

Guiding Questions
For my Grandmother Knitting by Liz Lochhead

Discuss the following questions and make notes. For each stanza, also consider:

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| - Strong words | - rhyme/rhythm | - Lexical fields | - Use of colours |
| - Contrast | - onomatopoeia | - Tone | |
| - Punctuation | - imagery | - Sensory images | |

Stanza 1

- a) Stanza 1 opens with the refrain of the poem.* What is the effect of the conjunction "but" and the statement which follows?
- b) What is the effect of the words "need" and "needles"?
- c) What words suggest that the needles have a life of their own? Effect?
- d) Comment on the use of the second person, "you".
- e) Comment on the repetition of the word "hands".
- f) What do we learn about the Grandmother's past? How does this affect our impression of her?
- g) What technique focuses the reader/listener on the woman's youth?
- h) Comment on the use of punctuation - what is the effect of enjambment and the final full stop?

*refrain = a repeated line, or number of lines in a poem or song

Stanza 2

- a) In what ways are the first and second stanzas similar? Effect?
- b) What are the possible meanings of 'grasp'?
- c) Find two examples of alliteration in this stanza and explain their effect.
- d) What sound techniques can you find in "you slit the still-ticking quick silver fish"? Comment on the effect.
- e) How is a contrast created in stanza 1 and 2 - between the grandmother's youth and her current situation? How does this make you feel?
- f) How do the last two lines force us to consider the grandmother's growing sense of uselessness?

Stanza 3

- a) In what ways were the grandmother's "hands" once so important?
- b) Give evidence to show that although in her youth she had a tiny frame she worked hard and was strong and robust.
- c) Comment on the use of, and effect, of sibilance.

Stanza 4

- a) How does the point of view shift?
- b) What are the feelings of the kids towards their grandmother knitting?

- c) What is the effect of the dash?
- d) Notice that the word "hand/s" is repeated in the other stanzas, but not here. Why?
- e) How does the last word of the stanza make you feel (in your response, also consider the endings of the other stanzas)?

Practise Question:

How does Liz Lochhead memorably portray the grandmother in the poem *For My Grandmother Knitting*? Support your ideas with **close reference to the text**.