HOW TO WRITE A CRITICAL COMMENTARY OF A POEM

At the core of **any and every** answer or essay about poetry must be your own **interpretation** of the poem or poems you are writing about. It is **this** **alone** that attracts the majority of marks. In a nutshell, the more subtly you interpret a poem - and give support for your interpretation - the higher your marks, and grade, will be.

When you **interpret** a poem, you seek to explain **what** you believe the 'hidden meanings' are, show **how** they have been created and discuss **why** this was done.

WHAT

***Theme, subject, emotion, image***

What is the key message or emotion that the poet is trying to convey with their poem?

e.g. ‘*In this poem the poet is examining the relationship between Nature and God’* **or**

*‘Once again, the poet is expressing her belief that Violence is the root of all evil’*

HOW

**Poetic devices- metaphor, simile, alliteration, repetition, rhyme, AND structure, form, style**

How does the poet use their poetry to express their opinion or convey their message?

e.g. ‘ *The poet uses an extended metaphor to compare her situation to that of a frightened animal thus showing her vulnerability and compounding her argument that women are seen as inferior and weak’* ***or***

*‘ In these lines we can see how both alliteration and onomatopoeia are used to create the sounds of the busy streets, which brings the image to life and allows the reader to engage fully with the world of the poet’*

WHY {OPINION}

**Creating the link- why has THIS poet written THIS poem in THIS way?**

Expressing why you believe the poet has used certain poetic devices

to emphasise a certain idea/create a certain image/make us feel a certain emotion

what these things reveal about this poem/this poet/ourselves.

E.G.*’ the use of simile throughout the poem is noteworthy as it gives clarity to the idea of anger as a living entity. It suggests that poet sees anger as something capable of not only feeling, but power. The poet has revealed his attitude to anger, which places him in a subservient role. For the poet and for the reader, the Anger in ‘Glory Daze’ has become the most powerful force.’*

FOR A COMPREHENSIVE ANSWER, EACH PARAGRAPH OF A POETRY ANSWER SHOULD CONTAIN ALL THE ELEMENTS OF INTERPRETATION.