success lies in his skill of using accessible language in an incredibly skilful and effective way. Writing in free verse helps to create a conversational style and tone, while the use of enjambment and repetition allow him to emphasise key aspects of the poem. The poem is divided into five stanzas which each deal with a specific focus. The first introduces us to the subject of the poem- Aunt Julia. The second describes her physical appearance and the objects MacCaig most strongly associates with her. In the third stanza, the perspective moves away from Julia to the way the poet felt when he visited her while in the fourth he uses personification to create a sense of her character. The concluding stanza reflects on his own frustration that he was unable to communicate effectively with her while she was alive, at the same time as expressing his enduring affection and admiration for her.

Themes: Isolation, Loss, Emotions, Relationships, Family, Reflection

Quotations

very loud and very fast. – repetition/word choice

I could not answer her– short sentence

paddling with the treadle of the spinning wheel– word choice/long sentence

her right hand drew yarn/marvellously out of the air– word choice

the absolute darkness – word choice

buckets/and water flouncing into them– word choice

fluttered after him. – word choice/metaphor

winds pouring wetly/round house-ends.. – word choice

absolute black – word choice/repetition

Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic/very loud and very fast. – repetition

But I hear her still, welcoming me/with a seagull's voice – metaphor

getting angry, getting angry, with so many questions, unanswered. – word choice/repetition

Links with: Basking Shark, Visting Hour

Aunt Julia Textual Analysis

1. **Look at lines 1–4.**
   By referring to at least one example of language, explain how the poet creates a clear sense of frustration. (2 marks)

2. **Look at lines 5–23.**
   By referring to at least two examples of language, explain how the poet makes clear what Aunt Julia represents. (4 marks)

3. **Look at lines 26–30 ("By the . . . Luskentyre").**
   By referring to at least one example of language, explain how the poet creates a sad tone. (2 marks)

4. **Look at lines 30–36 ("But I . . . unanswered").**
   How effective do you find these lines as a conclusion to the poem? You should refer to one example from these lines, and to the language and/or ideas of the rest of the poem. (2 marks)

5. By referring to this poem and to at least one other by MacCaig, show how being separated from people and/or things is an important idea in his poetry. (10 marks)

Repetition: "To stub", "to have", adds drama to opening shock felt by poet.

Metaphor: Comparison suggests both force and also inanimate nature of shark.

Basking Shark

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

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

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

Word choice: onomatopoeic "slounge" suggests sheer size of shark

Structure: use of brackets and dash suggests informal chatty tone. Ultimately he sees the experience as positive.

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

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

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

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

*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", rejecting 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 the baseness of 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?"

Basking Shark Notes

Summary: This poem depicts the startling encounter he had during one of these visits, while out on a small boat in the Minch (the sea area between the Hebrides and mainland Scotland) near Lochinver. Basking sharks are one of the largest species of the shark family, in fact they are the second largest species of any fish, reaching sizes in excess of ten metres and weighing several tonnes. This encounter sparked in him a reflection on the comparative paths of evolution such differing species took: basking sharks on the one hand, relatively unchanged for millions of years, and humans on the other, vastly changed since the days when marine life first crawled ashore and adapted to a life on land. This train of thought leads to a disturbing question: who is the monster? Is it the shark, literally monstrous in size and aspect to the human; or is it the poet himself, representative of the human race and all the dark, monstrous deeds of which our race is capable? The thought remains with the poet, unresolved, as the shark swims off.

Structure: This poem is set out in five stanzas, each of three lines, and each line being end-rhymed with the others in the stanza. The meter of the poem is also fairly regular: the first two lines of each stanza have five stressed syllables, while the final one has four. The effect of the final shorter stressed line is to create a sense of fitting closure to the stanza. This tight regularity of form is quite unusual in MacCaig's poetry. He is often quite free in stanza length, line length, and meter, and rhyming may or may not be present; he will vary his style according to the internal requirements of a particular poem. In this poem the tightness of structure serves to encapsulate the uniqueness of the experience, and the regularity of rhythm and rhyme matches the rhythmic quality of the rise and the fall of the sea itself, and likewise the steady pulling of the oars. The subject of the poem is never mentioned in the body of the poem itself, instead we infer from the title what the poet's small boat collided with that day.

Themes: Isolation, Loss, Emotions, Relationships, Family, Reflection

Quotations

who's the monster? – question/word choice

To stub an oar on a rock…To have it rise. – word choice

with a slounge out of the sea – word choice

a sea tin-tacked with rain – metaphor

matchbox brain – metaphor

roomsized monster – metaphor

He displaced more than water – short sentence

shook on a wrong branch of the family tree- word choice

Links with: Aunt Julia, Brooklyn Cop

Basking Shark Textual Analysis

1. Look at stanza 1. What event is described in this stanza and how does MacCaig react? Refer to the poet's language in your answer. **(2 marks)**

2. Referring closely to stanza 2, show how MacCaig uses word choice to convey how he feels about the encounter. **(4 marks)**

3. "He displaced more than water". Explain what this line means and show how the poet in the rest of the stanza develops this idea further. **(2 marks)**

4. Choose an example of word choice in stanza 4 and explain how effective you find this example. **(2 marks)**

5. MacCaig often describes his personal experiences in his poetry, using these to explore wider themes. Referring closely to this poem and to at least one other poem by MacCaig, show how he uses personal experience to explore wider themes. **(10 marks)**

Visiting Hour

The **hospital smell**

combs my nostrils

as they **go bobbing along**

green and yellow corridors.

What seems a **corpse**

is trundled into a lift and **vanishes**

heavenward.

I will not feel, I will not

feel, until

I have to.

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.

Metaphor: the smell is overpowering – it becomes a comb brushing through nose hair. Poet establishes a playful mood to begin with.

Synechdoche: Of course, not just his nostrils are moving along, as the image would suggest. This emphasises the powerful nature of "the hospital smell", since it has blocked out his other senses.

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

Enjambment/word choice: poet uses enjambment to highlight words associated with **death.**

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

Structure: the unusual word order is emphasising the number of nurses he sees and their activity.

Word choice/repetition: poet admires the difficult job nurses have facing death regularly. "Miraculously" suggests he cannot understand how they do it. Repetition of "so" stresses the frequency of the nurses' unpleasant dealings.

STRUCTURE : Free verse used throughout poem in order to better convey poet's confused emotions.
TONE: The tone in the poem changes. Begins nervously/humorously then shifts to sadness when faced with patient.

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.

Metaphor: suggesting the white curtains or sheets 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 intravenous 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 death theme.

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

Pun: "growing fainter," suggests both that he is growing fainter in the vision of the patient but also that the poet feels faint.

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.

Visiting Hour Notes

Summary: In Visiting Hour, the speaker describes a visit to a dying friend/wife in hospital. In the poem, the speaker is determined to maintain his composure in order to prevent transmitting his worry and fear to his friend. This attempt to switch off his emotions, however, is ultimately unsuccessful and in the end he is forced to confront the reality of both his own and his friend's mortality.

Structure: The poem is a stream of consciousness from a first person stance which allows us to experience the emotions of the speaker as he is feeling them. It is written in free verse and the present tense, and follows the chronological order of the visit. MacCaig often employs the techniques of enjambment and repetition in this poem to emphasise the central ideas.

Themes: Isolation, Loss, Emotions, Relationships, Family, Death, Fragility of life

Quotations

The hospital smell/combs my nostrils.. – metaphor/word choice

my nostrils/as they go bobbing along.– synedoche

I will not feel– repetition

here and up and down and there– word order

so much pain, so/many deaths– word choice/repetition/list

white cave of forgetfulness.– word choice/metaphor

glass fang– word choice/metaphor

black figure in her white cave.. – word choice/metaphor

the round swimming waves of a bell– word choice/metaphor

fruitless fruits. – oxymoron

Links with: Basking Shark, Aunt Julia, Assisi

Visiting Hour Textual Analysis

1. Stanza one establishes the unease that the poet feels in relation to his surroundings.
a) Identify and comment on one technique used to show this unease. 2 marks
b) How is this sense of unease developed in stanzas two and three? 2 marks

2. The second half of the poem focuses on the isolation of the patient and the barrier between the sick and the rest of us .By close examination show how the techniques used develop this idea. 4 marks

3. In verse five there are four main images which all indicate the woman's frailty and the visitor's inability to do anything. Identify two of these and comment on their effect. 2 marks

4. With close textual reference, show how the theme of isolation is developed in this poem and at least one other poem
by MacCaig which you have read. 10 marks

NY borough
- most populous borough of NY
- poorer area

U.S. slang for policeman

Brooklyn Cop
by Norman MacCaig

Simile — tells us he is big and strong - a stereotypical image of a NY cop.

Built like a gorilla but less timid, — suggests he is brave, but brutal

thick-fleshed, steak-coloured, with two
hieroglyphs in his face that mean — he is seeking out violence.
Hieroglyphs = ancient carvings, suggest face like stone, hard.
- could also suggest hard to read.

trouble, he walks the sidewalk and the
thin tissue over violence. This morning, — the divide between civilization + violence is only ever paper thin.
when he said, "See you, babe" to his wife,
he hoped it, he truly hoped it. — tender associations

metaphor — changes from the first line - reinforces the image + emphasizes the savage, primitive nature of the cop.

He is a gorilla
to whom "Hiya, honey" is no cliché. — something that has been overused so much that it loses its effect.

alliteration
Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through
into violence, what clubbings, what — suggest falling quickly, uncontrollably, into violence
gunshots between Phoebe's Whamburger
and Louie's Place. — sound like they could be mafia hangouts

(truncheon)
Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick, — stereotypical police would carry a gun, as you can keep your distance. The nightstick suggests he may enjoy being able to use it against criminals, enjoys the violence.

this tells us he is vulnerable
whose home is a place
he might, this time, never get back to?

And who would be who have to be
his victims? — ambiguous rhetorical question.

Stanza One - build up an almost cartoon-like image of a stereotypical cop. Brutish, strong, stony faced, etc. However, it hints at a more tender side when he is at home.

Stanza Two - Shows how quickly the cop could be thrust from safety into chaos, suggest that violence is always present.

Stanza Three - Tone changes and moves from descriptive → reflective.

Brooklyn Cop Notes

Summary: At the time the poem was written, the behaviour of the police in the USA had been called into question. Images of brutal and violent behaviour from the police in response to civil rights protests and demonstrations had been shown around the world. The poem focuses on one particular character, an un-named Brooklyn police officer. However, this poem is not a character sketch. It concerns the dangerous and violent world that policemen in New York, or anywhere in the world can face. By portraying the cop as both a threatening animal and as a vulnerable human being, McCaig questions how civilised modern society is and suggests the dehumanising nature of violence. Although the policeman is imposing and strong, we also see him as being vulnerable and human. His exchanges with his wife underline the severity of the dangers that he faces each day.

Structure: Stanza One - builds the cartoon-like image of a stereotypical cop. Stanza two - shows how how quickly the cop could be thrust from safety into chaos and how violence is always present in his world. Stanza Three - written as a rhetorical question and is ambiguous. It leaves the reader to question his policing, and his "victims". It is important to note the stanzas become shorter and much more condensed. This reflects the poet grasping at different ideas and becoming lost. Norman MacCaig's hope of proper justice is disappearing the more he thinks about it.

Themes: Isolation, Violence, Emotions, Relationships, Death, Reflections

Quotations

Built like a gorilla but less timid, thick fleshed, steak coloured.. – simile/word choice

Two hieroglyphs in his face that mean trouble, he walks the sidewalk and the thin tissue over violence”
.– metaphor

This morning when he said “See you babe” to his wife, he hoped it, he truly hoped it”– repetition

He is a gorilla to whom “Hiya, honey” is no cliche – metaphor

Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through into violence, what clubbings, what gunshots between Phoebe's hamburger and Louie's Place.”– word choice/repetition/metaphor

Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick,”
.– rhetorical question

And who would be who have to be his victims – word choice

Links with: Basking Shark, Aunt Julia, Assisi, Visiting Hour

Brooklyn Cop Textual Analysis

1. Look at lines 1-4 (“Built like…trouble.”)
By referring to at least two examples of language, explain how the poet creates a clear impression of the cop. **(4 marks)**

2. Look at lines 6-9.
By referring to **at least one** example of language, explain how the poet gives a clear sense of the cop’s home life. **(2 marks)**

3. Look at lines 14-16.
By referring to at least one example of language, explain how the poet highlights the threats that the cop faces daily. **(2 marks)**

4. Look at lines 17-18.
How effective do you find these lines as a conclusion to the poem? You should refer to one example from these lines, and to the language and/or ideas from the rest of the poem. **(2 marks)**

5. By referring to this poem, and at least one other by MacCaig, show how he uses setting to explore different themes. **(10 marks)**

Immediately establishes time of day

Establishes place through title and landmarks

Highlights size of the building – Poet critical of America and its biggest is best attitude

Poet's Attitude
Critical of ostentatious symbols of wealth that don't reflect the realities of what the city is like.

Hotel Room, 12th Floor

In this case the speaker is presumably the poet

This morning I watched from here
a helicopter skirting like a damaged insect
the Empire State Building, that
jumbo size dentist's drill, and landing
on the roof of the PanAm skyscraper.
But now midnight has come in
from foreign places. Its uncivilised darkness
is shot at by a million lit windows, all
ups and acrosses

Unpleasant connotations

Negative connotations – pain, suffering and unpleasant experiences.

Reflects that this is an unpleasant experience for the poet.

Real landmarks makes the poem seem more credible.

Emphasis on height – this verse is very much about the skyline of the city; neglecting the harsh realities of life on the streets (ground level)

Signposts turning point
Change to night and introduces the battle between light and dark- symbolic of the key THEME good v evil.

Multi-racial society/the unknown

Associate with crime/battle/war

But midnight is not
so easily defeated. I lie in bed, between
a radio and a television set, and hear
the wildest of warhoops continually ululating through
the glittering canyons and gulches –
police cars and ambulances racing
to the broken bones, the harsh screaming
from coldwater flats, the blood
glazed on sidewalks.

Good is losing the 'fight' ie. Society is beyond redemption

Light fighting darkness.
Religious imagery

Alliteration – wild west imagery.

Onomatopoeia

Possibly afraid? Trying to drown out sound?

Again symbols of wealth on the landscape amongst the poverty. The city just as dangerous as the areas favoured for ambushes.

Technology /wealth (TV etc.) juxtaposed with an impoverished 'wild west' society.

Violence.
Synecdoche shows casualties of this 'war' aren't recognised as people – simply 'broken bones'.

Poverty – poor living conditions

The frontier is never
somewhere else. And no stockades
can keep the midnight out.

Strong Conclusion
2 x strong statement
Use of 'never' 'no' .

Substitute for evil

Sense of hopelessness and despair

Norman MacCaig

STRUCTURE

1. Speaker is anxious and attacks the materialistic attitude of society.
2. Sense of fear – seems to be hiding in his room
3. Strong conclusion

THEME
Good v Evil

Hotel Room 12th Floor Notes

Summary: *Hotel Room, 12th Floor* ponders the balance between light and dark, good and evil and humanity's role in a developing urban society. It was first published in 1968 in MacCaig's *Rings on a Tree*collection. Though the poem begins with light-hearted imagery, with the Empire State Building compared to a jumbo size dentist's drill, the mood gradually becomes more sombre and reflective, with the ominous conclusion that no stockades can keep the midnight out as humans seek shelter from the uncivilised darkness that night brings. MacCaig makes reference to the technological advances and achievements of modern-day America, such as New York's skyscrapers. However, he also considers the violent past of America, particularly the Wild West, and compares this aggression to the country's present. By tracing the thread of violence throughout American history to the present, MacCaig suggests that technological progress has not resulted in societal civility. In this sense, this is a bleak poem that predicts that evil will always exist as a part of human life.

Structure: Free-verse often freed MacCaig to explore themes without a restrictive, defined structure – *Hotel Room 12th Floor* is a good example of this, as is *Visiting Hour*. Consisting of three stanzas of varying length, *Hotel Room, 12thFloor* does not have a rhyming scheme. Stanza One reflects how the city looks in the morning and focuses on the bright, modern appearance of the city. MacCaig moves to night at the close of the stanza to suggest a darker, more dangerous city. Stanza Two explores this threatening night world in more detail and links it to the Wild West. The shortest of the stanzas, Stanza Three is an effective summary of the poem's themes, bringing together societal concerns. By giving the two sentences that comprise stanza three a stanza of their own, MacCaig gives significance to their content. *Hotel Room, 12th Floor* is written in free-verse and in the first person. It documents a personal experience of MacCaig's like *Aunt Julia* and *Basking Shark* but, like both of these poems, its concerns are not limited to MacCaig – he uses the poem, and his own experiences described, to pose broader questions about humanity.

Themes: Isolation, Violence, Emotions, Death, Reflections, Human condition

Quotations

A helicopter skirting like a damaged insect/ the Empire State Building – simile/word choice

jumbo sized dentist's drill.– metaphor

But now midnight has come in/from foreign places – word choice

uncivilised darkness – personification

But midnight is not/ so easily defeated - tone/metaphor

The wildest of warwhoops continually ululating/ through the glittering canyons and gulches.– word choice

The frontier is never somewhere else. And no stockades can keep the midnight out– word choice

Links with: Basking Shark, Assisi, Visiting Hour

Hotel Room 12th Floor Textual Analysis

1. Referring closely to verse 1, lines 1-9, show how the poet creates a sense of time **and** a sense of place. **(2 marks)**

2. By referring to the language used in Stanza 1, explain clearly what the poet thinks of the Empire State building. **(2 marks)**

3. Referring closely to the language used in lines 10-18 (Stanza 2), discuss how MacCaig explores the key themes of the poem. **(4 marks)**

4. To what extent do you consider the last three-line verse to be an effective conclusion to the poem? Justify your answer by referring to the language used by MacCaig. **(2 marks)**

5. By referring to this poem, and to at least one other by MacCaig, show how MacCaig explores setting. **(10 marks)**

How to answer the 10 mark question

All questions are worth 10 marks and should be structured using bullet points and headings

Use the headings:

General Comment (2 marks)
Exam poem (2 marks)
Other poem (6 marks)

General Comment

Write a sentence for each poem to show how it ties in with the question.

Exam Poem

- Quote a relevant example from your exam poem.
- Pick out the techniques used in the quote.
- Explain what they show us and link this back to what the question is asking.
- Do exactly the same again using another quotation from this poem.

Other poem

- Do exactly the same as the Exam poem but do it six times.
- You can focus on one or two other poems.

Discuss how the poet **uses striking words and imagery** to explore a **deeper theme** in "Visiting Hour" and at least 1 other MacCaig poem.

General comment

- In "Visiting Hour", MacCaig uses striking imagery such as the description of the smell of the hospital and the comparison of the illness to a cave to illustrate the theme of loss

- In "Aunt Julia", MacCaig uses the imagery of memories of his aunt and his sadness that she is dead to illustrate the theme of loss.

- In "Brooklyn Cop", MacCaig uses the imagery of the cop as a gorilla and the potential for him to be dangerous to highlight the theme of good vs. bad

Exam Poem

"The hospital smell/combs my nostrils"

- *This metaphor compares smell to a comb brushing through the poet's nose and shows the power of the smell. Just as a comb would pass through the strands of hair so too the smell touches every part of the speaker's nose. The creates the effect of emphasising the fact that he cannot escape the smell. This illustrates the theme of loss as it clearly emphasises how much he dislikes this location and cannot escape how negative it is.*

"white cave of forgetfulness"

- *This metaphor compares the hospital room to a cave where things are forgotten and shows that the ill woman is becoming forgetful. Just as a a cave is somewhere dark and scary so too this hospital room is scary and dark as it contains no joy, hope or memories of the past. The creates the effect of emphasising the negative feelings of MacCaig. This illustrates the theme of loss as it clearly emphasises that he is afraid of his wife dying and feels like she is gone already through the lack of memory..*

Other Poems

"But I hear her still, welcoming me/with a seagull's voice"

- *This metaphor compares Aunt Julia to segaull and shows her connection to nature Just as a seagulls' voice is loud and can be heard clearly in the air so too Aunt Julia's voice is clear and loud in his memories. The creates the effect of connecting the memory of Aunt Julia to the natural world. This illustrates the theme of loss as it clearly emphasises his desire to keep her memory alive in the world around him.*

"the absolute darkness"

- *This metaphor compares .....to ..... and shows ..... Just as a ..... so too ..... The creates the effect of ..... This illustrates the theme*

of ..... as it clearly emphasises .....

"getting angry, getting angry, with so many questions, unanswered"

- *This striking word choice of tells the reader .... The word choice of "....." suggests..... The use of repetition creates the effect of ..... This illustrates the theme of ..... as it clearly emphasises .....*

"Built like a gorilla but less timid, thick fleshed, steak coloured"

- *This simile compares .....to ..... and shows ..... Just as a ..... so too ..... The creates the effect of ..... This illustrates the theme of ..... as it clearly emphasises .....*

Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick?"

- *This metaphor compares .....to ..... and shows ..... Just as a ..... so too ..... The creates the effect of ..... The use of rhetorical question creates the effect of ..... This illustrates the theme of ..... as it clearly emphasises .....*

"He is a gorilla to whom "Hiya, honey" is no cliche"

- *This metaphor compares .....to ..... and shows ..... Just as a ..... so too ..... The creates the effect of ..... This illustrates the theme of ..... as it clearly emphasises .....*

Recognising a technique

Visiting Hour

1. “She lies in a white cave of forgetfulness” – metaphor/word choice
2. “A glass fang is fixed, not guzzling but giving” – metaphor/word choice
3. “A withered hand trembles on its stalk” –metaphor/word choice
4. “Fruitless fruits” –alliteration/word choice
5. “I will not feel, I will not feel, until I have to” - repetition
6. “Ward 7” – caesura
7. “The hospital smell/combs my nostrils” – personification/word choice
8. “Nurses walk lightly, swiftly,/here and up and down and there,” – word order/word choice
9. “carrying their burden/of so much pain, so/many deaths” – repetition/word choice

Aunt Julia

1. “She was winds …. She was brown eggs …” (comparison of AJ to forces of nature) – metaphor/word choice
2. “But I hear her still, welcoming me with a seagull’s voice” – metaphor/word choice/theme
3. “Aunt Julia spoke Gaelic/ Very loud and very fast”- repetition/word choice
4. “and getting angry, getting angry with so many questions unanswered” – repetition/word choice
5. “I could not answer her – I could not understand her.” – turning point/repetition/theme
6. “By the time I had learned a little, she lay silenced…” – turning point/word choice
7. “She wore men's boots/when she wore any” – word choice
8. “drew yarn/marvellously out of the air.” – word choice
9. “listening to/crickets being friendly.” – word choice

Hotel Room 12th Floor

1. A helicopter skirting like a damaged insect/ the Empire State Building – simile/word choice
2. jumbo sized dentist’s drill.– metaphor
3. But now midnight has come in/from foreign places – word choice
4. uncivilised darkness – personification
5. But midnight is not/ so easily defeated - tone/metaphor

6. The wildest of warwhoops continually ululating/ through the glittering canyons and gulches.– word choice
7. The frontier is never somewhere else. And no stockades can keep the midnight out– word choice

Assissi

1. “Sat slumped like a half-filled sack” – simile/word choice
2. “On tiny twisted legs from which/Sawdust might run” – alliteration/word choice/tone
3. “his eyes wept pus” – word choice/characterisation
4. “said Grazie in a voice as sweet as a child’s” – simile/word choice
5. “the ruined temple” – metaphor/word choice
6. “I understood the explanation and the cleverness” – theme/word choice
7. “A rush of tourists, clucking contentedly,/fluttered after him as he scattered/the grain of the Word.” – metaphor/alliteration/word choice/theme
8. “outside the three tiers of churches built/in honour of St Francis” – word choice/contrast with beggar
9. “he had the advantage/of not being dead yet” – word choice/sentence structure

Brooklyn Cop

1. Built like a gorilla but less timid, thick fleshed, steak coloured.. – simile/word choice
2. Two hieroglyphs in his face that mean trouble, he walks the sidewalk and the thin tissue over violence”.– metaphor
3. This morning when he said “See you babe” to his wife, he hoped it, he truly hoped it”– repetition
4. He is a gorilla to whom “Hiya, honey” is no cliche – metaphor
5. Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through into violence, what clubbings, what gunshots between Phoebe's hamburger and Louie's Place.”– word choice/repetition/metaphor
6. Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick,”.– rhetorical question
7. And who would be who have to be his victims – word choice

Basking Shark

1. That room sized monster with a matchbox brain” – metaphor/word choice
2. “He shoggled me centuries back – this decadent townee” – word choice
3. “So who’s the monster?” – question/turning point

4. “To stub an oar on a rock where none should be” – metaphor
5. “To have it rise with a slounge out of the sea” – word choice/onomatopoeia
6. “That once I met, on a sea tin-tacked with rain” – word choice
7. “Emerging from the slime of everything.” – word choice

Poem	Key ideas	Speaker	Themes	Quotations	Links with
Basking Shark					
Brooklyn Cop					
Hotel Room 12th Floor					
Visiting Hour					
Aunt Julia					
Assisi					