



Student booklet

Poetry that speaks

Year 8	English
Name	

Critically analyse a poem, then write an analytical essay.

You will:

- analyse a poem
 - write an analytical essay.
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Section 1. Poetry analysis

Read and discuss the following poem with your teacher.

World on Fire

The temperature's rising, but there aren't any flames,
John Howard denies all the scientists' claims,
Society complacently spends and consumes,
As the atmosphere chokes on our leftover fumes.

Smokestacks billow like towering cigarettes,
Once it all rises, too late for regrets,
We all know that smoking will ruin our health,
But we pollute without thinking for the sake of our wealth.

Greenhouse gases fire the atmosphere oven,
Greenies and businessmen pushin' and shovin',
Like an extra blanket on an already warm bed,
Our land dries and cracks, as our faces turn red.

Rising seas caused by melting ice caps,
Habitats destroyed though 'natural' mishaps,
They said eco-tourism was the new stock,
But now the Antarctic's all water and rock.

The issue is real and affects everyone,
From the poles to the forests, all under the sun,
The Earth is in crisis, the world is on fire,
Act now before the stakes become even higher.

Gilbert Bromden

Respond to the following questions. They will be very helpful in assisting you to write your analytical essay.

1. What does Bromden mean when he says, “The temperature’s rising, but there aren’t any flames”?

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2. Explain in what sense the word “complacently” is used in the poem. Try to work it out by looking at the words around it and the clues given in the text.

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3. In stanza two is the line “We all know that smoking will ruin our health”. What is:

- a. the obvious meaning in the statement?

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- b. the deeper or less obvious meaning in the statement?

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4. In stanza three, what does Bromden mean by the “atmosphere oven”? Do you think this is a clever way to express this meaning? Explain.

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5. Why would “greenies and businessmen” be “pushin’ and shovin’”?

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6. Explain the effect that Bromden is trying to achieve in the similes in the last two lines in stanza three.

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7. In stanza four, why does Bromden put the word “natural” in inverted commas?

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8. In the last stanza, how could the stakes become even higher?

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9. Identify the poetic devices or other techniques that Bromden uses to engage the reader and promote his message. How effective are they?

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10. Find the conjunctions (linking words) that are used to join ideas within the text. Write these words and the ideas that they link. Highlight the conjunction.

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11. What adjective/noun combinations are used to enhance visual imagery? What images are being promoted?

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12. Words that express or create mood, feelings or tone are called emotive words. What emotive words are used here and how effective are they?

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13. What people or groups of people are likely to challenge, oppose or resist the message in the poem?

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Section 2. Analytical essay

Gilbert Bromden has a point of view about the effect of human activities upon the natural environment. Many people agree with what he has to say in this poem.

Write an essay discussing how effective you think Bromden has been in getting his message across.

Consider the following.

- The essay must be a minimum of 300–400 words in length.
- Use your responses in Section 1 to assist you in writing your essay.
- Think deeply about what it is that Bromden is saying in his poem. As a good critical reader, you know that meaning is not always just about the superficial value of the words, but also what is said between the lines and the deeper meanings of the words.

For this analytical essay, you need to have:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an introduction, which should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – be only one paragraph long – begin by grabbing the reader's attention with something very interesting or controversial – use descriptive language — remember that people who read this poem will have a variety of opinions about what Bromden is saying. You have to be sensitive to all. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a body, which should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – usually be at least three paragraphs in length, with each paragraph containing one new idea only, making your point, using supporting information from the poem or other sources – have each paragraph leading into the next one – use language that links ideas and causes and effects (e.g. since, although, because, due to, as a result of) and topic sentences. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a conclusion, where you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – restate the intent of your essay and do not introduce any new information – can use a quote (e.g. David Suzuki stated in his book, <i>The sacred balance</i>, ... ; Bromden reinforces Suzuki's claims ...) – finish with a powerful closing sentence that summarises your response. |

Analytical essay checklist

Before you hand in your finished analytical essay, check that you have done everything you need to by using this “self-help” checklist.

Question		Yes	No	A little
1. Is the opening sentence informative and catchy?				
2. Can you suggest a way to improve it?			
3. Does the introduction:	• grab the reader's attention?			
	• use language that suits the purpose?			
4. Is each new idea contained in a separate paragraph?				
5. Have the paragraphs been well linked?				
6. Are topics sentences:	• used?			
	• doing their job?			
7. Is Bromden's point of view clearly explained?				
8. Is there enough supporting evidence provided for each new idea?				
9. Is there enough information on the poetic devices that are used and how effective they are?				
10. Has the intent of the essay been restated?				
11. Has the essay been finished with a powerful closing sentence?				