

Anthology One: Conflict

- (a) Looking again at **Mametz Wood** by Owen Sheers which deals with the theme of the effects of conflict, and at one other poem from the CONFLICT anthology which also deals with the theme of the effects of conflict.

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

Candidate Answer: Band 5 (Other Poem - Poppies)

Response	Examiner's Comments
<p>'Mametz Wood', written by Owen Sheers, reflects the <u>effects of conflict on a future generation</u> and is based on a battle in the <u>First World War</u> which saw <u>fierce fighting</u> during the <u>Battle of the Somme</u> and from which a shallow grave of 20 soldiers was found. The poem is a memorial to all Welsh soldiers who died in the conflict as Sheers himself was from Wales. Sheers is trying to reclaim the ground the Welsh fought over from the farmers and its purpose is to recognise those who have died and to reclaim history. <u>'Poppies' on the other hand</u> is about a young man going off to war and the <u>impact his departure</u> has on his mother. Susan Weir tries to imagine what it would have been like for Wilfrid Owen's mother to have found out about his death just 'three days before Armistice Sunday'. Weir was writing at the time of the <u>recent Afghan War</u> and she is trying to imagine how she would have felt if her sons had been going off to war. In this essay I will show how these poems showcase the effects of war from different viewpoints.</p>	<p>immediately addresses the key terms of the question</p> <p>selects relevant contextual material</p> <p>appropriate choice of second poem and pointed connection</p> <p>outlines the situation</p> <p>relevant contextual information</p>
<p>'Mametz Wood' starts from the <u>view of local farmers</u> who are accidentally but continually 'turning up under their plough blades', the bodies from the war. There is an <u>implicit criticism</u> of the farmers who are trying to 'tend the land back into itself' as Sheers believes the land which the Welsh soldiers fought over should never be restored to farming. The <u>harsh language</u> such as 'plough blades' used by the poet shows <u>his anger</u> at this change. The poem is written in <u>three-line stanzas</u> but the length of the <u>lines changes</u> throughout breaking up the neat structure of the poem such as in stanza four. This is <u>to mirror</u> the unevenness of the ploughed field which the farmers are ploughing over and the <u>remnants of war</u> such as 'a chit of bone' and 'the relic of a finger' which they keep coming across. There is a clear and regular structure to the poem, shown by the <u>punctuation</u>, with a <u>single stanza</u> followed by a pair of stanzas with a concluding stanza to finish. This also represents the <u>changing focus</u> of the poem, with the first part of the poem concentrating on the land, 'across the field'/'towards the wood' with the latter stages concentrating more on the people, 'twenty men buried in one long grave', finishing with the 'unearthed' singing in celebration.</p>	<p>carefully integrated quotation</p> <p>poet's intention</p> <p>links aspects of form and structure to the focus of the question</p> <p>perceptive summary</p>
<p>'Poppies, <u>however</u> conveys more of the <u>silence</u> and <u>personal memories</u> rather than the artefacts left behind, after a love one has died, as the persona 'listened, hoping to hear'. The repetition of the 'h' sound, 'hoping to hear' <u>implies a sense of wistfulness</u> as she wishes her son was with her.</p>	<p>pointed contrast</p> <p>analysis is perceptive</p>

	Examiner's Comments
<p>Throughout the poem the persona wants to feel the innocence and youth of her son that she feels the <u>conflict and its effects</u> has taken away from him. She longs to 'play at being Eskimos like we did when you were little'. The structure of 'Poppies' reflects the <u>effects of the conflict</u> as the frequent <u>enjambment</u> shows how the mother has <u>lost control of her emotions</u>, added to by the <u>pauses</u>, as she tries to regain her composure shown by: 'smoothed down your shirt's upturned collar, steeled the softening of my face.' The choppy rhythm of this <u>free verse</u> poem also shows the mother as <u>full of grief</u>. The <u>metaphor</u> 'catching on the wind' <u>evokes pathos</u> in the reader as the reader realises the mother will never hear her son's voice again as he has died. This language <u>compares</u> with the much <u>harsher</u> language of 'Poppies' where Sheers refuses to protect the reader from the effects of conflict shown in such descriptions as 'skeletons paused mid dance- macabre'. <u>Unlike in 'Poppies'</u> where the mother is keen to remember her son, Sheers appears to dismiss the soldiers as 'the wasted young' and 'in boots that outlasted them' to emphasise the <u>pointlessness of war</u>.</p>	<p>continues to focus</p> <p>links structure to meaning</p> <p>effect of language on the reader</p> <p>synthesised approach</p> <p>meaningful comments of poet's intentions</p>
<p>In 'Mametz Wood' there is <u>continual harshness</u> shown by the sounds particularly the 'b' sound in 'blown', 'blade' and 'broken bird's egg' and this continual alliteration echoes the sound of gunfire and the battlefield destruction which is part of the effects of war. This is added to by the metaphor of the earth as guardian of the bones as 'even now the earth stands sentinel' of a battle where there were 4,000 casualties and 600 deaths as the Welsh were instructed to take Mametz Wood, a wooded hill area. The <u>personification</u> of the 'nesting machine gun' shows the permanence of the enemy and the <u>likelihood that the attack is futile</u>. The <u>simile</u> 'like a wound working a foreign body' also emphasises the likely outcome which is death. In the final stanza the sounds are much softer as the battlefield is peaceful after the battle, shown by the <u>repetition</u> of the 's' sound in 'sung' and 'slipped' as Sheers emphasises the <u>need</u> to remember these valiant men as they travel to heaven.</p>	<p>analysis is sustained</p> <p>carefully integrated contextual information</p> <p>systematic analysis</p>
<p>'Poppies' also shows the <u>effect on mental</u> health as a result of the <u>grief</u> over a loved one. This grief means that 'all my words flattened, rolled, turned into felt, slowly melting'. Here the references to 'felt' are relevant to Weir as a fabric designer and to the mother in the poem who repaired clothes during the war. The <u>imagery</u> around mending, 'sellotape bandaged around my hand' <u>parallels</u> the 'mending' that the mother is going through as she tries to come to terms with the death of her son.</p>	<p>carefully selected examples discussed and linked to the question</p>
<p>Both poems recognise that the dead should be <u>remembered fondly and not forgotten</u>, but they do it from different angles and in different ways. The mother 'traced the inscriptions on the war memorial' <u>whilst</u> Sheers comments that they are 'all mimicked now in flint'. Both poets use images of peace as a way forward and the <u>horrors of this war</u> as a lesson for the future shown in 'the dove pulled freely against the sky' and 'the notes they had sung'. Both poems express the effects of conflict however I feel Mametz Wood does this more effectively as it is a brings home the images of war more effectively and more graphically.</p>	<p>brings analysis together in a final summative comment</p> <p>clear personal engagement</p>

Response skilfully blends an analysis of form, structure and language.
The focus on the question is explicit and implicit, with meaningful connections
and precise use of contextual material.

Band 5