

Unseen Poetry 2012

'First Fight' by Vernon Scannell
Question 3 - Use of Language in the Poem
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Junior Cert 2012

- ▶ Question 3: Comment on the poet's use of language in the poem.
- ▶ Planning your answer: Be prepared to go into detail about the aspects of language you choose to discuss. There are many points you could make and in the following slides I will give you a brief overview of quite a few of them. Don't be dismayed by the volume of information as you would only be expected to discuss three (or four if you have time).

Point of View

- ▶ It is **written from the boy's perspective** which draws the reader in: we feel as if we are fighting along with him.
- ▶ The fact that it is written from the boy's perspective also makes the events described in the poem more believable as the boxer would know what he was talking about.



Metaphor

- ▶ The feeling of a punch to the jaw is compared to ‘Guy Fawkes’ Night’ as light ‘Flashes and dazzles’ inside the boy’s head like fireworks. This is **very effective use of imagery** and it perfectly captures the drama and the shock of the punch

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Repetition

- ▶ The **repetition** in the poem mirrors the repetition of the various moves in boxing. For example, the boy reminds himself to ‘Keep the left jabbing,’ ‘Keep your left working,’ and to ‘Jab with the left again’.

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Imperatives

- ▶ The use of **imperatives** throughout the description of the fight shows us how the boy has learned these moves from a coach and now tells himself to ‘Move around the ring,’ ‘Stab it out straight and hard’. He has learned his lesson well and knows that he must keep his concentration and focus on what he is doing all the time.

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Graphic Language

- ▶ The violence of the fight is captured in the graphic descriptions of the blows and the crowd's reaction. Words like 'Smash', 'thuds', and 'smack' bring the fight to life for us. These **short, choppy, onomatopoeic verbs** make us feel as if we were there at the ringside.

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Structure

- ▶ The poem changes quite dramatically once the fight is over. Now instead of action, we have **reflection**. The **longer lines are appropriate here because the boy's thoughts are more complex** than they were during the fight when he was focused on thinking and moving quickly.
- ▶ The **rhyming couplet** at the end of the poem shows us that the boy has reached a resolution: he has decided to suppress any thoughts of pity for or empathy with his opponent.

