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| **Literature Paper 2 Section B: Anthology Poetry****Learning compendium****Extract from ‘The Prelude’** |
| Key ideas\*Autobiographical. The extract describes how Wordsworth went out in a boat on a lake at night. He was alone and a mountain peak loomed over him. Its presence had a great effect upon him and for days afterwards, he was troubled by the experience.\*The poem shows the spiritual growth of the poet: how he comes to terms with who he is, and his place in nature and the world.\*Wordsworth was a Romantic poet meaning that he took his inspiration from nature and he based his poems on places he had visited. He believed that we could learn from the natural world and that nature is more powerful than man. |
| Form and structureThe extract is one stanza long and the entire works is viewed as an epic poem.The poem is a first person narrative and organised in chronological order. The extract is a complete story within itself.The poem is written in blank verse which creates the sense of Wordsworth talking and explaining what he did to the reader.The poem can be organised into three sections: the first begins with Wordsworth’s sense of adventure and almost arrogance; then he is frightened; finally the end of the poem is reflective explaining how the experience has changed him. The turning point in the poem (start of the second section) starts at the conjunction ‘when’ (line 21)Genre: plays with the gothic tradition. Night journeys in an isolated setting (often in nature) are a common element. Including elements of fear, and the psychology of things like night and the surroundings of characters. |
| LanguageNatural imageryNature/ the natural world is presented in two ways: one as beautiful and the other as powerful and frightening.Nature as beautiful‘small circles glittering idly…’‘until they melted all into one track/Of sparkling light.’Light imagery evokes a calm and tranquil image. The imagery of the boat ‘elfin pinnace’ as a fairy boat (metaphor) also adds to the magical quality of the start of the poem.Nature as frightening and powerfulThe description of the mountain peak is in juxtaposition to the image of the boat. The mountain peak is an ugly and foreboding image.‘a huge peak, black and huge’---repetition of the adjective ‘huge’ reinforces the size of the peak and how Wordsworth feels powerless in its presence. His belief in his strength from earlier (‘heaving through the water like a swan’) is now lost.‘And growing still in stature the grim shape/ Towered up between me and the stars…’ It seems to the narrator that the mountain is getting bigger and creates a nightmarish quality to this point of the poem.‘…with purpose of its own/ And measured motion like a living thing,/ Strode after me’ The mountain is personified and is the object of Wordsworth’s fear.Use of sibilant ‘s’ sounds creates an eerie and sinister mood: ‘still…stature…shape…stars…’etcUse of plosive ‘p’ and ‘b’ sounds at this point represent Wordsworth’s fear.Presentation of WordsworthFirst section: the poet knows he is doing something that he shouldn’t but there is a sense of adventure and risk.‘act of stealth’ & ‘troubled pleasure’ ---these words create a semantic field of riskHe enjoys the experience, at first, and feels he is strong and also proud of his rowing skills. He sets himself a challenge in order to ‘prove’ his strength and ability.‘…heaving through the water like a swan.’ The verb ‘heaving’ suggests strength and power and the simile like a swan suggests elegance and poise. However the two ideas juxtaposed together creates a strange image and could lead the reader to question Wordsworth’s ‘abilities’. |
| Feelings and attitudesSafety/adventure and fearIsolation and helplessnessEnlightenment and knowledge |
| ThemesThe power of natureHumanity versus natureFear and isolationIdentity |
| Compare with…‘Storm on the Island’ (power of nature)‘Exposure’ (power of nature/ nature as frightening)‘Emigree’- (Identity and place)‘Checking out me History’ (identity) |
| Key quotations ‘glittering’ ‘sparkling’‘elfin pinnace’‘huge and black’ ‘towered’ ‘strode after me’ |
| GlossaryIdly: lazily, gently. Craggy: rocky, stony. Stealth – a cautious and secret actLustily - in a strong, healthy, vigorous way; heartily, enthusiastically.Pinnace – a small boat propelled by oars or sometimes a small sailCovert - not openly acknowledged or displayed; hidden.Grave: seriousStature: sizeBark: an old type of sailing boat.Elfin: small and delicate but also mischievous.  |