National 5
Critical Reading Exam
Scottish Text: Jackie Kay
How to read a poem

- Title
- Theme
- Word choice
- Imagery
- Sound
- Structure
- Rhyme
- Repetition?
- Enjambement?
- Alliteration?
- Stanza length?
- Stanza break?
- Word position?
- Speed?
- Regular?
- Speaking to?
- Personality?
- Voice?
- Narrator
- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Regular?
- Stanza length?
- Stanza break?
- Word position?
- Speed?
- Regular?
- Speaking to?
- Personality?
- Voice?
- Narrator
- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Regular?
- Stanza length?
- Stanza break?
- Word position?
- Speed?
- Regular?
Jackie Kay

**Biography**

Jackie Kay was born in Edinburgh in 1961 to a Scottish mother and a Nigerian father. She was adopted as a baby by a white Scottish couple, Helen and John Kay, and grew up in Bishopbriggs, a suburb of Glasgow, in a 1950s-built Glasgow housing estate in a small Wimpey house, which her adoptive parents had bought new in 1957. They adopted Kay in 1961 having already adopted Jackie’s brother, Maxwell, about two years earlier. Jackie and Maxwell also have siblings who were brought up by their biological parents. Her adoptive father worked for the Communist Party full-time and stood for Member of Parliament, and her adoptive mother was the Scottish secretary of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In August 2007, Jackie Kay was the subject of the fourth episode of The House I Grew Up In, in which she talked about her childhood.

Initially harbouring ambitions to be an actress, she decided to concentrate on writing after Alasdair Gray, a Scottish artist and writer, read her poetry and told her that writing was what she should be doing. She studied English at the University of Stirling and her first book of poetry, the partially autobiographical *The Adoption Papers*, was published in 1991 and won the Saltire Society Scottish First Book Award. Her other awards include the 1994 Somerset Maugham Award for *Other Lovers*, and the Guardian First Book Award Fiction Prize for *Trumpet*, based on the life of American jazz musician Billy Tipton, born Dorothy Tipton, who lived as a man for the last fifty years of his life. [citation needed]

She writes extensively for stage (in 1988 her play Twice Over was the first by a Black writer to be produced by Gay Sweatshop Theatre Group), screen and for children. Her drama *The Lamplighter* is an exploration of the Atlantic slave trade. It was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in March 2007 and published in poem form in 2008.

In 2010 she published *Red Dust Road*, an account of her search for her natural parents. Her biological parents met when her father was a student at Aberdeen University and her mother was a nurse.

Jackie Kay was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) on 17 June 2006. She is currently Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University, and Cultural Fellow at Glasgow Caledonian University. Kay lives in Manchester. She took part in the Bush Theatre's 2011 project Sixty-Six Books, with a piece based upon a chapter of the King James Bible.

Accessed: 2/6/14
### Glossary of terms

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alliteration</strong></td>
<td>The repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words.</td>
<td>Clogs clacked clumsily on the cobbles. (Reflects the sound of the clogs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambiguity</strong></td>
<td>Words or phrases in which the meaning is unclear or has several interpretations.</td>
<td>Example: the title of the poem, “Mid-term Break” by Seamus Heaney</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assonance</strong></td>
<td>The repetition of similar vowel sounds</td>
<td>Example: “slice of ice” from “Stealing”</td>
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<td><strong>Climax</strong></td>
<td>Building up to an important moment</td>
<td>Example: Macbeth’s murder of Duncan in Act 2 represents the point of no return, after which Macbeth is forced to continue butchering his subjects to avoid the consequences of his crime.</td>
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<td><strong>Colloquial</strong></td>
<td>Ordinary, everyday speech</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connotation</strong></td>
<td>The implication or suggestion attached to a word or phrase</td>
<td>Example: Owning a Rolls Royce – connation of being extremely rich</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enjambment</strong></td>
<td>A line of a poem that flows into another one</td>
<td>Example: “Not a day since then/I haven’t wished him dead” from “Havisham”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Euphemism</strong></td>
<td>A nicer way of phrasing something quite harsh</td>
<td>Example: “passing away” rather than died</td>
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<td><strong>Hyperbole</strong></td>
<td>Elaborate exaggeration: I came down to a mountain of presents at Christmas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Imagery</strong></td>
<td>Simile, metaphor, personification - words or phrases used to create a picture in the reader’s mind</td>
<td>Example: “ropes on the back of my hand I could strangle with” from “Havisham”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inversion</strong></td>
<td>Word order which places the verb before the subject in order to place emphasis on the word that sounds out of order</td>
<td>Example: “Blushing, she fled”; Longingly, she looked at the puppy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Irony</strong></td>
<td>Saying or doing one thing while meaning another/something unexpected happens</td>
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</table>
Duncan’s reply to Malcolm’s report of the execution of the disloyal Thane of Cawdor is ironic: “There’s no art to find the mind’s construction in the face” (never judge a book by its cover). Duncan is unable to predict the treachery of Cawdor and exactly at the moment that Duncan speaks the line, Shakespeare seals the irony by having Macbeth enter the court room.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>A comparison of two things in which you state that something is something else</td>
<td>life is a rollercoaster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onomatopoea</td>
<td>Using sounds which copy the action taking place</td>
<td>“Bang” from “Havisham”; hiss</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxymoron</td>
<td>Placing together two items which are not usually placed together</td>
<td>“Beloved sweetheart bastard” from “Havisham”. Pretty ugly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paradox</td>
<td>A puzzle; a statement that appears contradictory</td>
<td>“Life is good, life is bad”; “Fair is foul and foul is fair” from “Macbeth”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personification:</td>
<td>Giving human characteristics to an inanimate object</td>
<td>The sun kissed the windowsill; the bite of Winter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>A question which does not need an answer either because the answer is obvious or implied in the question</td>
<td>“How would you prepare to die on a perfect April evening?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sibilants:</td>
<td>Words that begin with “s” or soft “c”</td>
<td>“soft shoes” in “Sparrow”</td>
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<td>Simile:</td>
<td>The comparison of two things using the words “like” or “as”</td>
<td>“Upright as statues” from 2Shooting Stars”; she is like an angel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolism:</td>
<td>The use of a physical object as representative of something else</td>
<td>Once Macbeth and Lady Macbeth embark upon their murderous journey, blood comes to symbolise their guilt and they begin to feel that their crimes have stained them in a way that cannot be washed clean. Lady Macbeth comes to share his horrified sense of being stained: “Out, damned spot; out, I say . . . who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?” (5.1.). Blood symbolises the guilt that sits like a permanent stain on the consciences of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, one that pursues them to their graves.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Theme: | The central ideas explored in a piece of literature  
The corrupting power of unchecked ambition in Macbeth; fate and free will in Macbeth |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Transferred Epithet: | An adjective which is normally applied to a person is applied to an object to draw attention to it.  
Example: the labelling of Kinraddie as “sinful”, as it’s the people they are actually referring to, not the town |
Jackie Kay: National 5: Scottish text

Jackie Kay checklist

- Tick or cross off when you complete each section
- Write down any thoughts/reflections/comments on your work- what you want to work on or improve 😊

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<th>Initial questions</th>
<th>Copied notes from PowerPoint</th>
<th>Annotated poem</th>
<th>Critical Reading Practice</th>
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<td>My Grandmother’s Houses</td>
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<td>Lucozade</td>
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<td>Bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoughts/reflections/comments</td>
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Jackie Kay: National 5: Scottish text

Listening assessment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt8iPPT_las&autoplay=1&app=desktop

1. Does Jackie Kay think that they are an interesting choice of poems?
2. Why?
3. What does Jackie Kay think that young people can get out of studying the six poems?

My Grandmother’s houses

1. What were the reasons for her writing it?
2. Why is she angry for her grandmother?

Keeping Orchids

1. Who does Jackie Kay meet in this poem?
2. What does the poem explore?

Divorce

1. Who was the poem written for or aimed at?
2. Why did she write it?
3. What two tones does Jackie Kay say are in the poem?

Lucozade

1. Is this based on true events?
2. If yes, what events are these?
3. What two interpretations do readers have about the ending of the poem?

Bed

1. What language is this poem written in?
2. Why does Jackie Kay say she chose to write it in this language?

Gap Year

1. Why did she write this poem?
2. What did her son think of this poem?

Purpose and Audience:

1. What is the purpose of this recording?
2. Who is the intended audience?

Tone and pace:

1. Write down one piece of information about the tone (way it is said) and pace (speed) of one of the speakers in the recording.
Bed

She is that guid tae me so she is
an Am a burden tae her, I know Am ur.
Stuck here in this big blastit bed
year in, year oot, ony saint wuid complain.

There's things she has tae dae fir me
A' wish she didnae huv tae dae.
Am her wean noo, wey ma great tent o' nappy,
an champed egg in a cup, an mashed tattie.

Aw the treats A' used tae gie her,
she's gieing me. A' dinny ken whit happened.
We dinny talk any mair. Whether it's jist
the blethers ha been plucked oot o' us

an Am here like some skinny chicken,
ma skin aw bubbles and dots and spots,
loose flap noo (an yet as a young wuman
A' took pride in ma guid smooth skin.)

Aw A' dae is sit and look oot this windae.
A've seen hale generations grow up
an simmer doon fray this same windae –
that's no seen a lick o' paint fir donkeys.

The Kerrs have disappeared, but the last
Campbells ur still here so Am telt –
tho' hauf the time A' dinny believe her:
A’ve no seen any Campbell in a lang time.

My dochter says ‘Awright mother?’
haunds me a thin broth or puried neep
an A say ‘Aye fine,’ an canny help
the great heaving sigh that comes oot

my auld loose lips, nor ma crabbit tut,
nor ma froon when A’ pu’ ma cardie tight
aroon ma shooders fir the night drawin in.
Am jist biding time so am ur.

Time is whit A’ hauld between
the soft bits o’ ma thumbs,
the skeleton underneath ma night goon;
aw the while the glaring selfish moon

lights up this drab wee prison.

A’ll be gone and how wull she feel?
No that Am saying A’ want her guilty.
No that Am saying Am no grateful.
In this poem Jackie Kay uses the dramatic monologue form to convey the stark realities of extreme old age. The speaker is an elderly bed-bound woman, completely dependent on her daughter for her care. She voices her thoughts and feelings in a colloquial Scots, which is direct, expressive and sometimes bleakly humorous. Her words describe with a raw honesty the physical ravages of old age and the guilt and frustration she feels. She has become the "wean noo". In the second last stanza her words have a stark poetry in the personification of Time held "between / the so bits o’ ma thumbs". In the last stanza she contemplates her own death. Her matter of fact question, “how wull she feel?” and her apparently simple and direct statements suggest a complexity of emotions about her own death and how it will affect her daughter.

Answer each question in as much detail as you can, and include quotes if appropriate.

1. What do we learn about the speaker’s circumstances in stanzas 1 and 2?
2. What feelings does she express about her situation?
3. Name the techniques the poet uses in the following phrases and comment on how effective they are in portraying the woman’s personality: “this big blastit bed”; “year in, year oot”; “ma great tent o’ nappy”.
4. What reason is suggested for the lack of communication between mother and daughter in the statement, “the blethers ha been plucked oot o’ us”?
5. In stanzas 4, 5 and 6, what more do we learn about her and her situation?
6. Which of her expressions reveal her frustration with her isolation and lack of company?
7. Look at stanza 7. Why do you think she says “Aye ne” when her daughter hands her her “baby food”?
8. In stanza 9 and the rest line of stanza 10 the woman’s language becomes less conversational. Comment on the effectiveness of the language techniques the poet uses to convey this change.
9. What qualities does the woman still have, despite her cruel circumstances?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Number</th>
<th>Annotations: ‘Bed’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>• Patterns and inflections of real speech – ‘so she is ... I know Am ur’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• <strong>Alliteration</strong> – plosive ‘b’: her frustration, ‘big blastit bed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• <strong>Repetition</strong> suggests the length of time; <strong>word choice</strong> suggests a sense of her martyrdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>• Humiliations/indignities of being cared for; these are conspicuous. She is very aware of her situation. Body is weakened but mind is not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>• Role reversal; <strong>metaphor</strong> – the size of the nappy suggested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>• Typical food of an invalid/baby food; bland, unexciting, mundane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>• Idea of role reversal continued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>• <strong>Enjambment</strong> emphasises the change in roles. Persona has lost control/agency – bewilderment at this change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>• Lack of communication – loss of intimacy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>• <strong>Word choice</strong> – ‘blethers’ – small talk; intimacy of the relationship has gone. <strong>Word choice</strong> – connection to feathers; the violence of the removal of communication – suggests it is gone forever, irretrievable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>• Image extended into a <strong>simile</strong> – ‘like some skinny chicken’ – vulnerability; ugly, unnatural, being prepared for the end</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>• <strong>List</strong> – suggests illness/disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>• Contrast with the indignity she is now experiencing. ‘guid’ – comment on way society sees old age as bad – youth is ‘good’</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>• ‘Aw’ – everything, the only thing she has; passivity: trapped behind the window, can see but not communicate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>• Time passing – whole generations coming and going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>• Suggests youth is impetuous/vibrant. As you age, you go off the boil. Contrasts with ‘same windae’ – monotony and sameness/predictable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>• Length of time suggested again. <strong>Symbolism</strong> – the window frame is also aging and uncared for; lacking attention</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>• Whole generations/families moving on; ‘last’ – <strong>enjambment</strong> to focus on the end of the family line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>• ‘so Am telt’ – doesn’t know herself; second hand information</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>• Feeling as though she is being misled</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>• Her limited view/perspective: reinforces looking for remnants of the past, things she recognises</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>• Daughter’s question has no real meaning; dark irony; not seeking an answer as the answer is clear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>• Broth is weak and insubstantial; turnip like baby food again. Lack of investment in preparation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>• Mother’s reply is equally meaningless</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>• Long vowels suggest the sigh/her despair and hopelessness. Enjambment across the two quatrains replicates the sigh.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>• ‘ma crabbit tut’ – shortness of vowels/jagged consonants suggest the disapproval; irritation in the consonance</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>• Suggests fear and vulnerability</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>• Age/ oncoming darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>• Waiting for bed/waiting to die</td>
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<tr>
<td>33-34</td>
<td>• Tenuous grip, not much left – gossamer thin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>• Flesh has gone; what’s left is simply bones. Death is waiting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>• ‘the glaring selfish moon’ – personification – the daughter? (1) the passing of time literally – she has been there all day (2) connotations of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>• Her bed and her body like a prison – mind is still obviously active. ‘lights up’ – brings a small amount of cheer/joy/relief?</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>• ‘guilty’ – how the daughter feels. Exactly how she DOES want her to feel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>• Repetition of ‘no’ – this IS what she is saying. ‘grateful’ – the mother does not feel this</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sense that these feelings are unavoidable – like ‘ah canny help’ in line 27. A natural product of being in this situation.</td>
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Divorce

I did not promise
to stay with you till death do us part, or
anything like that,
so part I must, and quickly. There are things
I cannot suffer
any longer: Mother, you never, ever said
a kind word
or a thank-you for all the tedious chores I have
done;
Father, your breath
smells like a camel’s and gives me the hump;
all you ever say is:
‘Are you off in the cream puff, Lady Muck?’
In this day and age?
I would be better off in an orphanage.

I want a divorce.
There are parents in the world whose faces turn
up to the light
who speak in the soft murmur of rivers
and never shout.
There are parents who stroke their children’s cheeks
in the dead of night
and sing in the colourful voices of rainbows, red to blue.
These parents are not you. I never chose you.
You are rough and wild,
I don’t want to be your child. All you do is shout and that’s not right.
I will file for divorce in the morning at first light.
This poem is written in the form of an address. The title leads us to expect a poem about divorcing parents but it is soon clear that it is a young person who wishes to divorce her parents. The dramatic, often comical tone leads us to question how serious the girl's grievances are or wonder if her histrionics mask a deeper hurt. Her vision of the parents she wishes for is lyrical and idealistic, suggesting that in her disappointment with her real parents she is seeking the impossible. There is a wistfulness and longing in the lines “who speak in the so murmur of rivers” and “sing in the colourful voices of rainbows” which is in strong contrast to the confrontational persona presented in the rest of the poem. The girl uses blunt, assertive, uncompromising statements: “I want a divorce”; “I never chose you”; “I don’t want to be your child”; building up to the final climax in the last line, but their force is blunted by the humorous effect of the rhyming of the final couplet. The poem is dramatic, humorous and unsettling.

1. What does the title of the poem suggest the subject matter of the poem will be?

2. How do the rest four lines seem to reinforce this?

3. “so part I must, and quickly.” Comment on the sentence structure and word choice in this line and suggest the tone the speaker has adopted.

4. What does the father’s comment, “Are you o in the cream puff, Lady Muck?” reveal about his opinion of his daughter?

5. Show how the poet uses repetition in the second stanza to build up to a climax in the last line.

6. What kind of parents does she wish for? Comment on the tone and word choice she uses.

7. In the last five lines the speaker’s word are blunt and uncompromising, bringing the poem to a dramatic and humorous climax. What language techniques are used to create this effect?

8. Consider the poem as a whole. Is she exaggerating her grievances? Or do her confrontational words mask a deeper hurt?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Number</th>
<th>Annotations: ‘Divorce’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1-14        | • High, formal **register** created through language and grammar  
              • **Repetition** of ‘I’ throughout creates a strident declarative tone – knowingly theatrical and pompous |
| 1           | • Confounds expectation, created by title, that poem will be about a married couple |
| 6-8         | • **Ironic** role reversal. Parodying the stereotypical complaint from mother to child that her daily housework goes unnoticed and unthanked |
| 9-10        | • **Pun** on ‘camel’ and ‘gives me the hump’ |
| 11-12       | • ‘all you ever say’ – suggests perhaps the speaker is prone to strops like this regularly  
              • Jovial voice of father contrasts with stoppiness/seriousness of speaker  
              • ‘Lady Muck’ – suggests speaker is seen as theatrical by father |
| 13          | • **Ironic** role reversal - sounds like something a parent would say to a child |
| 14          | • Overblown, theatrical, OTT.  
              • Imitative of what teenagers say when fighting with parents? (“I wish I’d never been born” ... “I wish you weren’t my parents”)  
              • Echoes idea of rejecting parents altogether – ‘divorce’ of the title |
| 15          | • **Blunt** tone created by simple declarative statement.  
              • Marks a shift in **tone** – second stanza becomes more serious/earnest/poetic in tone |
| 16-23       | • **Series** of idealised **images** of parents  
              • **Language** echoes the fantastical descriptions of fairytales, children’s stories or nursery rhymes – underscores the speaker’s juvenile naivety and lack of worldly understanding.  
              • **Repetition** of ‘there are parents’ is ironic: there aren’t. These parents are unrealistic and idealised. |
| 24          | • Hyperbolic, grandiose **tone** returns.  
              • **Short, declarative statements** convey pomposity |
| 25-26       | • Improbable description of parents as ‘rough and wild’ and always shouting. Contradicted by the father’s words which give impression of a good-humoured man.  
              • **Irony** - the speaker is the one coming across as rough and wild. The **accusative address** of the poem suggests it might be being shouted at the parents. |
| 27 | Suggests an unshakeable certainty about right and wrong – reflects naivety/limited world experience. |
| 28 | Grand/dramatic ultimatum. Mention of ‘morning’ and ‘first light’ **implies** that in the morning all will be forgotten. (calls to mind phrases such as “everything will look better in the morning” and “you’ll see things in a different light”) |
Gap Year
(for Mateo)

I
I remember your Moses basket before you were born.
I’d stare at the fleecy white sheet for days, weeks,
willing you to arrive, hardly able to believe
I would ever have a real baby to put in the basket.

I’d feel the mound of my tight tub of a stomach,
and you moving there, foot against my heart,
elbow in my ribcage, turning, burping, awake, asleep.
One time I imagined I felt you laugh.

I’d play you Handel’s Water Music or Emma Kirkby
singing Pergolesi. I’d talk to you, my close stranger,
call you Tumshie, ask when you were coming to meet me.
You arrived late, the very hot summer of eighty-eight.

You had passed the due date string of eights,
and were pulled out with forceps, blue, floury,
on the fourteenth of August on Sunday afternoon.
I took you home on Monday and lay you in your basket.

II

Now, I peek in your room and stare at your bed
hardly able to imagine you back in there sleeping,
Your handsome face – soft, open. Now you are eighteen,
six foot two, away, away in Costa Rica, Peru, Bolivia.

I follow your trails on my Times Atlas:
from the Caribbean side of Costa Rica to the Pacific,
the baby turtles to the massive leatherbacks.
Then on to Lima, to Cuzco. Your grandfather

rings: 'Have you considered altitude sickness,
Christ, he’s sixteen thousand feet above sea level.’
Then to the lost city of the Incas, Macchu Picchu,
Where you take a photograph of yourself with the statue

of the original Tupac. You are wearing a Peruvian hat.
Yesterday in Puno before catching the bus for Copacabana,
you suddenly appear on a webcam and blow me a kiss,
you have a new haircut; your face is grainy, blurry.

Seeing you, shy, smiling, on the webcam reminds me
of the second scan at twenty weeks, how at that fuzzy
moment back then, you were lying cross-legged with
an index finger resting sophisticatedly on one cheek.

You started the Inca trail in Arctic conditions
and ended up in subtropical. Now you plan the Amazon
in Bolivia. Your grandfather rings again to say
‘There’s three warring factions in Bolivia, warn him

against it. He canny see everything. Tell him to come home.’
But you say all the travellers you meet rave about Bolivia. You want to see the Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt-flats, the Amazonian rainforest.

And now you are not coming home till four weeks after your due date. After Bolivia, you plan to stay with a friend's Auntie in Argentina. Then – to Chile where you'll stay with friends of Diane's.

And maybe work for the Victor Jara Foundation.

I feel like a home-alone mother; all the lights have gone out in the hall, and now I am wearing your large black slippers, flip-flopping into your empty bedroom, trying to imagine you in your bed. I stare at the photos you send by messenger: you on the top of the world, arms outstretched, eager. Blue sky, white snow; you by Lake Tararhua, beaming.

My heart soars like the birds in your bright blue skies. My love glows like the sunrise over the lost city. I sing along to Ella Fitzgerald, A tisket A tasket. I have a son out in the big wide world.

A flip and a skip ago, you were dreaming in your basket.
Gap Year

This poem is written in the form of an address to her son, Mateo. It expresses her love for and pride in her son, who is spending a gap year travelling widely in South America. In the first section she describes her memories of the weeks before he was born: her excited anticipation, the difficult birth. In the second section she describes the progress of his travels and her mixed feelings about his departure. She is caught up in the romance and adventure of his travels in exotic places but misses him greatly. In contrast, his grandfather's blunt advice reminds her of the very real dangers he might encounter. She cannot hide her strong feelings of disappointment when she learns he will return home four weeks later than she had expected, but comments with wry humour that she feels "like a home-alone mother". In the last two stanzas, however, her mood changes to one of elation and pride when she looks at photos of her son "on top of the world". It seems no time since he was a baby dreaming in his Moses basket.

Answer each question in as much detail as you can, and include quotes if appropriate.

1. Look at the first stanza. What feelings does the poet have as she awaits her son's birth?
2. Name the language techniques used in the following phrases: "tight tub of a stomach"; "turning, burping, awake, asleep"; and say how effective these expressions are in describing the expectant mother's experience.
3. What does the phrase "close stranger" and the word "tumshie" tell us about the poet's feelings about her unborn child?
4. How does the poet link the two sections of the poem?
5. What is the poet's first reaction to the grandfather's blunt advice?
6. How does she react to the news that he will be returning four weeks later than expected?
7. The last two stanzas signal a further mood change. Comment on the effectiveness of the language the poet uses to convey her feelings.
8. Comment on the poet's word choice in the phrase "a flip and a skip ago". What is she trying to emphasise?
### Annotations: ‘Gap Year’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Number</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Title**   | - Alludes to physical ‘gap’ between Kay and Matthew  
- Also reflects the 18 years that have felt like a short ‘gap’ to Kay between Matthew's birth and being 18  |
| **Section 1** | |
| 1           | - **Image** of basket referred to at end of poem – framing device  
- Starts with Matthew absent and Kay yearning – how the poem also ends  |
| 2           | - **Word choice** – ‘stare’ – repeated throughout poem, conveying intensity of longing  |
| 3 & 4       | - ‘willing you to arrive’ – sentiment repeated at end of the poem  
- Inability to believe baby will arrive reflected at start of section 2 when cannot imagine his return  |
| 5           | - **Metaphor** – image of a container. By the end of poem, it is clear Matthew cannot be contained  |
| 6 & 7       | - **Metaphor** of ‘foot against my heart’ and ‘elbow in my ribcage’ – source of joy and pain. Reflected at end of poem with mixed emotions of pride and longing  |
| 7           | - **List** of baby’s actions – constant, continuous, ever present. (cf. absence later)  |
| 8           | - ‘felt you laugh’ – **synaesthesia** – closeness of pregnancy. His experience are hers. (cf. later in poem when his experiences must be lived vicariously through atlas/webcam)  |
| 9-10        | - She does the things parents are told to do  
- Adds to atmosphere of calm and peacefulness  |
| 10          | - **Oxymoron** – ‘close stranger’ – physically close but unknown. Mirrored/inverted at end of poem: mother-son bond is close, but he has become a stranger physically through distance  |
| 11          | - **Colloquial** nickname – affectionate  
- Sense of longing for arrival again – echoed at end of poem  |
<p>| 12 &amp; 13     | - <strong>Rhyme</strong> of ‘late’ with ‘eight’ – emphasises auspicious due date missed  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>• Irony – had to be pulled out with forceps / unwilling to leave; now unwilling to return home from travels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15 & 16 | • Sunday → Monday – idea of new week **symbolising** a new chapter beginning  
• Circular structure – the empty basket at the start of the section is now full |
| 17   | • **Word choice** – ‘peek’ – actions of a parent checking on a sleeping child  
• **Word choice** – ‘stare’ – intensity of longing. Echoes earlier reference looking at empty basket |
| 18   | • Links back to stanza 1. However, then she couldn’t imagine his presence. Now she can’t imagine anything but his absence. |
| 19   | • Affectionate descriptions of face.  
• Image of face as ‘soft, open’ will be contrasted by appearance on webcam later |
| 20   | • **Repetition** of ‘away’ emphasises the distance  
• **List** of South American countries – exotic, distant, connotations of exploration/adventure |
| 21   | • Role reversal – mother following child’s lead.  
• ‘trails’ – **connotations** of plotting a journey across the face of the world  
• ‘Times Atlas’ – British institution, roots her in the UK  
• **Contrast** in the smallness of her actions (armchair travelling) compared with his adventure |
| 22-24 | • Repeated structure of “from...to”  
• Traversing from one side of South America to the other.  
• **Contrast** between ‘baby turtles’ and ‘massive leatherbacks’  
• All serve to emphasise range and scale of Matthew’s travels |
| 24-26 | • Intrusion of Grandfather’s warning humorous  
• **Enjambment** across stanzas reflects interruptions to Kay’s romanticised imagining of Matthews travels |
| 27   | • ‘lost city of the Incas, Macchu Picchu’ – connotations of discovering new worlds, like a conquistador |
| 29   | • ‘the original Tupac’ – humorous  
• ‘Peruvian hat’ a symbol of changing/experiencing new things |
<p>| 30   | • Constantly on the move |
| 31   | • <strong>Word choice</strong> – ‘suddenly’ – fleeting |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line(s)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 32      | • Haircut a marker of change/new/unfamiliar to Kay  
         | • ‘grainy, blurry’ face contrasts with her imagining of his face in l.19 |
| 33-36   | • Comparison between present and past / webcam and prenatal scan |
| 37 & 38 | • ‘started...Arctic [...] end up in subtropical’ – emphasises range/diversity of his travels |
| 38      | • ‘plan the Amazon’ – ambitious, broad, sweeping plans – continues image of Matthew as explorer/conquistador |
| 39-44   | • Grandfather represents the voice of age: limitation, fear, worry, caution. Contrasts with Matthew's carefree, free-wheeling plans to see the biggest and best ('largest salt-flats' ‘Amazonian rainforest’) |
| 45 & 46 | • Mirrors being four-weeks overdue |
| 46-48   | • ‘Bolivia [...] Argentina [...] Chile’ – ranging across whole countries, skipping across the continent |
| 47 & 48 | • ‘a friend’s Auntie’ and ‘friends of Diane’s’ – plans are ad-hoc. Kay struggling to keep up with who and where? |
| 49      | • ‘maybe’ – plans are fluid, uncertain. |
| 50      | • Pun on ‘home-alone’ – usually applied to a child. Role reversal. |
| 50-52   | • Darkness symbolic of Matthew’s absence (‘lights have gone out’ and ‘black’)  
         | • Role reversal – Kay wearing Matthews slippers  
         | • **Onomatopoeia** – ‘flip-flopping’: a pathetic, sad sound, lacking energy. Idea of going back and forth to his room? |
| 53 & 54 | • ‘empty bedroom’ recalls empty cot at start. Sense of empty nest syndrome  
         | • ‘trying to imagine you / in your bed’ recalls ‘willing you to arrive’ at start of poem |
| 54      | • **Word choice** - ‘stare’ – longing. Word repeated several times throughout poem |
| 55      | • **Metaphor** – ‘you on top of the world’ |
| 56      | • Blue and white of sky and snow recalls the blue of Matthew when born, and while of the fleecy blankets  
         | • ‘beaming’ – reinforces symbolism of light. Matthew as light of her life. His absence brings darkness to the house. His happiness brings light to his face. |
| 57 & 58 | • **Simile** – ‘heart soars like the birds’ – image of joy and pride  
         | • **Simile** – ‘love glows like the sunrise over a lost city’ – reinforces idea of Matthew as light.  
         | • Kay is imagining herself present with Matthew in the form of her love.  
         | • **Long vowel sounds** of these two lines reflect the wide, open all-encompassing love that spans continents between Kay and...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Matthew.</th>
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</table>
| 59 | • Ella Fitzgerald – associated with the blues: reflecting tinge of sadness/longing?  
• Nursery rhyme – ‘A tisket, A tasket’ – recalls Matthews babyhood. Lyrics are about delivering a love letter to a little boy. |
| 60 | • Proud, declarative statement – proud of him. Proud of herself? Is there a tone of wistfulness too in ‘big, wide’? |
| 61 | • ‘flip’ and ‘skip’ – tiny moments. Reflected in short ‘I’ sound. He has grown up (too?) quickly.  
• ‘you were dreaming’ – his dreaming has turned into living. Now it is Kay who dreams of his return?  
• ‘basket’ – **rhyme** with ‘tasket’ emphasises important of word. Kay’s longing for that time when he could be contained/protected. |
Keeping Orchids

The orchids my mother gave me when we first met
are still alive, twelve days later. Although
some of the buds remain closed as secrets.
Twice since I carried them back, like a baby in a shawl,
from her train station to mine, then home. Twice
since then the whole glass carafe has crashed
falling over, unprovoked, soaking my chest of drawers.
All the broken waters. I have rearranged
the upset orchids with troubled hands. Even after
that the closed ones did not open out. The skin
shut like an eye in the dark; the closed lid.
Twelve days later, my mother’s hands are all I have.

Her voice is fading fast. Even her voice rushes
through a tunnel the other way from home.

I close my eyes and try to remember exactly:
a paisley pattern scarf, a brooch, a navy coat.

A digital watch her daughter was wearing when she died.
Now they hang their heads,
and suddenly grow old – the proof of meeting. Still,
her hands, awkward and hard to hold

fold and unfold a green carrier bag as she tells
the story of her life. Compressed. Airtight.

A sad square, then a crumpled shape. A bag of tricks.
Her secret life – a hidden album, a box of love letters.

A door opens and closes. Time is outside waiting.
I catch the draught in my winter room.

Airlocks keep the cold air out.
Boiling water makes flowers live longer. So does

cutting the stems with a sharp knife.
Keeping Orchids

This poem describes the poet’s first meeting with her birth mother. It is a painful emotional journey for both women. The poet uses the images of the orchids her birth mother gave her on their first meeting and of her own and her mother’s “troubled hands” as symbols of the complex, painful emotions they both feel. It is not a joyful meeting. Jackie Kay can articulate her own feelings but finds it hard to read her mother’s feelings as “she tells the story of her life”. The poet describes her mother’s account of her life as “compressed”, “airtight”, “a sad square”. It does not reveal enough; it does not bring comfort to her daughter, hungry for emotional connection and revelation.

Answer each question in as much detail as you can, and include quotes if appropriate.

1. Why does the poet emphasise in lines 1 and 2 that the orchids are still alive?
2. What does the line “I carried them back, like a baby in a shawl” reveal about the poet’s feelings?
3. Why does the poet emphasise that “twice since” she carried the orchids home, their glass carafe had fallen over causing her to rearrange them “with troubled hands”?
4. Why does the poet repeat the image of the buds “closed as secrets” in stanza 5?
5. How does the poet develop the image of her mother’s troubled hands in stanzas 10 and 11?
6. “A door opens and closes. Time is outside waiting”. What two meanings could these lines have?
7. Using “boiling water” and “cutting the stems with a sharp knife” are somewhat drastic but effective remedies for wilting flowers. Why is it so important for the poet to try to make the orchids last?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Number</th>
<th>Annotations: ‘Keeping Orchids’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• ‘my mother’/’first met’ – confuses the reader; illogical. <strong>Enjambment</strong> suggests the strangeness, jarring relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• <strong>Caesura</strong>: (1) her thoughtfulness, about the orchids (2) consideration of this, a shift in direction. <strong>Enjambment</strong> again to suggest the divide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• ‘closed as secrets’ <strong>Simile</strong>: idea of concealment, mystery, something impenetrable. A truth that’s unknown. Reinforces the <strong>symbolism</strong> of the orchids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• ‘like a baby in a shawl’ <strong>Simile</strong>: suggestion of care, protection, care, love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Idea of separation – ‘her’ and ‘mine’, then ‘home’. Suggestion of the distance between them. ‘Twice’ – <strong>repetition</strong>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>• <strong>Long vowels</strong> replicate the slow motion fall of the vase. <strong>Assonance</strong> slows the line down. ‘glass’ – fragility; ‘crashed’ – violence of the falling vase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>• <strong>List</strong> – ‘falling ... soaked’ – suggestion of her passivity; happens without her involvement; she must simply deal with the aftermath. ‘My chest of drawers’ – intrusion into the order of her life. Parallel to the unwanted child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>• ‘broken waters’ – birth reference. Disruption to a calm surface – a disturbance beneath the surface. <strong>Caesura</strong> – re-establishes order in the couplet, emphasised with ‘I have rearranged’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>• <strong>Transferred epithet</strong>; ‘troubled’ – <strong>word choice</strong> to reflect her feelings. ‘The closed ones’ – is there a link between the upset vase and the meeting with the mother. Does ‘one’s suggest people as well as the flowers? ‘skin’ – connection to the mother? Not petals but skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>• ‘like an eye’ – <strong>simile</strong>; again human. Confusion, lack of sight, awareness, understanding. ‘Lid’ – idea of cutting something off, containing it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>• Memory of the visit is fading; but also idea of her limited inheritance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>• <strong>Alliteration</strong> to emphasise the loss of connection. Train imagery used again (see line 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>• Idea of the voice being warped in the tunnel – distortion. Moving in opposite directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>• <strong>Synecdoche</strong>. The fragments of memories. ‘her daughter’ – Kay is, of course, ‘her daughter’ too but a sense she doesn’t see it like this. There has been another daughter – who lived a whole lifetime unknown.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 17-18       | • Back to the flowers again – ambiguous imagery: ‘hang their heads’ – shame? Guilt? **Oxymoron** in ‘suddenly grow
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>- Image of the hands repeated (1) to literally hold on to (2) to keep the connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>- <strong>Repetition</strong> of the movement through assonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>- Is it the story that is ‘Compressed. Airtight’? Suggestion it is an excuse – idea of the excuse for the adoption being airtight? (does it link forward to ‘tricks’?). Is she looking for absolution? <strong>Caesura</strong> begin to pile up as things become further fragmented rather than becoming clearer for the speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>- The plastic bag changes shape before her eyes – as so much in life does. <strong>Tone</strong> seems to become more bitter here ‘bag of tricks’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>- ‘secret’ – is this the speaker and her father, or the reverse? Both in a sense secret. ‘Hidden album, a box of love letters’ perhaps suggest it is her life as the speaker’s mother that is hidden away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>- Sense of time being suspended – ‘opens and closes’ – onto her history? But has anything actually changed. It appears not, as time is simply ‘waiting’. This is her real life. The meeting has little effect on her life outside: only the orchids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>- ‘winter room’ – cold, severe, harsh, bare, inhospitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>- ‘airlocks’ – are these the mother’s or the daughter’s defences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29</td>
<td>- Ideas of pain and distress BUT they prolong the life of the flowers. Is this the same with the adoption – painful but the right thing to do? ‘cutting’ – umbilical cord (like to ‘broken waters’).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Grandmother's Houses

1

She is on the second floor of a tenement.

From her front room window you see the cemetery.

Her bedroom is my favourite: newspapers dating back to the War covering every present she's ever got since the War. What's the point in buying her anything my mother moans. Does she use it. Does she even look at it.

I spend hours unwrapping and wrapping endless tablecloths, napkins, perfume, bath salts, stories of things I can’t understand, words like conscientious objector. At night I climb over all the newspaper parcels to get to bed, harder than the school’s obstacle course. High up in her bed all the print merges together.

When she gets the letter she is hopping mad.
What does she want with anything modern, a shiny new pin? Here is home.

The sideboard solid as a coffin.
The newsagents next door which sells
hazelnut toffees and her Daily Record.
Chewing for ages over the front page,
her toffees sticking to her false teeth.

2

The new house is called a high rise.
I play in the lift all the way up to 24.
Once I get stuck for a whole hour.
From her window you see noisy kids
playing hopscotch or home.
She makes endless pots of vegetable soup,
a bit bit of hoch floating inside like a fish.

Till finally she gets to like the hot
running water in her own bathroom,
the wall-to-wall foam-backed carpet,
the parcels locked in her air-raid shelter.
But she still doesn’t settle down;
even at 70 she cleans people’s houses
for ten bob and goes to church on Sundays,
dragging me along to the strange place where the air
is trapped and ghosts sit at the altar.
My parents do not believe. It is down to her.
A couple of prayers. A hymn or two.
Threepenny bit in the collection hat.
A flock of women in coats and fussy hats
flapping over me like missionaires, and that is that,
until the next time God grabs me in Glasgow with Gran.

3
By the time I am seven we are almost the same height.
She still walks faster, rushing me down the High Street
till we get to her cleaning house. The hall is huge.
Rooms lead off like an octopus’s arms.
I sit in a room with a grand piano, top open –
a one-winged creature, whilst my gran polishes
for hours. Finally bored I start to pick some notes,
oh can you wash a sailor’s shirt oh can you wash and clean
till my gran comes running, duster in hand.
I told you don’t touch anything. The woman comes too;
the posh one all smiles that make goose pimples
run up my arms. Would you like to sing me a song?
Someone’s crying my Lord Kumbaya. Lovely, she says,
beautiful child, skin the colour of café au lait.
‘Café oh what? Hope she’s not being any bother.’
Not at all. Not at all. You just get back to your work.
On the way to her high rise I see her
like the hunchback of Notre Dame. Everytime I crouch
over a comic she slaps me. Sit up straight.

She is on the ground floor of a high rise.

From her living-room you see ambulances,
screaming their way to the Royal Infirmary.
My Grandmother’s Houses

In this poem, the poet simultaneously recreates her childhood experiences and voices her adult perceptions of her grandmother. Each section of the poem describes a different house, each at reflecting different aspects of her life, work and personality. This structure enables Jackie Kay to create a vivid, memorable portrait of her grandmother. The first section describes her tenement at with her bedroom’s idiosyncratic clutter. In the second section the poet creates a picture of her life in her new high-rise at. We learn that she is always busy, still cleaning people’s houses at the age of seventy and taking her reluctant grand-child to church with her on Sundays. The third section describes the child’s perceptions of her grandmother’s “cleaning house” and uses snatches of remembered conversations to portray the somewhat patronising “posh one”. The final three lines suggest that her grandmother had moved to a ground floor at, where she is disturbed by screaming ambulances. It is a sombre ending to a poem which pays tribute to the life of this spirited, hard-working and devout woman.

Answer each question in as much detail as you can, and include quotes if appropriate.

1. Describe how the poet structures this poem. Comment on the content of the rest and the last two lines, suggesting why the poet has framed the main body of the poem in this way.
2. Look closely at the poet’s detailed descriptions of the tenement at and the high-rise at. What do they suggest about her grandmother’s personality and her way of life?
3. “even at 70 she cleans people’s houses / for ten bob” What does this statement reveal about the poet’s grandmother?
4. Choose three phrases, which show that the child is reluctant to accompany her to church and does not enjoy the experience and suggest why they are effective.
5. “like an octopus’s arms”: “a one winged creature”. Name the language technique used in each of these phrases and suggest what you think the poet is trying to convey.
6. What do the snatches of remembered conversation suggest about “the posh one”?
Annotations: ‘My Grandmother’s Houses’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Number</th>
<th>Annotations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td><strong>Rhythm/Internal rhyme</strong> links ‘tenement’ to ‘cemetery’. Suggestion that these are the two destinations in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td><strong>Repetition</strong> of ‘war’ and every/ever – sense of the child’s perception of the length of time that has passed and the mystery of such a hoarding. Sense of awe conveyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Alliteration</strong> focuses the disgruntlement of the mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Seem to be questions but not punctuated as such. Inevitability of the answers turns them into statements. Contrast with the wonder of the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>‘unwrapping ... wrapping’ the number of items emphasised but also the time spent in the simple activity. <strong>Enjambment</strong> forces the pause before the list...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>List</strong> suggests the number of items. They are all frivolent – fripperies. Gifts for gifts’ sake – not necessarily practical or useful. So put aside. Yet not discarded. Hoarding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Ambiguous link back to the newspapers that contain the gifts: are they more of a gift to the child? <strong>Enjambment</strong> emphasises how high they child feels she is climbing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sense of her smallness among the vest number of parcels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Enjambment</strong> to emphasise dual reading: sense of awe and literal height of the bed to the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>‘the letter’ – <strong>definitive article</strong>, officialdom. There is no ‘other’ letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Grandmother’s words – links back to the gifts that are unwanted. <strong>Metaphor</strong> – the new pin, the new house; modernity. <strong>Alliteration</strong> emphasises her connection to the tenement. Short declarative statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>‘solid as a coffin’ – <strong>simile</strong> - sense this is the place she expected to live and die in. Link to the first couplet – tenement/cemetery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>- Familiarity – it’s ‘her’ paper. Ownership and position in community. The known and the familiar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>- ‘is called a high rise’ – exoticism; sounds alien and modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>- ‘all the way up to 24’ – an incredible height; almost unimaginable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>- View has changed from the (peace?) of the cemetery to the noise of children playing. Ambiguous – could be about the noisy intrusion of the young and new, or the arrival of life and vibrancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29</td>
<td>- Again, the sense of wonder from the child. Soup made from scratch – a remnant of another life. ‘like a fish’ – <strong>simile</strong> – seems almost a magical production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>- The comforts of modern life – anti-asceticism. But finally accepts the trappings of a more comfortable life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>- Strange image of the parcels locked in the shelter. Shelter must be in the tenement garden, not at the high rise. But not a total rejection of them. Kept locked away and not thrown away. Remnants of that old life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-36</td>
<td>- Suggestions of other houses connected to the grandmother – those she cleans and her church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>- Work ethic: ‘for ten bob’. Even in old age she works for a living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-38</td>
<td>- ‘dragging’ – <strong>word choice</strong> suggests the child’s reluctance to go to church. The strangeness of the church ‘trapped’ – connotations of staleness/age. ‘ghosts’ – things past and lost but somehow still in the air (link to her way of life? Her husband?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>- Speaker’s parents are not religious – another moving away from an older, more traditional way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-41</td>
<td>- Despite the insistence of the ritual, seems almost tokenistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-43</td>
<td>- ‘flock of women’ – <strong>metaphor</strong> – their community but also link to the good shepherd. <strong>Alliteration</strong> ‘fussy ... Flapping’ focuses reader on their excitement about the girl. ‘Missionaries’ – <strong>simile</strong> – comparison to saving the souls of the heathen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>- <strong>Alliteration</strong> – emphasises the sporadic nature of such events. Child’s connection of Gran to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>- Speaker growing up, grandmother seems smaller</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>- Despite this, still a sense of her energy being undiminished: standards and responsibilities to be met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>- <strong>Alliteration and long vowels</strong> emphasise the child’s sense of wonder at the size of the house</td>
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<td>Page</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>‘octopus’s arms’ – <strong>simile</strong> – again the child’s perception of the number of rooms and corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49-50</td>
<td>‘a one-winged creature’ – <strong>metaphor</strong> – seems fantastic or mythical. Exotic. <strong>Enjambment</strong> – break to emphasise the length of time cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>‘for hours – <strong>hyperbole</strong> to demonstrate the work put in to clean the house. Contrast with the fantastical piano – the mundane vs the exciting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53-54</td>
<td>Wry <strong>humour</strong> – you can only touch it if you are cleaning it. The only access to this kind of world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>Class differences established in the cleaning of the house made clearer. ‘cafe oh what’ – lacking access even to the language the ‘posh one’ uses. ‘back to your work’ – the grandmother’s role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>‘like the hunchback of Notre Dame’ – <strong>simile</strong> - image of her bent over but also of the high rise like a bell tower. Is there a suggestion of someone who lives outside ‘society’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62-63</td>
<td>Back to the ideas of standards from another time. The grandmother’s demanding perspective. <strong>Alliteration</strong> – ‘crouches ...comic’ and ‘sit ... straight’ emphasise the difference between the generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66</td>
<td>Return to the <strong>structure</strong> of the opening couplet but with key shifts. The view is now from the ground floor and not the second floor – a drop in status? The room is a ‘living room’ and not a ‘front room’ – change of function from the room for good to the room to live in. View is also different – now of the noisy, jarring, modern ambulances ‘screaming’ to the hospital – rather than the peaceful, fuss-free silence of the cemetery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lucozade

My mum is on a high bed next to sad chrysanthemums.
‘Don’t bring flowers, they only wilt and die.’
I am scared my mum is going to die
on the bed next to the sad chrysanthemums.

She nods off and her eyes go back in her head.
Next to her bed is a bottle of Lucozade.
‘Orange nostalgia, that’s what that is,’ she says.
‘Don’t bring Lucozade either,’ then fades.

‘The whole day was a blur, a swarm of eyes.
Those doctors with their white lies.
Did you think you could cheer me up with a Woman’s Own?
Don’t bring magazines, too much about size.’

My mum wakes up, groggy and low.
‘What I want to know,’ she says,’ is this:
where’s the big brandy, the generous gin, the Bloody Mary,
the biscuit tin, the chocolate gingers, the dirty big meringue?’

I am sixteen; I’ve never tasted a Bloody Mary.
‘Tell your father to bring a luxury,’ says she.
‘Grapes have no imagination, they’re just green.
Tell him: stop the neighbours coming.’

I clear her cupboard in Ward 10B, Stobhill Hospital.
I leave, bags full, Lucozade, grapes, oranges,
sad chrysanthemums under my arms,
weighted down. I turn round, wave with her flowers.

My mother, on her high hospital bed, waves back.
Her face is light and radiant, dandelion hours.
Her sheets billow and whirl. She is beautiful.
Next to her the empty table is divine.

I carry the orange nostalgia home singing an old song.
Lucozade

In this poem Jackie Kay describes visiting her mother in hospital. She was a young girl of sixteen, afraid that her mother would die. The poem not only describes the shock of seeing her mother but conveys the personality of her mother expressively and with humour. Her mother’s ironic questions, her humorous commands, her idiosyncratic remarks may be partially the result of her treatment or operation but strongly suggest a person who faces her hospital experience with spirit and humour. There is something indomitable about her. The last two stanzas describe the euphoria of relief the poet feels when she realises her mother will not die but has recovered enough to wave from her hospital bed. The clearing of her mother’s ward cupboard of the traditional gifts an invalid receives, which her mother had decisively rejected, is a cathartic moment for the poet. For the sixteen-year-old poet, her senses heightened after the trauma of her mother’s hospitalisation, the sight of her mother waving becomes for her a beautiful, almost heavenly vision.

Answer each question in as much detail as you can, and include quotes if appropriate

1. Comment on the poet’s word choice in stanza 1. Which words suggest that it is a young person speaking?
2. Why do you think the poet repeats the phrase, “sad chrysanthemums”?
3. How does the poet suggest her mother’s confused state in stanza 2?
4. What impression of her mother’s personality do we get in stanza 4?
5. How is this impression reinforced in stanza 5?
6. "Says she". What does this expression suggest about the poet’s reaction to her mother’s orders?
7. The phrase, "weighted down" refers to the collection of unwanted gifts her mother has rejected. Does it suggest another meaning?
8. In what way is the line, “my mother on her high hospital bed, waves back” in stanza 7 the turning point of the poem?
9. Comment on the language the poet uses in stanza 7 to describe her recovering mother and her own emotional reaction to this experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line Number</th>
<th>Annotations: Lucozade</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1 | • Opens with simple confessional **tone** reflecting speaker's age/fear  
• 'High bed' suggests distance from speaker. Image of a pedestal/altar?  
• **Transferred epithet**: speaker's sadness onto flowers. Stereotypical 'hospital flowers' - mother rejects the stereotypical trapping of illness |
| 2 | • 'they only' – sense of inevitability  
• 'wilt and die' - flowers become image of death/fading/loss of vitality |
| 3 - 4 | • Simple confessional statement. Connects mother to flowers  
• Simple circular/symmetrical structure of stanza reflects speaker's age/fear |
| 5 | • Suggests a lack of energy / fading of vitality |
| 6-8 | • 'Lucozade / Orange nostalgia' – **metaphor**  
• Mother rejects nostalgia/another stereotypical marker of illness |
| 8 | • 'fades' – **word choice** continues idea of light going out / vitality ebbing |
| 9 | • 'blur' – **word choice** – indistinct, unclear, senses impaired/fading  
• 'a swarm of eyes' – **metaphor** – feeling objectified, gawped at. Irritation. Passivity |
| 10 | • 'white lies' – recalls white coats. Idea of doctors dealing in half truths / medical euphemism (again reflects mother's rejection of traditional approach to illness/death) |
| 11 | • **Rhetorical Question.** Magazine (another traditional symbol of hospital illness) cannot bring happiness |
| 12 | • Magazines obsessed with dieting and being slim → mother gaunt/emaciated through illness?  
• **End Rhyme** – 'size' with 'eyes' and 'lies' previously. Reflects monotony/'blur' of hospital life? |
| 13 | • 'Groggy' – ironic link to alcohol mother asks for. Already groggy from illness/medicine |
| 14 | • Colon – marks **turning point** in poem from negatives to positives, from passivity to action, from acceptance to rejection |
| 15 - 16 | • **Alliteration** of 'b' and 'g' sounds  
• **Internal rhyme** of 'gin' and 'tin'  
• **List** of several luxuries  
• **Repetition** of 'the' |
- All techniques serve to emphasise the grandiose indulgence, recklessness, extravagance, naughtiness and life-affirming nature of the request.

17  - Emphasises speaker’s youth/inexperience of life. Contrasts with mother’s age/experience. Sense that mother’s situation(/death) is bewildering to speaker

18 - 19  - ‘Grapes have no imagination’ - **personification** / **transferred epithet**. Implied criticism of visitors/father who bring such stereotypical markers of illness to hospital

20  - Ambiguous request – Too ill/close to death to receive visitors? Or simply sick of the ‘swarm of eyes’ and wants to spend final days on her own terms? (Another rejection of expected hospital etiquette)

21 - 24  - ‘bags full’ / ‘under my arms’ / ‘weighted down’ – metaphorically heavy with sadness/emotion/grief
- Objects removed are the stereotypical markers of illness/death: Lucozade, grapes, oranges, flowers.
- Sense of unburdening the mother / freeing her

24 - 25  - Turning and waving implies a final goodbye / last look.
- **Stanza break** separates speaker’s wave and the mother’s response - imitates distance between the two.
- Mother waving back suggests that energy has returned. She has been revived. Not by Lucozade, but by its removal – through a rejection of the expected role of victim/invalid.
- **Repetition** of ‘high hospital bed’ from first line – tone has changed. Optimistic now.

26  - ‘light and radiant’ – optimistic / sense of unburdened (cf. daughter’s burden carrying away trappings of illness)
- ‘dandelion hours’ – metaphor continues sense of lightness and beauty, but also delicate fragility. Little time remaining / easily blown away

27  - ‘billow and whirl’ – Angelic **connotations**
- **Soft consonants and vowels**
- Simple statement of beauty – suggests a revelation for the speaker?

28  - ‘empty table is divine’ – Continues image of heaven/angelic transcendence (cf. negative tone of death in first stanza)
- **Transferred epithet** – mother is divine
- Clearing of the table removes the trappings of sickness – a final, transformative ritual

29  - ‘I carry’ – daughter has unburdened her mother. Instrumental in removing the sadness.
- ‘orange nostalgia’ – repeated from earlier – this time given a positive tone. Carrying the objects (including the Lucozade away) has metaphorically revitalised the mother on her death bed, in a way the Lucozade could never literally achieve.
- ‘singing an old song’ – joyful, happy **connotations**.
### The formula for achieving 8 marks in the final question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify elements of commonality as identified in the question</th>
<th>Identification of commonality (e.g. theme, language, use of imagery, relationship, or any other key element) (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accompanied by supporting evidence from the extract</td>
<td>One relevant reference to technique /idea/feature (1) One appropriate comment (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of similar references to at least one other part of the text by the writer.</td>
<td>Idea/ Technique/Feature (1)</td>
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<td>Comment (1)</td>
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<td>Comment (1)</td>
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</table>
Questions on Divorce

8 mark: Gap Year, Lucozade, Bed, Keeping Orchids, My Grandmother’s Houses

1. Explain how the narrator creates a serious tone in lines 1-3. (2 marks)
2. In your own words, what are the narrator’s complaints about her parents? (4 marks)
3. Select an example of imagery from stanza two and explain how it creates the image of perfect parents? (2 marks)
4. Identify how the language shows the narrator’s anger at her parents? (4 marks)
5. With close textual reference, show how the narrator in this poem helps the reader understand the central concerns of the poem, and in at least one other poem by Jackie Kay (8 marks)

Questions on Gap Year

8 mark: Divorce, Bed or Keeping Orchids

1. Explain how the speaker creates a feeling of love between mother and son in section 1 (4 marks)
2. Choose an example of imagery from section 2 and explain how it is effective (4 marks)
3. In your own words, how does the grandfather’s opinion differ from the mother’s (4 marks)
4. Discuss the positive parental relationship that is established in this poem and go on to discuss a poem that has a difficult parental relationship as its central concern. (8 marks)

Questions on ‘My grandmother’s houses’

8 mark: Gap year, Lucozade, Bed

1. Comment on a feature of language in section 1 and how it helped you understand what staying in the tenement was like. (2 marks)
2. Choose two examples of imagery from section 2 and explain why they are effective? (4 marks)
3. ‘God grabs me in Glasgow with Gran’ is an example of which technique (2 marks)
4. With reference to section 3 how does the grandmother treat her granddaughter and go on to explain why she treats her in this way? (4 marks)

5. In your own words what have you learned about the 'posh one'? (2 marks)

6. Place is an important aspect of this poem. Discuss how place has helped you understand the central concerns of this poem, and in at least one other poem by Jackie Kay. (8 marks)

**Questions on 'Keeping Orchids'**

8 mark question: Divorce, My grandmother's houses, Bed, Lucozade

1. With close reference to the text explain what the flowers meant to the poet? (2 marks)

2. Comment on a language feature and how it helped you have a greater understanding of the meeting. (3 marks)

3. Identify two examples of imagery and explain why they are effective. (4 marks)

4. Identify the tone of the poem. With close reference to the poem, how has this tone been created? (3 marks)

5. Jackie Kay has used a tense atmosphere in this poem. Explain how this atmosphere helps you understand the meeting in the poem, and go on to discuss another poem that uses a particular atmosphere to help you have a greater understanding of the poem. (8 marks)

**Questions on Lucozade:**

8 mark question: Gap Year, Divorce, Bed, Keeping Orchids

1. With close reference to the text what tone is established in the opening stanza? (2 marks)

2. Comment on two language features and their effect in stanzas 3 and 4. (4 marks)

3. In your own words what does the reader discover about the mother? (2 marks)

4. With close reference to the text explain the ideas discussed in the final two stanzas. (2 marks)
5. Parental relationships are an important theme in Jackie Kay’s poetry. With close reference to this poem discuss the nature of the parental relationship, and go on to discuss a parental relationship in another Jackie Kay poem. (8 marks)

Questions on Bed

8 mark question: Keeping Orchids or Lucozade

‘Bed’

1. Explain how the speaker’s sense of irritation is conveyed in lines 1-6 (4 marks)
2. What is the speaker’s attitude towards being old in lines 7-16 (4 marks)
3. How does the tone change at stanza 9 (2 marks)
4. Choose an example of imagery from lines 33-40 and explain how it is effective (2 marks)
5. Discuss the mother daughter relationship in this poem, and go on to explain another poem that describes a mother daughter relationship. (8 marks)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/ideas</th>
<th>Similar to:</th>
<th>In what way/s, narrator/ideas/language etc</th>
<th>Different to:</th>
<th>In what way/s, narrator/ideas/language etc</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keeping Orchids</td>
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<td>Lucozade</td>
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## Jackie Kay – Common Themes for 8 Mark Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Poem(s)</th>
<th>Quotations and Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between parent(s) and child</td>
<td>‘Divorce’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Keeping Orchids’</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>‘Bed’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Lucozade’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Changing of traditional roles (such as parent/child, male/female, victim/saviour) | ‘Divorce’  
| ‘Gap Year’  
| ‘Lucozade’  |
| Feelings of anger/frustration/confusion at a difficult situation | ‘Divorce’  
| ‘Bed’  
| ‘Keeping Orchids’ |
| The passage of time/sense of nostalgia for what is passed or lost | ‘Gap Year’  
‘My Grandmother’s Houses’ |
|---|---|
| The impact of illness/deteriorating health/death | ‘Bed’  
‘Lucozade’  
‘My Grandmother’s Houses’ |