1. What is the poem about?
2. In what ways is the title significant?
3. Which three lines seem to be particularly important?
4. Which three individual words stand out?
5. What poetic devices can you identify?
6. How do they help to shape meaning?
7. How is the poem structured (i.e. organised)?
8. Is the poem written in an identifiable form?

***The First Day*, by Christina Rossetti**

I wish I could remember that first day,

First hour, first moment of your meeting me,

If bright or dim the season, it might be

Summer or winter for aught I can say;

So unrecorded did it slip away,

So blind was I to see and to foresee,

So dull to mark the budding of my tree

That would not blossom yet for many a May.

If only I could recollect it, such

A day of days! I let it come and go

As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;

It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;

If only now I could recall that touch,

First touch of hand in hand – Did one but know!

***Demeter*, by Carol Ann Duffy**

Where I lived – winter and hard earth.

I sat in my cold stone room

choosing tough words, granite, flint,

to break the ice. My broken heart –

I tried that, but it skimmed,

flat, over the frozen lake.

She came from a long, long way,

but I saw her at last, walking,

my daughter, my girl, across the fields,

in bare feet, bringing all spring’s flowers

to her mother’s house. I swear

the air softened and warmed as she moved,

the blue sky smiling, none too soon,

with the small shy mouth of a new moon.

***Still I Rise*, by Maya Angelou**

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may trod me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I’ll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

‘Cause I walk like I’ve got oil wells

Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,

With the certainty of tides,

Just like hopes springing high,

Still I’ll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Shoulders falling down like teardrops,

Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?

Don’t you take it awful hard

‘Cause I laugh like I’ve got gold mines

Diggin’ in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?

Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I’ve got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history’s shame

I rise

Up from a past that’s rooted in pain

I rise

I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,

Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

1. What is the poem about?
2. In what ways is the title significant?
3. Which three lines seem to be particularly important?
4. Which three individual words stand out?
5. What poetic devices can you identify?
6. How do they help to shape meaning?
7. How is the poem structured (i.e. organised)?
8. Is the poem written in an identifiable form?

***Pike*, by Ted Hughes**

Pike, three inches long, perfect
Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.
Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin.
They dance on the surface among the flies.

Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,
Over a bed of emerald, silhouette
Of submarine delicacy and horror.
A hundred feet long in their world.

In ponds, under the heat-struck lily pads-
Gloom of their stillness:
Logged on last year’s black leaves, watching upwards.
Or hung in an amber cavern of weeds

The jaws’ hooked clamp and fangs
Not to be changed at this date:
A life subdued to its instrument;
The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.

Three we kept behind glass,
Jungled in weed: three inches, four,
And four and a half: fed fry to them-
Suddenly there were two. Finally one

With a sag belly and the grin it was born with.
And indeed they spare nobody.
Two, six pounds each, over two feet long
High and dry and dead in the willow-herb-

One jammed past its gills down the other’s gullet:
The outside eye stared: as a vice locks-
The same iron in this eye
Though its film shrank in death.

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,
Whose lilies and muscular tench
Had outlasted every visible stone
Of the monastery that planted them-

Stilled legendary depth:
It was as deep as England. It held
Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old
That past nightfall I dared not cast

But silently cast and fished
With the hair frozen on my head
For what might move, for what eye might move.
The still splashes on the dark pond,

Owls hushing the floating woods
Frail on my ear against the dream
Darkness beneath night’s darkness had freed,
That rose slowly toward me, watching.

***The Eagle*, by Alfred Tennyson**

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;

Close to the sun in lonely lands,

Ring’d with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;

He watches from his mountain walls,

And like a thunderbolt he falls.

***Broadcast*, by Philip Larkin**

Giant whispering and coughing from

Vast Sunday-full and organ-frowned-on spaces

Precede a sudden scuttle on the drum,

‘The Queen’, and huge resettling. Then begins

A snivelling of the violins:

I think of your face among all those faces,

Beautiful and devout before

Cascades of monumental slithering,

One of your gloves unnoticed on the floor

Beside those new, slightly-outmoded shoes.

Here it goes quickly dark. I lose

All but the outline of the still and withering

Leaves on half-emptied trees. Behind

The glowing wavebands, rabid storms of chording

By being distant overpower my mind

All the more shamelessly, their cut-off shout

Leaving me desperate to pick out

Your hands, tiny in all that air, applauding.