**Unseen Poetry Practice Paper 1**

**BACK IN THE PLAYGROUND BLUES**

I dreamed I was back in the playground, I was about four feet high   
Yes I dreamed I was back in the playground, standing about four feet high   
Well the playground was three miles long and the playground was five miles wide   
  
It was broken black tarmac with a high wire fence all around   
Broken black dusty tarmac with a high fence running all around   
And it had a special name to it, they called it The Killing Ground   
  
Got a mother and a father they're one thousand years away   
The rulers of the Killing Ground are coming out to play   
Everybody thinking: ‘Who they going to play with today?’   
  
      Well you get it for being Jewish   
      And you get it for being black   
      You get it for being chicken   
      And you get it for fighting back   
      You get it for being big and fat   
      Get it for being small   
      Oh those who get it get it and get it   
      For any damn thing at all   
  
Sometimes they take a beetle, tear off its six legs one by one   
Beetle on its black back, rocking in the lunchtime sun   
But a beetle can’t beg for mercy, a beetle’s not half the fun   
  
I heard a deep voice talking, it had that iceberg sound   
‘It prepares them for Life’ - but I have never found   
Any place in my life worse than The Killing Ground.

Adrian Mitchell

1. In ‘Back in the playground blues’, how does the speaker present his feelings about his school days? (30 minutes) 24 marks

**My Parents Kept me from Children who were Rough**

My parents kept me from children who were rough

And who threw words like stones and who wore torn clothes.

Their thighs showed through rags. They ran in the street

And climbed cliffs and stripped by the country streams.

I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron

And their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms.

I feared the salt coarse pointing of those boys

Who copied my lisp behind me on the road.

They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges

Like dogs to bark at our world. They threw mud

And I looked another way, pretending to smile.

I longed to forgive them, yet they never smiled.

*Stephen Spender*

1. In ‘My Parents Kept Me’ and in ‘Back in the playground blues’, both speakers write about their experiences of bullying. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those experiences? (15 minutes) 8 marks

**Unseen Poetry Practice Paper 2**

**Catrin**

I remember you, child

As I stood in a hot, white

Room at the window watching

The people and cars taking

Turn at the traffic lights.

I can remember you, our first

Fierce confrontation, the tight

Red rope of love which we both

Fought over. It was a square

Environmental blank, disinfected

Of paintings or toys. I wrote

All over the walls with my

Words, coloured the clean squares

With the wild, tender circles

Of our struggle to become

Separate. We want, we shouted,

To be two, to be ourselves.

**Gillian Clarke**

1. In ‘Catrin’, how does the speaker present her feelings about her daughter?

(30 minutes) 24 marks

**Before You Were Mine**

I’m ten years away from the corner you laugh on

with your pals, Maggie McGeeney and Jean Duff.

The three of you bend from the waist, holding

each other, or your knees, and shriek at the pavement.

Your polka-dot dress blows round your legs. Marilyn.

I’m not here yet. The thought of me doesn’t occur

in the ballroom with the thousand eyes, the fizzy, movie tomorrows

the right walk home could bring. I knew you would dance

like that. Before you were mine, your Ma stands at the close

with a hiding for the late one. You reckon it’s worth it.

The decade ahead of my loud, possessive yell was the best one, eh?

I remember my hands in those high-heeled red shoes, relics,

and now your ghost clatters toward me over George Square

till I see you, clear as scent, under the tree,

with its lights, and whose small bites on your neck, sweetheart?

Cha cha cha! You’d teach me the steps on the way home from Mass, stamping stars from the wrong pavement. Even then

I wanted the bold girl winking in Portobello, somewhere

in Scotland, before I was born. That glamorous love lasts

where you sparkle and waltz and laugh before you were mine.

**Carol Ann Duffy**

1. In both ‘Catrin’ and ‘Before You Were Mine’, the speakers describe mother and daughter relationships. What are the similarities and/or differences in the ways that those relationships are presented? (15 minutes) 8 marks

**Unseen Poetry Practice Paper 3**

**Hedgehog**

Twitching the leaves just where the drainpipe clogs

In ivy leaves and mud, a purposeful

Creature at night about his business. Dogs

Fear his stiff seriousness. He chews away

At beetles, worms, slugs, frogs. Can kill a hen

With one snap of his jaws, can taunt a snake to death

On muscled spines. Old countrymen

Tell tales of hedgehogs sucking a cow dry.

But this one, cramped by houses fences, walls

Must have slept here all winter in that heap

Of compost, or have inched by intervals

Through tidy gardens to this ivy bed.

And here, dim-eyed, but ears so sensitive

A voice within the house can make him freeze,

He scuffs the edge of danger; yet can live

Happily in our night and absences.

A country creature, wary, quiet and shrewd,

He takes the milk we give him, when we’re gone.

At night, our slamming voices must seem crude

To one who sits and waits for silences.

**Anthony Thwaite**

1. In ‘Hedgehog’, how does the speaker present his feelings about the hedgehog?

(30 minutes) 24 marks

**Pigeons**

They paddle with staccato feet

In powder-pools of sunlight,

Small blue busybodies

Strutting like fat gentlemen

With hands clasped

Under their swallowtail coats;

And, as they stump about,

Their heads like tiny hammers

Tap at imaginary nails

In non-existent walls.

Elusive ghosts of sunshine

Slither down the green gloss

Of their necks in an instant, and are gone.

Summer hangs drugged from sky to earth

In limpid fathoms of silence:

Only warm dark dimples of sound

Slide like slow bubbles

From the contented throats.

Raise a casual hand -

With one quick gust

They fountain into air.

**Richard Kell**

1. In both ‘Hedgehog’ and ‘Pigeons’, the poets describe creatures in unusual and surprising ways. What are the similarities and/or differences in the methods used to bring these creatures to life for the reader? (15 minutes) 8 marks