



Taunton School

English 13+ Scholarship 2022

45 minutes

Please write in pen as clearly as you can.

You are allowed 45 minutes only.

The poem below was written by Laurie Lee. Read the poem carefully and then answer all the questions which follow.

Town Owl

On eves of cold, when slow coal fires,
rooted in basements, burn and branch,
brushing with smoke the city air;

When quartered moons pale in the sky,
and neons glow along the dark
like deadly nightshade on a briar;

Above the muffled traffic then
I hear the owl, and at his note
I shudder in my private chair.

For like an augur he has come
to roost among our crumbling walls,
his blooded talons sheathed in fur.

Some secret lure of time it seems
has called him from his country wastes
to hunt a newer wasteland here.

And where the candelabra swung
bright with the dancers' thousand eyes,
now his black, hooded pupils stare,

And where the silk-shoed lovers ran
with dust of diamonds in their hair,
he opens now his silent wing,

And, like a stroke of doom, drops down,
and swoops across the empty hall,
and plucks a quick mouse off the stair...

Glossary

Augur – a good or bad sign or omen (something that predicts the future)

Deadly nightshade – a poisonous plant

Candalabra – an ornate light fitting

Questions

1. There are 3 quotations underlined; explain how in each one the poet creates a powerful effect through the specific language used. **6 marks**
2. Choose 3 more phrases from the poem and explain how it is effective in suggesting something about the owl's behaviour. **6 marks**
3. The poem focuses its attention on an owl hunting at night. How does the poet employ the night time setting to create a powerful and dramatic mood? You may refer to quotations you have already discussed in previous answers. You should use a minimum of six quotations within your answer. **13 marks**