

First year exams

Poetry Unseen Feedback

1

A good introduction

- Both Boland and Morrissey explore concepts of continuity in their poems "Inheritance" and "Genetics." Morrissey uses the structure of a villanelle and bodily imagery, denoting the continuity of her parents' union through her own body, and Boland uses enjambment and imagery harkening back to the tradition of motherhood in her own culture, to demonstrate how the same values of love and compassion have been passed down through the generations.

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Another Good Introduction

- Eavan Boland, in her poem 'Inheritance' explores the idea of continuity through the voice of a mother, wondering about what she will leave her daughters, using mentions of her home, Ireland, as a basis, whereas Sinead Morrissey explores the idea of continuity through the voice of a daughter attempting to find ways her separated parents are still connected through her.

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Three Levels of Response

- **Description** – In *Inheritance* Eavan Boland is wondering what she can leave her daughters when she dies.
- **Commentary** – In *Inheritance* Eavan Boland is 'wondering' what she can 'leave behind' when she dies.
- **Analysis** – Eavan Boland starts her poem *Inheritance* in a deliberately understated way, using the present participle 'wondering' and the first person pronoun 'I' to give the poem a tentative and immediate feel, almost as if she is speaking directly to us.

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Order of essay

- Focus on meaning at the start – what are the poems about, what are the poets conveying through their choice of words?
- Deal with structure last – structure rarely creates meaning, it supports it – although you could make a good case for enjambement reflecting continuity.

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AO1

- Argument, structure, spelling, critical terms, punctuation etc.
- **Try to have a theory about the differences in the poems that informs your argument.**
- *In both 'Genetics' and 'inheritance', the two poets discuss continuity in parent-child relationships, while Boland focuses on the eternal values of motherhood that have lasted throughout history despite changes in culture and tradition. Morrissey approaches the repetition of relationships, the continual cycling from child with parents to parents with children.*

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AO2

- This is the dominant AO in the poetry. You need to drill down closely into language – certainly to word level, sometimes even to sound level.
- *The repetition of the verb "learned" also harkens back to earlier in the poem, when she addresses that she "learned so little" from the mothers of the past, but by tying these lines together with "learning", Boland conveys an evolution, a learning process that isn't the same, but has evolved with time to create her version of motherhood, and will evolve again, under different traditions but always continuing the same values.*
- In the final stanza, Morrissey also uses imagery of a marriage to represent the birth of their new child, as she "bequeaths" her fingers, holding connotations of giving away part of herself, to unite with the "palms" of her husbands to create an entirely new child, a new "hand"

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More AO2

- Boland uses a running leitmotif of domestic and crafting items, such as: 'silk', 'lace' and 'mesh', to emphasize a motherly figure through the narrator due to the heavy connotations of women's association with craft and domesticity.

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Other things

- Try to avoid overlong paragraphs. It's fine to split a comparison between two paragraphs in order to have a better organised structure.
- Read the unseen poem *really* carefully Some of you got the wrong end of the stick and so some of your points were not relevant.
- Many people missed the ending of 'Inheritance' where Eavan Boland writes that

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