

'This Moment' by Eavan Boland

OL Sample Answer – From 'This Is Poetry 2017'

Question 1

- (a) Why in your opinion does the poet called the poem This Moment (10)
- (b) Write out two images from the poem that best help you to picture the neighborhood at dusk. Give a reason for your choice in each case. (10)
- (c) Taken as a whole, does this poem give you a comforting or a threatening feeling about the neighborhood? Explain your answer. (10)

Question 2

Answer ONE of the following (i) (ii) or (iii) [Each part carries 20 marks]

- (i) Imagine you were asked to make a short film based on the poem 'This Moment'. describe the sort of atmosphere you would try to create and say how you would use music, sound effects and images to create it.

OR

- (ii) *Stars rise.*

Moths flutter.

Apples sweet and in the dark.

Do you think these lines provide a good ending to the poem? Give reasons for your opinion.

OR

- (iii) Write a short letter to Evan Boland in which you tell her what her poems on your course mean to you.

1. (a) The poem represents a moment snatched out of time. It describes a suburban neighborhood "at dusk", which is a fleeting moment between day and night. We get the sense that the poet is alone, that only she is witnessing "this moment". She gives us very precise images – "woman leans down to catch a child" - which seemed to route the poem in a specific place and time. There is a sense of possibility in the air, feeling that anything could happen: "Things are getting ready/ to happen/ out of sight ... but not yet." This sense of anticipation helps to imbue an ordinary scene with a sense of that momentous.

(b) I found "Stars and moths" to be quite simple yet evocative images. There is a striking contrast between the majestic star and a humble moth, and yet there are similarities too - Both are associated with light, both float overhead. Their image contributed strongly to the dusky, hushed atmosphere of the poem.

I also liked the line "One window is yellow as butter" because it is so visual. It highlights the fading of light at dusk; people are switching on their lights but have not yet closed their curtains. There is also a good contrast with the previous line "One tree is black." This highlights the fact that dusk is an in between time, not quite light and not quite dark.

(c) I think there is a slightly threatening undercurrent in this poem. We are not told what "Things" are about to happen; all we know is that they're "out of sight" and mysterious. The images of moths and the black tree also lend the poem an ominous feeling. The woman catching the child "who has run into her arms" seems like a comforting image at first, but it is also possible that the child is frightened and running away from something. There is a sense that night belongs to nature and not to people: "Apples sweeten in the dark".

2. (ii) I think the last three lines give the poem a wonderfully mysterious and atmospheric ending. The lines are rhythmic and sound almost like a chant, which ties in with the eerie atmosphere of the poem. They also bring back into focus the main image used throughout the poem - the stars, moths and "rinds slanting around fruit".

The line "Apples sweeten in the dark" is particularly striking. It is a benevolent image of the beauty of nature, but the poet also reminds us that this work is done "in the dark", echoing the earlier lines "Things are getting ready/ to happen/ out of sight." The poet is reminding us that ordinary things have their own inner life that we cannot always see.