

Anthology One: Identity

(b) Looking again at **Here** by R.S Thomas which deals with the theme of a sense of who you are, and at one other poem from the **IDENTITY** anthology which also deals with the theme of the effects of a **sense of who you are**.

With close reference to the ways each poet uses language, compare and contrast what the speakers in the poems say about a **sense of who you are**. You should include relevant contextual material.

Candidate Answer: Band 5 (Other Poem - Belfast Confetti)

Response	Examiner's Comments
<p>'Here' written by R.S Thomas is about a young man who believed he was fighting for a just cause but now realises he has been misled, as he has come to maturity both physically and mentally. The voice of the young man is that of R.S Thomas who was a clergyman whose <u>religion</u> greatly influenced his poetry and his beliefs. Throughout the poem there is no real sense of location and it could have been set anywhere, some have suggested it has connotations around Jesus and the crucifixion but images such as 'swift satellites' I think suggests a military connection. <u>Likewise</u> 'Belfast Confetti' by Ciaran Carson is set around a military campaign and a place of violence in the Northern Irish Troubles in the late twentieth century between the protesters and the security forces. Carson describes his experiences of being on the streets at the time as he lived during the Troubles and like Thomas his religious beliefs heavily influenced his poetry. He grew up in in Belfast and narrowly missed a bullet on the Falls Road, so he is continually wary and nervous and this is shown in the atmosphere of his poem. Carson feels he is being dehumanised and like Thomas, he <u>struggles to find a sense</u> of who he is and what he should be <u>doing</u>.</p> <p>Thomas' poem consists of seven self- contained tercets each indicating a separate idea or thought that the speaker is having. <u>As a religious man</u> Thomas continually uses religious connotations in his work and seven appears regularly in the Bible such as the seven spirits of God. However Thomas appears to be critical of God when he asks; 'Does no God hear when I pray?', as nobody appears to be answering his prayers and he feels misled. This structure allows the reader to consider each thought and perhaps place it in their own context of who they are. The use of the AAA rhyme scheme and where the rhyme falls, often depicts the mood of each tercet and is the rhythmic heartbeat of the poem. For instance, 'now/brow/grow' in the first stanza suggests something that is positive whereas in stanza four; 'red/dead/ misled' is very <u>negative</u> and shows Thomas' <u>anger</u> at the situation he finds himself in. In the final stanza the final rhyming word is 'hurt' which confirms the <u>pain</u> Thomas is in at the end of the poem.</p> <p><u>In contrast</u>, 'Belfast Confetti' has only two stanzas written in free verse with <u>irregular lineation</u> which emphasises <u>the level of confusion</u> which Carson is experiencing and this structure is <u>immediately striking</u>. The sentences are short and choppy; 'A fount of broken type. And the explosion...' to</p>	<p>outlines content</p> <p>appropriate choice of poem</p> <p>selects precise contextual material</p> <p>links back to the question</p> <p>carefully links context to text</p> <p>insight into verse structure</p>

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<p>imitate the irregular sound of gunfire and Carson's heartbeat as he comes to terms with what is facing him. The regular use of enjambment adds to this <u>confusion</u> as does the disrupted punctuation. The line; 'Itself- an asterisk on the map. This hyphenated line' adds to the <u>emphasis of the confusion</u> as does the lack of rhythm and the fast pace of the poem. The harsh 'k' sound throughout the poem in words such as 'Kremlin/Makrolon' are representative of the instruments of war as Carson's social order is disrupted and like Thomas <u>he is both angry and confused.</u></p>	<p>precise and pointed analysis of structure</p> <p>theme of the question is addressed frequently</p> <p>mature insight</p>
<p>Thomas' style is very <u>direct and stark</u>, the speaker's voice is bleak and raw throughout and this is shown in the title 'Here'. This is also shown immediately in the first line with the <u>declaration</u>; 'I am a man now. 'The brains' represent his growth as his experiences and knowledge have bought him to this understanding of who he is. In the second stanza the imagery of the <u>tree symbolises</u> his growth and the tree of life in the <u>simile</u>: 'I am like a tree' and the <u>metaphor</u> 'footprints that led up to me' shows how the speaker has been able to learn from others. The use of <u>imagery</u> continues in the third and fourth stanzas with the repetition of blood, but it has different meanings. In the third stanza the blood is 'in my veins/That has run clear of the stain' suggesting cleanliness and his physical and spiritual growth as a person, whereas the blood in the next stanza refers to 'the blood of so many dead?' and the tone is more critical suggesting that he has become stained. In the latter stages of the poem the tone becomes even more forlorn as the speaker struggles to find a purpose as he has; 'no where to go'. His dilemma is shown by the contrast of the <u>sibilance</u> of 'swift satellites show' and 'the clock of my whole being is slow', the long vowel sounds here suggesting he has nowhere to go and is struggling to find a sense of who he should be. The melancholy final stanza suggests the pain he is <u>suffering</u> as 'he must stay here with my hurt' and this tone of resolution is <u>an acceptance of his present forlorn state.</u></p>	<p>analysis of techniques is systematic</p> <p>frequent use of quotation to illuminate analysis</p> <p>highly perceptive comments</p>
<p>Like Thomas, Carson uses <u>extensive imagery</u> in his poem beginning in the title with the word 'confetti' which is normally associated with weddings, is here used <u>ironically</u> as the debris caused after a bomb explosion. Throughout Carson uses lists such as 'nuts, bolts, nails and car keys' which have been used in the making of the bombs and this cleverly <u>juxtaposes</u> between the conflict and everyday objects adding confusion to Carson who is trying to make sense of what is happening. The <u>listing</u> of street names; 'Balaclava, Raglan, Inkerman, Odessa' are <u>symbolic of British victories</u> in previous wars and shows the present conflict is a form of war, but these streets are well known to Carson. This is added to by a series of <u>metaphors</u> which further indicates the breakdown of law and order; 'this hyphenated line, a burst of rapid fire...' The clever use of the <u>rhetorical question</u>: 'Why can't I escape?' shows how confused Carson is and adds to his sense of discovering who he is, this is added to in the final line of the poem with; 'Where I am going?' which suggests growing unease and <u>uncertainty</u> and how Carson is desperately searching for answers similar to Thomas in his final stanza.</p>	<p>takes opportunities to make connections</p> <p>seamlessly brings in context</p> <p>relates analysis to the question</p>
<p>'Here' and 'Belfast Confetti' both convey the brutal and inhumane nature</p>	

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of conflict. In both poems the speakers are asking questions and trying to make sense of what is in front of them and a sense of who they are. This is shown by the number of interrogatives in each poem from; 'Is this where I was misled?' to Carson's 'Why can't I escape?'. Both appear angry about what they see but while the location is very clear in 'Belfast Confetti', Thomas' location is more ambiguous and open to interpretation. Both poems use imagery extensively, Thomas' image of 'the clock of my whole' is symbolic of time, the future, the past and the idea that your experiences over time have created a sense of who you are. Likewise in Belfast Confetti the image of the labyrinth suggests the danger confusion and entrapment that Carson finds himself in and also the wider crisis in Northern Ireland as a whole.

In conclusion both 'Here' and 'Belfast Confetti' use a range of different methods to show the sense of who the speakers are, although their approaches are different. I prefer 'Belfast Confetti' as it describes my home town really effectively and the pain and suffering the older members of my family suffered at that time. Both poems goes beyond their Christian contexts and are universal, as all of us at some stage seek a sense of who we are and what we are doing on this earth.

An assured assessment of both poems; interpretation is underpinned with highly engaging points about content and theme. Contextual material is shrewdly identified and carefully blended into argument.

Band 5

summative comments
relate to key terms

articulates argument with
fluency and a high level of
insight

