**SAMPLE POETRY ANSWER**

**How is control presented in *The Horse Whisperer* and one other poem you have studied?**

**Both** ‘Horse Whisperer’ by Andrew Forster and ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ by Dorothy Molloy are about individuals **whose lives undergo a significant change**. In ‘Horse Whisperer’, readers hear from a **poetic voice** who used to be respected and valued in his role as a horse whisperer only for the Industrial Revolution to make his job outdated, meaning he is shunned by his community. In ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ the **narrator** reveals that she was an independent single woman who had lots of attention from men, and enjoyed their company and the power it gave her. **Central to both of these poems is the idea of control.** Both speakers, in their past lives, had a great deal of control, but because of a life-changing event they have lost this power and, it may be argued, have become controlled themselves.

A similarity between both the speakers in these poems is that they are **both narrating a story from a similar position** – one where they are reflecting on a happier past in which they had control over their lives. In ‘Horse Whisperer’, the first two stanzas describe the protagonist’s role as an important member of his community, and readers are given the impression of a man who is highly valued by the society of which he is a part. The **repetition** of **‘They shouted for me…’** *reveals that farmers were highly dependant on the horse whisperer to tame these important animals*, even to the point where they took him for granted. The **sibilance** in **‘My secret was a spongy tissue…’** *evokes the sound of whispering*, and the detailed description of the charms used to **‘draw the tender giants to [his] hands’** *suggests a highly skilled and knowledgeable person*. **‘Restless’** horses are transformed by the speaker’s power, as conveyed by the **simile** **‘like helpless children’**. **Similarly,** the speaker in ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ is reflecting on a past in which she enjoyed many and varied relationships with men. The phrase **‘The best and worst of times were men’** *highlights that male company was everything for this woman*. Moreover, we are given hints that these men, as well being beneficial to the speaker (**‘Men were my buttresses’** – *meaning support*), are to an extent controlled by this woman. Men are described using **metaphors**, ‘**Men were my dolphins, my performing seals’**, *which suggests* that they were at the beck-and-call of the speaker, *implying that she had a lot of control over them*.

**Both** of the speakers in these poems depict their past life using **vivid imagery**, and often **figurative language**, to portray the things they had control over. The speaker in ‘Horse Whisperer’ describes the horses he used to tame in an admiring way *which reflects the detailed understanding and bond he had with them*. **Descriptions** of the horses’ **‘shimmering muscles’** and **‘stately heads’** *convey this admiration*, and *tell readers* that the horse whisperer’s understanding of these creatures was absolute. In the **final stanza** of the poem, the narrator again reminisces about the creatures he knew so well and had such control over, with **lyrical descriptions** of their **‘searing breath’** and **‘glistening veins’**, but above all their **‘pride’** - a characteristic which is **repeated for emphasis** at the end of the poem, and which *perhaps refers to the speaker’s own pride, which has been taken away along with the control he had*. In ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’, the speaker’s relationships with men are described using a series of **metaphors**, some of which portray the men as almost ridiculous and *hint to the reader that the female speaker treated them as playthings*. **Images of men** as **‘strutting pink flamingos’** and **‘hurdy-gurdy monkey-men’** *suggest that men* were eager to impress and entertain the speaker, and that she (‘their queen’) was happy to receive this adoration.

The most striking **similarity** between these two poems is that **both speakers** undergo a huge change in their lives, and that this change is signalled by a definite **turning point**. In ‘The Horse Whisperer’, this change occurs in the **third stanza** of the poem, when **‘the tractor came over the fields like a warning’,** *representing the onset of the Industrial Revolution*, meaning that the horse whisperer is **‘the life-blood no longer’** – *implying* a sudden and devastating diminishing of his status. In ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’, this change occurs **‘overnight’** when the woman is **‘wedded, bedded’.** This **internal rhyme** *emphasises the fact* that as soon as the speaker is married, and begins to have a sexual relationship, all of her previous independence, power and control is taken away. **The structure of the poem reflects this**; the speaker’s ‘new’ life is presented to us plainly in the **fourth and final stanza**, *completely separate from what has come before*. **Similarly**, in ‘The Horse Whisperer’, structure *reflects the dying out of the speaker’s trade and status*, **as stanzas lessen in length by a line as the poem goes on.**

The **final sections** of **each of** these poems reveal how, in their new lives, each speaker has lost the control they once had, and, it could be argued, are now controlled themselves. The horse whisperer is treated as a **‘demon and witch’** and is forced to flee his community, having to join a **‘stampede’** of others who have also now become redundant and mistrusted. He exerts one final act of of power and control, seeking vengeance on the villagers who have wronged him by using **‘tools of revenge’,** *meaning that* he uses the same mystical powers he once employed to calm the horses to now curse the creatures he leaves behind. **Similarly,** the speaker in ‘Les Grands Seigneurs’ becomes controlled by her husband. In contrast to the elaborate **metaphors** which she used to depict the men in her life, she describes herself using a list of words and phrases *which show how diminished she has become:* **‘a toy, a plaything, little woman, wife, a bit of fluff’.** This kind of **language**, and the poet’s use of **caesura**, *convey the idea that* the woman is now solely defined by her sexuality and status as a wife; it is interesting that the **lively metaphors** at the beginning of the poem have been replaced with stale, **clichéd imagery** to do with the status of being somebody’s wife. **Sentences become short and choppy** at this point in the poem, *meaning the tone of the final stanza reflects* the bitterness and lifelessness which the speaker now feels.

Many similarities can be drawn between these poems when they are considered as **texts about control**. **Both speakers** had a great deal of control, self-worth and independence in their past lives – one because of his profession and status within a community, and the other because of her relationships with men. Moreover, **both speakers** lose control after a significant event or turning point in each of their lives, meaning the control they once had disappears altogether.