

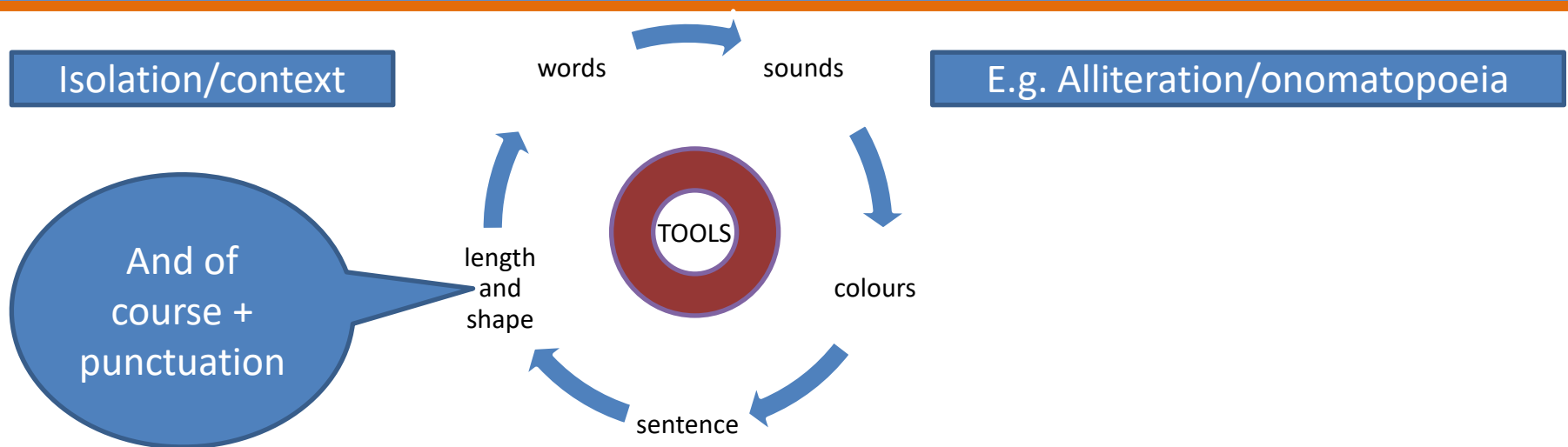
# A Simple Methodological Approach to Poetry

During the previous three poetry sessions our focus has been on equipping the Learner to be able to PERSONALLY analyse and appreciate a poem.

The emphasis was on offering an approach that the candidate can use in relation to any poem without his or her thinking being pre-determined or influenced by other instruction or 'potted' interpretations.

In other words, INDEPENDENT thinking was encouraged, the reliance on OWN emotional and intellectual response, arising from PERSONAL life-world experience, refined by structured and carefully considered, response and logical thought, lay at the heart of what I called A SIMPLE, METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO POETRY.

Thinking about thinking or 'META-COGNITION' lies at the heart of the approach. Give the learner the tools and enable him/her to 'join-the-dots' and make defensible conclusions about a poem by bringing PERSONAL CREATIVITY to the analytic process





# A Simple Methodological Approach to Poetry

## Applying the Ideas

Now let's move to this session's business: APPLYING THE IDEAS

You may recall that during the second presentation, I mentioned that the website is full of excellent and very helpful study aids/guides but that I tended to stay away from them until the learner had had an opportunity to develop an independent opinion based on a workable approach to poetry analysis.

During this session I would like to concentrate  
on

### APPLYING THE APPROACH

that we have been discussing and show how it  
is of inestimable value in the writing of the  
'Poetry Essay,' as opposed to answering the  
'Contextual' poetry questions in the final NSC  
examination.

A Question

Is an opinion or statement about a poem TRUE simply because it appears in print?

An Anecdote



# Applying the Ideas With an Eye to Writing an Essay

## FIRST DAY AFTER THE WAR Mazisi Kuneni

We heard the songs of a wedding party  
We saw a soft light  
Coiling round the young blades of grass  
At first we hesitated, then we saw her  
footprints,  
Her face emerged, then her eyes of freedom!  
She woke us up with a smile saying,  
'What day is this that comes suddenly?'  
We said, 'It is the first day after the war'.  
Then without waiting we ran to the open space  
Ululating to the mountains and the pathways  
Calling people from all the circles of the earth.  
We shook up the old man demanding a festival  
We asked for all the first fruits of the season.  
We held hands with a stranger  
We shouted across the waterfalls  
People came from all lands  
It was the first day of peace.  
We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the  
horizon.

## NSC Examination Nov 2018

*In 'First Day after the War', the speaker focuses on the **celebration of new beginnings**.*

*With close reference to diction, imagery and tone, **critically discuss the validity of this statement**.*

*Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page) 10 marks*

Develop  
your  
argument  
LOGICALLY

## Essay Marking Rubric

- In-depth** interpretation of topic
- Range** of striking arguments; extensively supported from poem
- Excellent** understanding of genre and poem



# A Simple Methodological Approach to Poetry: Application

## **A Hard Frost** Cecil day Lewis

A frost came in the night and stole my world  
And left this changeling for it – a precocious  
Image of Spring, too brilliant to be true;  
White lilac on the windowpane, each grass-  
blade  
Furred like a catkin, maydrift loading the hedge  
The elms behind the house are elms no longer  
But blossomers in crystal, stems of the mist  
That hangs yet in the valley below, amorphous  
As the blind tissue whence creation formed.  
The sun looks out, and the fields blaze with  
diamonds.  
Mockery spring, to lend this bridal gear  
For a few hours to a raw country maid,  
Then leave her all disconsolate with old  
fairings  
Of aconite and snowdrop! No, not here  
Amid this flounce and filigree of death  
Is the real transformation scene in progress  
But deep below where frost  
Worrying the stiff clods unclenches their  
Grip on the seed and lets our future breathe

### NSC Examination 2020

3.1 What does the word, 'changeling' (line 2), suggest about the scene the speaker is confronted with when he awakes? (2)

3.2 Explain how the phrase, 'Mockery spring' (line 11) influences your response to the frost. (2)

3.3 Refer to the phrase, 'this flounce and filigree' (line 15). Comment on how this phrase conveys the speaker's attitude toward the frost. (3)

3.4 Refer to lines 17–19: 'But deep below ... our future breathe.'

The poem concludes with the promise of future life and growth. Critically discuss the validity of this statement with reference to imagery and/or diction, and tone. (3)

Total [10]

How does this rubric differ from the essay question?

Would you agree with the statement that the Theme of this poem is Appearance vs Reality? If so, what “carries” the theme? How? Why is this discussion important?



# A Simple Methodological Approach to Poetry

## Exploring a variety of poetic approaches

### Felix Randal

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Felix Randal the farrier, O is he dead then? my duty all ended,  
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome  
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it, and some  
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended  
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some  
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom  
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.  
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,  
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,  
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,  
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!

### FACT File

"Felix Randal" is a sonnet written by the British poet and Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1880. The speaker is a priest (generally taken to be Hopkins himself) who reflects on the death of a young man named Felix Randal, as well as on their priest-parishioner relationship in the latter's final days. The speaker provided spiritual comfort to Felix Randal as his life neared its end, and is deeply moved by the young man's passing. The speaker, however, doesn't dwell on death so much as paint a vivid picture of Felix Randal in the prime of his life—hard at work in his blacksmith's workshop. The poem, then, is somewhere between elegy and eulogy, both lamenting Felix Randal's death and celebrating his life.

In 'Felix Randal', the speaker contemplates what he sees as significant aspects of the life and death of the farrier. With close reference to diction, imagery and tone, discuss how the above statement is reflected in the poem. (NSC Nov 2020)

This is considered to be one of Hopkin's most powerfully emotive sonnets. In a short essay show how it is possible to hold this opinion by paying close attention to Form, Diction and Imagery.



## An Africa Thunderstorm David Rubadiri

From the west  
Clouds come hurrying with the wind  
Turning sharply  
Here and there  
Like a plague of locusts  
Whirling,  
Tossing up things on its tail  
Like a madman chasing nothing.  
Pregnant clouds  
Ride stately on its back,  
Gathering to perch on hills  
Like sinister dark wings;  
The wind whistles by  
And trees bend to let it pass.  
In the village  
Screams of delighted children,  
Toss and turn  
In the din of the whirling wind,  
Women,  
Babies clinging on their backs  
Dart about  
In and out  
Madly;  
The wind whistles by  
Whilst trees bend to let it pass.  
Clothes wave like tattered flags  
Flying off  
To expose dangling breasts  
As jagged blinding flashes  
Rumble, tremble and crack  
Amidst the smell of fired smoke  
And the pelting march of the storm.

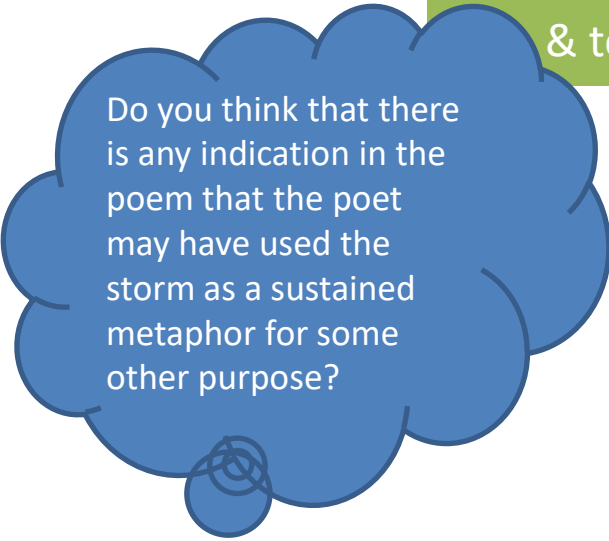
Theme: Man in a Natural context

Intention: To describe an African thunderstorm and the way people response to it.

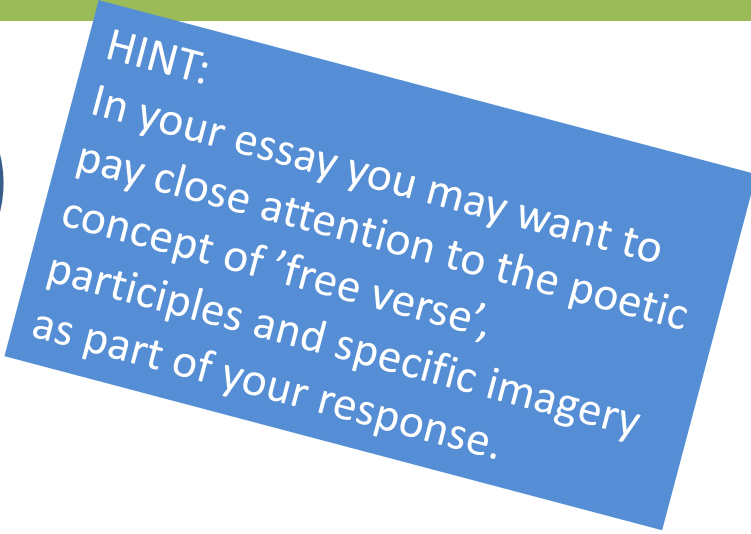
Feeling: The poet is awed by the power and energy / basic violence of the storm

Tone: Excited and animated, the reader is immediately caught up in the way the poem is written.

Critically discuss the validity of these statements with reference to imagery, diction, & tone.



Do you think that there is any indication in the poem that the poet may have used the storm as a sustained metaphor for some other purpose?



**HINT:**  
In your essay you may want to pay close attention to the poetic concept of 'free verse', participles and specific imagery as part of your response.