

# Candidate 7

## W.B Yeats Trio of poems

“Effective poetry emerges when a poet transforms his or her experience of the world into the universal experiences such as: love, birth, death regret, loss...”

Discuss the effectiveness of a poet’s presentation of universal experiences through the use of a range of poetic techniques you should refer to at least 3 poems.

William Butler Yeats is a perfect example of an author that has transformed his experiences of the world into several poems. His experience of a seemingly unrequited obsessive love that lasted a great many years through several turned down proposals inspired and slightly warped his writing style (combined with the natural maturation of a human being) from a young idealist to an older, angrier cynic. Three poems that show this to be true are “the lake isle of Innisfree”, “the song of the wandering Aengus” and “no second Troy”, the first of these was written in 1888 before he met his “muse” Maude Gonne in 1889 and is full of an innocent longing to go back to nature, the second poem shows his complete infatuation for her and how he envisions himself to be a parallel to the Celtic myth of Aengus and the third he is disillusioned with her and as a result the poem has a bitter and sarcastic tone.

The lake isle of Innisfree has Yeats as a younger man wishing to be far away from London and has an almost religious obsession with the island to the point of even likening his travel to the island as an out of body experience.

“I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree” the use of the word arise instead of getting up signifies the act as something more than just a simple journey. Yeats uses word choice here to convey that the journey to Innisfree would be a spiritual journey and not a physical chore. Arise has connotations of holiness and divinity, this is effective as it generates thoughts and ideas of an out of body pilgrimage.

Yeats seems to be mimicking the style of the romantic poets before him as he wishes for something simple instead of the bustling metropolis, the romantics wanted to go back to nature instead of dealing with the modern age, they wanted man to go back to simpler times where a man could provide for his family without having to work himself to death in a factory. Yeats in the poem wants self sufficiency on his island.

“A small cabin built there, of clay and wattle made: nine bean-rows I will have there, a hive for the honey bee”

A small cabin suggests that Yeats wishes to live in solitary away from the hustle and bustle of other people; the bean-rows suggest a longing for simple food that he needs no other human to disturb him and the bee hive that he still wants for a small amount of modern convenience. This style the poet uses here is very similar to the Romantic Movement which was a counter culture movement; this shows that Yeats was a younger and more idealistic man at this point.

The poem ends with Yeats back from his “out of body experience” and standing on a busy London street where he knows that he has to be away from Innisfree as he is needed in the present but he holds onto the idea of one day becoming the lone man on Innisfree.

"I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; while I stand on the roadway or on the pavements grey, I hear it in the deep heart's core"

Yeats uses rhyme throughout the poem every second line rhymes with the one two lines before it which is effective as it gives a slightly balletic feel to the poem and in the final paragraph it is exceedingly effective as it captures the fact that the shore is a place he is longing to be and one he would never forget as the sound of the water surrounding it would constantly come to mind.

"the song of the wandering Aengus" is a poem after Yeats met Maude Gonne where he places himself in an old Celtic myth where he is looking for a beautiful young woman (no prizes for Guessing who) and as such is wandering all around Ireland looking for his love but is condemned to wander until he finds her.

Yeats firmly believed in the Occult and drew some inspiration from some Celtic myth and superstitions and as such believed that different woods enhanced and showcased the natural aspects of man and that Hazel signified immortal and creative wisdom.

"I went out to the hazel wood because a fire was in my head and cut and peeled a hazel wand, and hooked a berry to a thread"

Yeats starts off using the symbolism of the hazel wood (which was coveted by the druids and thought to have boosted creative wisdom) which could be classed as the symbol of a writer, he then goes onto use a metaphor which showcases a destructive force "A fire was in my head" the fire being the passion he feels towards Maude Gonne, a destructive force of which he has no control over. This comparison is effective as Gonne was a feisty woman who would give all up for her cause and was unshakeable in her convictions no matter the cost of fulfilling them. This opening line of the poem could be an analogy to his mind; I went through the creative wisdom of my mind because a passion for her was consuming my thoughts. Yeats could be dedicating the poem to her as she was the fire that was both consuming and illuminating his creative mind.

He then goes onto describe a girl in the forest who disappears before his eyes

"A glimmering girl with apple blossom in her hair who called me by name and ran and faded through the brightening air"

This is referring back to the myth of Aengus as he caught a glimpse of the girl before she disappeared, Yeats also uses rhyme to give the poem the feel of an Irish ballad. The apple blossom signifies passion which refers back to the previous stanza where there is a fire in his head; the appearance of the girl connotes moonlight and also feminine energy all of which Maude Gonne possessed.

Yeats adds a twist to the myth by either removing the immortality of Aengus or showing that for him in the poem a vast amount of time has passed whilst he was still searching for her.

"Though I am old with wandering through hollow lands and hilly lands. I will find out where she has gone and kiss her lips and take her hands"

The poet changes course from the source material by having Aengus never find the girl and having him grow old trying to find her. The use of word choice here shows that he is still determined to find

the girl and reap his rewards from doing so. The writer also leaves some ambiguity in these lines "take her hands" this could be meaning three things: literally taking her hands and kissing her, he could be marrying her or more sinisterly he could be following the Arabian tradition of cutting off the hands of a thief (her theft being the years she stole from him whilst he was searching for her).

The third and final poem by W.B. Yeats is "No Second Troy" is a bitter and sarcastic rant at Maude Gonne due to her Marriage to Major. John McBride. A militant nationalist, he is angry due to his unrequited love for Gonne hadn't gone unnoticed by her and her encouragement of his feelings to gain attention from him and good poetry.

The poem starts with Yeats being angry at an undisclosed "she", he uses a sarcastic tone to create his bitter tone

"Why should I blame her that she filled my days with misery"

Yeats starts with a juxtaposition where in he is asking why he should blame her for causing him so much misery, this is an effective technique as it conveys the writers tone and shows his state of mind with more grace than Yeats just saying how he feels.

Yeats then goes onto say how he disproves of her inciting nationalist feelings amongst the lower classes and that he thinks they are not fit for purpose

"She would of late have taught to ignorant men most violent ways or hurtled the little streets upon the great."

Yeats is a typical member of the aristocracy who believes that they are the ruling class is superior and that the lower classes are useless even as foot soldiers for a revolution that he never wanted. The use of contrast is effective in "little streets upon the great" the use of contrasting here is effective as it shows the poets opinion and also the way he uses word choice shows that he thinks that the streets are in unison for their cause against a divided upper class some of whom want to see home rule and those that are all for the British rule to stay in place

He then compliments Gonne on her beauty but also sees it as a dangerous thing indeed.

"With beauty like a tightened bow"

Yeats believes that her charisma is another factor that is causing the masses to support the nationalist cause, the poet also uses a simile that perfectly describes the charisma's effect "a tightened bow" not only fires an arrow forward but it also once fired the drawstring recoils back causing damage to the unexpectant archer. This simile is effective as the arrow is not only a damaging blow towards the British but it will also have a backlash towards the Nationalist cause and by extension Ireland, this is proven a mere 4 years later after the events of the Easter rising when the black and tans were sent over with carte blanche ,

Yeats then goes on to ponder if her actions like Helen of Troy's will cause their nation to burn.

"Why, what she could have done, being what she is? was there another troy for her to burn?"

Yeats starts the second last sentence of this paragraph with a rhetorical question “why” the why here creates an almost desperate unfathomable question as if he could not believe that she could have become something so different than what he had fallen in love with. The poet also likens Ireland to Troy as it is a fragile place that needs only one false gift to send it over the edge and he thinks that Maude Gonne could be it.

William Butler Yeats’ writing style evolved over time becoming more effective due to his life experiences such as his unrequited love, the person he admired the most warping into something almost unrecognisable from his initial impression of them and the realisation that no matter how hard he shouted that he could not stop the events of a nationalist struggle from hurting his country. This could all be contributing factors about how his work was always improving even after he got the highest awards for it thus cementing his work a place in history.