**NOTES ON FUNERAL BLUES**

“Funeral Blues” focuses on themes of dependence, death, and grief. The poem deals with somebody losing a loved one, and therefore feeling as though his or her world has been destroyed. So for the speaker in the poem, the world is transformed because of loss. To everyone else, nothing changes. Time doesn’t slow down and no one cares about what is happening. The speaker pleads with the world to feel as he or she does, to understand this grief and even participate in it.

**Let us remind ourselves of some poetic techniques quickly**.

**Caesura**, occurs when a line is split in half, sometimes with punctuation.

**Alliteration** occurs when words are used in succession, or at least appear close together, and begin with the same letter.

**Anaphora**, or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of multiple lines, usually appears as a refrain.

**Hyperbole** is an intentionally exaggerated description, comparison or exclamation meant to further the writer’s important themes, or make a specific impact on a reader.

**Enjambment** occurs when a line is cut off before its natural stopping point. Enjambment forces a reader down to the next line, and the next, quickly. In other words you have to read on down the lines till you get to a punctuation mark.

Auden structured the poem in four, four-line stanzas known as **quatrains**. These quatrains follow an AABB rhyming pattern.

Within ‘Funeral Blues’ Auden makes use of several poetic techniques. The first, caesura, occurs in the fourth line of the first stanza, as well as the fourth line of the third stanza.

Alliteration, is used extensively. For instance, in the first line of the first stanza: “the clocks, cut off” or “working week” in the second line of the third stanza.

Auden also makes use of anaphora for example, “Let” at the beginning of lines one and four of the second stanza and “My” at the start of lines two and three of the third.

Towards the end of the poem, hyperbole becomes quite important. The last lines ask the impossible, that one should “Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun” and “put out the stars”.

**Now let us go stanza by stanza**:

**Stanza 1**: The poem starts with an instruction. What a powerful way to start! The idea of stopping the clocks serves two purposes here. First, it stops the noise that they make, but also it signifies the stopping of time. And it also has the overtone that the deceased has run out of time. That is followed up with “cut off” the telephone, a strong phrase that again suggests death. There is an ever-present theme of stopping sounds and promoting silence.

**Stanza 2**

Auden is meticulously clever in the language that he uses. This stanza refers to the public funeral processions that took place in Victorian England for important dignitaries. Once again in this stanza, he refers to noise. This time though he describes the airplanes as “moaning”. The word “moaning” sounds a lot like the word mourning and also represents suffering and heartbreak. The city’s pigeons must dress to suit the mourning procession. There should be a muffled drum. The sound is deliberately muffled to create the right atmosphere. Even the traffic police should be in mourning. Wearing black gloves would be a sign of respect to the departed.

**Stanza 3**

This stanza explains what the person he or she is mourning meant to him or her. The opening line refers to the points of a compass and carries the suggestion of a loss of direction. The speaker is lost, physically and emotionally, without his or her partner. The next line furthers the importance of the deceased. The speaker is saying that this person meant everything to him or her. The third line emphasizes this: night and day, talk and silence, work and relaxation and even the seasons. The speaker loved the person and believed that emotion would last forever. It has clearly been replaced by grieving and loss. Death has taken away love.

**Stanza 4**

The opening line to the final stanza of ‘Funeral Blues’ is very striking. It describes the listless feeling one experiences when everything seems pointless and irritating. The stars represent hope and love and the speaker has no interest in these things at this point. His or her grieving has meant a loss of interest in the world- of not wanting to carry on. This is expressed by asking that the world in dismantled even doing away with the oceans. These melodramatic instructions suggest that the mourner has lost all interests in the world and wants it to go away. Also the speaker wants everyone else to feel the same.

**MEMO OF QUESTIONS ON FUNERAL BLUES**

The poem and questions were posted on Monday. Here are the answers to these questions.

7.1.The clocks indicate normality and the passing of time. By stopping the clocks, he wants other people's normality to cease so that they can relate to his situation. The death of his loved one is so momentous that he feels the world cannot continue. It was tradition to stop the clocks from ticking when someone in the house had died. The speaker wants the world to acknowledge the death of his loved one. [Award 2 marks for any one idea well discussed OR any two relevant and distinct points.](2)

7.2 The capital letters indicate the importance of the loved one in the speaker's life and emphasise the intensity of the grief he is experiencing./It creates the impression that the person who has died is a person of significance within society and thus deserving of outpourings of public grief./Capital letters draw the reader's attention to the stark finality of death. [Award 2 marks for any one idea well discussed OR any two relevant and distinct points.](2)

7.3 The deceased was like the points on a compass to the speaker. He provided him with guidance and played a significant role in the speaker's life. The image is effective because, like a compass, the deceased was dependable and one on whom the speaker could always rely. Now that he is dead, the speaker feels lost and without direction. The four compass points emphasise that the deceased was an important part of every aspect of the speaker's life.[Award 3 marks for any two ideas well discussed OR three ideas.](3)

7.4The speaker is devastated/distraught/despondent because he sees no future. He wants the entire universe to come to an end. All sources of light need to be extinguished because to him, everything is now dark and depressing. He wants all of nature to disappear as it is now inconsequential to him. The hyperbolic statements emphasise the intensity of his pain at the death of his loved one. [Award 3 marks for any two ideas well discussed OR three ideas.](3)[10]three ideas.](3)

FRIDAY

HAMLET –William Shakespeare

QUESTION 20: HAMLET–ESSAYQUESTION•

This question was sent to you on Monday. You should have done the work yesterday. Here is the memo:

Hamlet's behaviour throughout the play has unintended consequences. Critically discuss the extent to which you agree with the above statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 400–450 words (2–2½ pages).[25].

Below is the basis for answering this essay. Use the following as a guideline only. However, also allow for answers that are different, original and show evidence of critical thought and interpretation.

•A range of examples may be used by the candidates to support their arguments.

•. Candidates might argue that this statement is not entirely true and discuss how Hamlet's behaviour has either intended or unintended consequences or they might offer a mixed response.

•From the time he learns of his father's murder, Hamlet is obsessed with the need to avenge his death. This sets him on a course that has many unintended consequences.

•Hamlet intends for his antic disposition to mislead his enemies and to allow him to investigate the Ghost's accusations. It serves, however, to make Claudius suspicious of him and leads to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's spying on him and ultimately their deaths.

•Hamlet's introspection, self-doubt and anxiety cause him to procrastinate, thus giving Claudius the opportunity to act against him.

•Although Hamlet has the perfect opportunity to kill Claudius while he is at prayer, he decides against it, as he does not want Claudius's soul to ascend to heaven. His delay gives Claudius time to come up with a plan to kill him. Realising that Hamlet poses a threat to him, Claudius sends Hamlet to England where he will be executed by the English king

.•Hamlet's boarding of the pirate ship has the unintended consequence of enabling him to return to Denmark and escape execution.

•Hamlet unintentionally kills Polonius when he realises that he is being spied upon in his mother's room. As a result, Laertes is determined to avenge his father's death.

•Hamlet's cruel treatment of Ophelia is a result of his disillusionment with his mother, and women in general. His brutal rejection of her and her father's death at Hamlet's hands cause Ophelia to descend into madness and she drowns soon after.

*[•In order to eliminate the threat that Hamlet poses to him, Claudius poisons Hamlet's wine at the duel. Gertrude's death after drinking the poison is a consequence that neither Hamlet nor Claudius could have predicted*

*.•Fortinbras becoming King of Denmark is another unexpected outcome of Hamlet's commitment to revenge. ] This is in Act 5 not included yet.*

•Candidates might argue that much of what Hamlet does is orchestrated and that he has a very clear outcome in mind. They might refer to his deliberate act of feigning madness and his plan to stage a play that mirrors Claudius's murderous and incestuous actions. Both these acts have the intended outcome of confirming Claudius's guilt. [Credit valid alternative/mixed responses.] [25]