



## CANADIAN POETRY QUESTIONS

### THE NIGHT MARKET

#### Form Questions

1. What is the effect of the **imagery** in the poem? Examine the comparisons—the similes and metaphors—what do they imply about the literal objects and people? How does the speaker express her attitude through these images?
2. What is the effect of the **juxtaposition** of the following images?
  - the vats of curried fish balls / and braised tripe . . . [vs.] a storefront window / in Beverly Hills
3. What meanings are communicated by the following **metaphors** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?
  - dripping with threads
  - face squeezed by hunger
  - the crowd roars past, / goldfish mouths flapping
  - bodies bathed in smoke and spices
  - the sunset a tanker explosion / spilling across an oil-soaked sea
4. What meanings are communicated by the following **similes** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?
  - stares at the vats of curried fish balls / and braised tripe as if at a storefront window / in Beverly Hills
  - eyes bland as beads
  - the starch sloshing in my stomach / like wet cement

5. What are the relevant **connotations** of the following words?

- hordes
- gorge

6. How does the sound of these lines interact with the meaning?

- pinch skewers quail or scallop

7. What is the effect of the **sibilance** (/s/ **consonance**) in the last 7 lines of the poem?

8. In what lines does the **enjambment** have an effect on the way the words can be read?

9. How is the homeless woman dehumanized in this poem?

What is the emotional state of the speaker at the end of this poem?

## ICE PALACE

### Form Questions

1. What is the effect of the **imagery** in the poem? Examine the comparisons—the similes and metaphors—what do they imply about the literal objects and people? How does the speaker express her attitude through these images?

2. What is the effect of the **juxtaposition** of the following images?

- violins . . . lullaby / the sugared air [vs.] . . . the wad of hair / you left in the porcelain shower
- carnage [vs.] Red petals on the floor

3. What meanings are communicated by the following **metaphors** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?

- clouds of breath formed into words
- violins . . . lullaby / the sugared air

4. What meanings are communicated by the following **similes** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?

- opal gelatine that glows / like phosphorescent deep-sea fish

5. What are the relevant **connotations** of the following words?

- demiparadise
- hotel

- the bodies that were once / attached to all those hands
- backstage
- carnage
- oh / dearest
- forbidden
- inscribed

6. How is the **tone** change from stanza to stanza?

7. How are the **stanzas** used to organize ideas?

8. What is the effect of the **internal rhyme** in the third line of the fourth stanza?

9. In what lines does the **enjambment** have an effect on the way the words can be read?

10. In what lines do you hear a particular **cadence**? How does that help to communicate **tone**?

11. Why is it a “fearful beast who runs the show”? Why does this beast *long for kisses*?

## BIG NEWS CAFE

### Form Questions

1. What meanings are communicated by the following **metaphors** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?

- Idle Ant
- Don Quixote Ant

2. What is the function of the quoted words which appear in italics? (The horoscope, and the bank ad)

3. To what do the following **allusions** refer? What is the purpose of these allusions?

- Don Quixote
- Polaris, Cassiopeia, dead reckoning

4. What is the effect or purpose of all the words that refer to architecture? Is there any significance to the **juxtaposition** of various architectural styles that the poet points out?

- brick parapet
- white neon letters scrawled on blue revolving sign
- stone moulding
- churchy pointed windows
- brick piers
- modernism
- condemned (a pun?)
- structural
- peaked gables
- churchy pointed arches
- stone crests
- columns with scroll-top capitals
- quadrangles
- concrete slabs
- aluminum windows

5. What is the effect or purpose of this poem's use of sentence fragments?

6. What makes the poet's choice of form—a **prose poem**—appropriate?

7. What is the **structure** of the poem? What is its shape?

8. In what way is this poem directed like a film? ("To Idle Ant in Big New Café. Horoscope: *By all means..*")

9. What unifies each stanza? How are they set apart from each other in terms of idea or tone?

## Super's Report

### Form Questions

1. What is the effect of the **juxtaposition** of the following images?

- the merest smear [left on the wall vs. a smear] on an elder's bib

2. What meanings are communicated by the following instances of **personification** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?

- Weeds discovered huddled . . . / Were gassed
- Feisty but mortal, a gangsta tag . . .
- Some vague flaw vexing and exec's view
- the marble's polish gleams . . . chipper
- the chimes of his keys will chatter
- the dawn's cheeks blush
- the pristine floor that greets the newborn feet

3. How do you feel about the poet's use of the word *gangsta*? Is it justified or incongruous?

4. What are the relevant **connotations** of the following words?

- huddled
- gassed
- feisty
- elder's bib
- marble
- dreamy
- paunch
- robust
- hordes
- Incident Logs
- fabled
- immune
- brittle straw
- pristine

5. Is there a purpose to the poet's use of /ch/ **alliteration** in the sixth stanza?

6. How do you feel about the poet's use of **slant rhymes**? For example:

- cracks / back
- wiped / bib
- warp / torch
- chipper / vista
- out / belt
- blush / robust
- sweep / feet

7. What is the effect of the **consonance** in the following lines of the poem?

- Some vague flaw vexing an exec's view—an amendable warp / In her office window's plexiglass—was rendered void by torch

8. What lines produce particular **cadences**? What tones or emotions suit those cadences?

9. What do you make of the poet's apparent **pun** on *report* as both a list of what was done, and the sound of a gun?

10. How does the poem set up a **dramatic speaker** distinct from the poet? Whose perspective are we getting here?

## MERCY

### Form Questions

1. What is the effect of the **imagery** in the poem? Examine the **comparisons**—the **similes** and **metaphors**—what do they imply about the literal objects and people? How does the speaker express her attitude through these images?

2. How do you make sense of the **personification** or **metaphor** in the first three lines?

3. What is the effect of **personifying** the wind as something which *batters, slams, and shoves*?

4. What is meant by the **metaphor**, *weight and counter weight in a faceless clock*?

5. What are the relevant **connotations** of the following words?

- word, light, mercy
- batters
- graces
- curse
- praise

6. What is the effect or purpose of the **synecdoche**, *its paws and hooves*?

7. What lines produce a particular **cadence**, and how does that cadence relate to the tone of the lines?

8. What is the purpose of the odd simile, *The coyotes hang like coyotes from an ugly tree*?

9. How does the **punctuation** show the various parts of the narration and the poet's thoughts?

10. What kind of world is created? Is it *sunshine and lollipops*? What **images** does the speaker use to create that world? How is that version of our world appropriate to the speaker's topic?

### Other questions

Is the subject of the first three lines "the wind"? Or "the old god"? Or are they equated? In what ways are both relevant?

How would you answer the question posed by the speaker?

Why does the poet end with the line *Their throats don't make a sound*? How is sound important or relevant here?

## DANTE'S IKEA

### Form Questions

1. What is the effect of the **imagery** in the poem? Examine the comparisons—the **similes** and **metaphors**—what do they imply about the literal objects and people? How does the speaker express her attitude through these images?

2. Who is *Dante*? What does this poem **allude** to?

3. What is *Zeno's law*? What is the point of this **allusion**?

4. What is the effect of **juxtaposing** *Dante's Inferno* with *Ikea*? How are they similar, and how are they very different?

5. How would you describe the **diction** of the poem? Consider the **connotations** of:

- sarcophagi
- wept / upon
- from thence

- we took the holy name
- the boneyard of domesticity
- the fabled vale of despair
- O blessed sun!
- Hordes
- Howling children caged in glass
- glaring

6. What meanings are communicated by the following **metaphors** and **personifications** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?

- In the bedrooms of Ikea-land / Where love's theatres are assembled
- the toilet and the urinals hissed
- they turned their red-eyed / demon-faces
- and stoned my image / in the glass with hollow plastic balls
- where bits and pieces of living / lie in boxes like the dead. / Billies, Nannas, Ivars and Johans / stacked on scrap-wood pallets
- the boneyard of domesticity

7. What meanings are suggested by the **pun** on *assembled*?

8. In what lines does the **enjambment** have an effect on the way the words can be read?

## BECOMING A WRITER

### Form Questions

1. What is the effect of the **imagery** in the poem? Examine the **comparisons**—the **similes** and **metaphors**—what do they imply about the literal objects and people? How does the speaker express her attitude through these images?

2. What meanings are communicated by the following **metaphors** and **similes** that could not be communicated by a strictly literal sentence?

- the top of the pen a diviners rod
- story emerges from this cocoon
- epiphanies / flashing like lightbulbs above the heads of cartoon characters
- the writer / neither practitioner nor artisan but miner, digging / within himself for riches unimagined, for salt



3. What is the effect of the **alliteration** in *a glancing away, the grandest of entrances / the telling gesture, the banal and the beautiful*

4. Examine all the **lists** in this poem. How often does the poet list something. What is the point of that style? What effect does it create?

5. What is the point of the **dualism** in *not so much in the head / as under the arms, glistening with sweat, stinking / with the knowledge of the body?*

6. What is the **structure** of the poem? Note that it starts with a question?

### **OTHER QUESTIONS**

How do you feel about the fact that this is a writer writing about writing and saying how easy it should be for anyone?