**Two Sample Student Analyses**

**Poetic Analysis of “Hawk Roosting”**

In the poem “Hawk Roosting,” by Ted Hughes, the poet portrays the hawk as a creature of arrogance and power. The hawk is self-assured due to its attitude of only caring about itself and its needs. Unlike humans, the hawk is not bound by fears, hopes, or dreams. The hawk is a metaphor for the power and control that the force of nature holds over the earth. Like other creatures of nature, the hawk will inevitably be killed, but what remains is Nature which alone has the power to allot death, not the hawk. In order to convey the theme of the poem, the poet has used devices such as structure, diction, personification, and specific stylistic choices.   
 The poem is structured into six equal four line stanzas. The form is consistent throughout and does not change at the end of the poem. This is significant because the Hawk does not wish for any kind of change. His world is orderly and controlled, which parallels the form of the poem. Also, quite a few of the lines end with full stops and are also short in length. For example in the last stanza, lines 21-24 all state brief facts and all end in full stops: “The sun is behind me. /Nothing has changed since I began./ My eye has permitted no change. /I am going to keep things like this.” This stylistic choice of factual statements and full stops helps to illustrate the hawk’s certainty in himself, what he stands for and what he believes in. They also show that the Hawk does not allow for arguments.   
 Hughes uses diction and connotations to convey different traits of the hawk. For example, to show the hawk’s arrogance, Hughes uses lines such as "And the earth’s face turned upwards for my inspection"(line 8), and "the sun is behind me"(21). To show the fierceness of the Hawk, Hughes uses lines such as "Rehearse perfect kills and eat"(4), and "I kill where I please" (14). Lastly, to show the power that the Hawk possesses, Hughes uses lines such as "Now I hold creation in my foot"(10), and "My eye has permitted no change"(23). Although literally the voice in the poem is that of the hawk, metaphorically, the voice, on a much larger scale, is the force of Nature. Hughes uses sophisticated and formal language to illustrate the hawk’s power. The Hawk sees himself as a God-like creature and therefore expresses his thoughts in a formal manner. This is seen in phrases such as "falsifying dream"(3). This phrase is spoken with a formal tone and adds to the hawk’s control over his situation.   
 Personification is also well utilized by the author. The line "And the earth's face upward for my inspection" (8) personifies the earth, illustrating the hawk’s seeming control over it, much like that of a king. This use of personifying the earth to show the hawk’s dominance it ties into the metaphor that the Hawk is representing Nature because it is nature that controls the earth.  
 The style of the poem is centered on the control the hawk thinks he possesses. Most of the images have to do with the hawk’s control. This is seen by the number of times the words, “I’, “me” and “my” are used. The tone of the poem is brutal and menacing.

**Turning Tides: A Poetic Analysis of E.J. Pratt’s “The Shark”**

“The Shark,” by E.J. Pratt, uses strong imagery and rhythm to create the perfect setting to explore the methodical movements and wild instincts of the creature. The title of this poem is very direct, creating a clear idea of what is to come. Through language and various poetic devices, such as alliteration and onomatopoeia, Pratt has created tension throughout the stanzas and is constantly surprising the reader with twists and turns.

The first line of the poem immediately introduces us to the character of the shark and establishes a familiarity of place. This sense of routine is brought about through both the setting of the harbour as well as through the language with which Pratt describes the shark’s movement using words such as “leisurely.”

The idea of routine is furthered as the stanza continues to describe the shark’s body, in particular the comparison of his fin to a piece of “sheet iron.” The way in which Pratt has chosen to describe the fin moving through the water resonates with the reader, drawing upon the image of a knife slicing through the surface. This comparison creates a feeling of calculated process and precision and the idea of the dangerous yet controlled weapon, building tension in the reader. The second stanza continues to build the image of the shark as it describes the body as “tubular” and “tapered.” The alliteration adds strength to the lines but also draws focus to the image of the shark’s body as a “smoke blue” torpedo.

There is a powerful shift midway through the second stanza that changes the rhythm and direction of the poem as both literally and figuratively “he turned.” The language and imagery becomes more active increasing the pace of the poem. The use of onomatopoeia, for example “snapped,” creates an immediacy and intensity to the poem. Sharper tones are also found within the lines with specific emphasis on words that begin or end in the letter “t.” Pratt continues to increase the rhythm extensively using alliteration that connects the images together, such as the “flat-fish,” “floating” and “flash.”

The final stanza of the poem returns to a more natural or controlled movement and rhythm as well as returning to the image of the harbour, creating a frame for the poem itself. The language also revisits the smoother, rounder tones that are evident at the start of the poem and uses softer alliteration such as the “l” sound in “lithely, leisurely.” Many of the descriptive words are also repeated and give the reader the sense that the process is starting over. The shark is on his controlled, calculated hunt and is only waiting for his moment to turn and strike once more.

Pratt concludes the poem with a comparison of the shark to other wild animals such as a vulture that poaches and a wolf that hunts. He is, however, very specific in reminding the reader that the shark is neither of these things for he has the distinct characteristic of being cold blooded. These lines separate themselves from the rest of the poem and therefore command attention. It leaves the reader at the end of the poem with the sense that the shark is not only a wild animal with the natural instinct to hunt, but is also a ruthless, cold-blooded killer.