## Prescribed Poetry Approaching the essay

- There are 50 marks for this section.
- You should allow 45 / 50 minutes to write your prescribed poetry essay.
- Choose four to five poems which are relevant to the question.
- You are making a case in your essay, so you must have a thesis. The examiner is not interested in reading a re-hash of your poetry notes.

#### Remember...

- Themes
- Style
- Personal response



## Organisation

If you simply choose four or five poems and discuss them in no particular order, you will get a low grade.



#### Order

 Your thesis should be the thread that holds your essay together



## Some suggestions

- Move from poems written about the poet's childhood to poems written about middle age or old age.
- Move from poems written when the poet was young to poems written when he / she was an older person.
   (This approach works well for Yeats.)
- Move from positive to negative or vice versa.
- Move from personal to public or vice versa.

#### Final Touches

Think of links between the poems and fine-tune your plan.

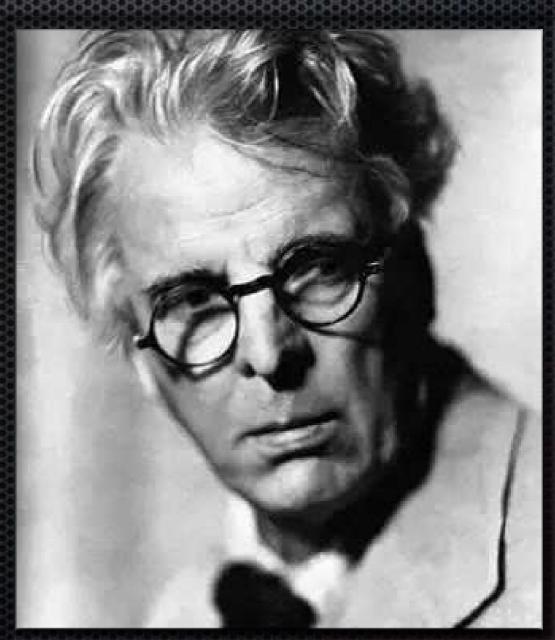


#### Structure

- There is no hard and fast rule here; use whatever structure has worked for you in the past.
- Introduction: Refer to the question and outline your approach
- Two paragraphs on each poem
- Link sentence at the start of each new poem
- Conclusion: it is good to end on a quote if possible

# Yeats: Approaching the Essay

Yeats' poetry is driven by a tension between the real world in which he lives and the ideal world that he imagines.'



#### Thesis

- This tension is at the heart of Yeats' poetry
- Longing to be at one with nature
- Struggling to come to terms with ageing
- Disillusionment with contemporary Ireland
- Admitting reality of 1916 rising is far from the ideal
- Always expresses himself with passion and strength of conviction
- Sweeps us along with him as he constantly reinvents himself
- Adjusts his opinions to reflect the changing reality in his personal life and the social and political turmoil of his native land

#### The Lake Isle

Natural perfection
Romantic ideal
'Hateful' London
Overwhelming longing
'I hear it in the deep
heart's core'



#### The Wild Swans

- Change in opinion
- Nature is now a symbol of what he has lost
- In 'The Lake Isle' he longed to be alone beside a lake, but now the reality does not bring him joy.



## Sailing to Byzantium

- Now rejects nature completely in favour of art and civilisation
- His heart is 'sick with desire and fastened to a dying animal'.
- Dichotomy between reality and imagined ideal
- Wants to be 'gathered into the artifice of eternity'

## Changing imagery

- Progression of bird imagery is interesting
- Lake Isle: linnet is part of the imagined ideal
- Wild Swans: birds are reminders of all he has lost; 'their hearts have not grown old'
- Sailing to Byzantium: 'birds in the trees' are part of reality which Yeats has utterly rejected
- He now wishes to be a golden bird upon a bough





...set upon a golden bough to sing / To lords and ladies of Byzantium Of what is past, or passing, or to come...

#### Sailing to Byzantium

### September 1913

- Not just in his personal life that Yeats expresses tension between reality and an imagined ideal
- Rails against the merchant classes
- Patriots of old represent a sort of heroic ideal
- 'delirium of the brave'

#### Easter 1916

- Palinode
- Oxymoron: 'a terrible beauty' Yeats attempts to reconcile heroic idealism and bitter reality of violence and death

#### Conclusion

- Anniversary of 1916 nearly upon us
- Will modern commentators view these patriots as an ideal whose likes will not be seen again?
- Part of the human condition to strive for and dream of better things
- Yeats' vision resonates with us

