



SAMPLE ANSWER (1) STUDIED POETRY JUNIOR CERT. 2007

1. Choose any poem you have studied which is “wonder-filled” or captures the “whoosh of the imagination”.

(i) Describe what happens in this poem. (15)

(ii) How does the poet fill the poem with wonder or show the imagination at work? (15)

The Text of the chosen poem.

Travelling through the Dark

by William Stafford

Travelling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of tail-light I stepped back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason--
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.



The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for all of us --my only swerving--
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

The model answer by a Junior Cert Student

(i) The poem that really left me wondering for a whole class (and believe me it has to be a good one to do that) was *Traveling through the Dark* by William Stafford.

It happened that the poet was driving home on the Wilson River road beside a canyon when he saw a dead deer lying on the road. The road was narrow so he couldn't just leave it there in case another driver went into the canyon avoiding it.

When he went to heave it over the side, he noticed that the deer was cold but her belly was warm. Then he realized that she was pregnant.

What should he do? Cut out the doe and save it? Push both over the side?

He thought hard, being a poet and all – he thought hard for “all of us” and then he pushed both deer and doe over the side. What a choice! He felt so despairing of our future that he chose to let the doe die.

Not much happens you'll agree but what does happen says a lot about the state we are in! There is no future! I call this one my Global Warming poem! **15/15**

(ii) When we talked about this poem in class we all agreed it was like a little video. Like in a video, the poet sets the scene. It's dark; the headlights shine and pick out a deer lying dead

“on the edge of The Wilson River road”

Soon you begin to wonder is it the start of a horror film – and in a way it is!

You are there with the poet – and yet you are watching the image as well,

“By glow of tail light I stepped back of the car

and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing.



You can feel the weight of the animal as he drags it to the edge,

“I dragged her off – she was large in belly”

The poem is almost dramatic enough at this point but then he drops the bombshell,

“Her faun lay there waiting,

alive, still, never to be born...”

At this stage my imagination was in top gear. What should he do? Should he save the doe? Of course he should.

But he just stands there thinking! And thinking!

“I stood in the glare...I could hear the wilderness listen.”

Silence – and I’m wondering where’s Superman to save the day!

Then comes the poet’s judgment on us all, cold as ice.

“I thought hard for all of us...then pushed her over the edge into the river.”

It’s as if he looked into the future of the earth and decided that the doe would be better off dead what with the state we have got our planet into.

No! I say, NO NO! But is anyone listening? **15/15**