

Answers - Stage 6 - Ashes To Ashes:

S: The poem is about the people who lived in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius in the town of Pompeii which was buried under the ash when the volcano erupted. It questions why the people lived there despite the danger. The narrator says that the advantages of living in the area outweighed the risk. They were wrong.

R: They chose to live there because it was good for growing grapes to make wine – “The soils so rich, so fertile, so good for cultivation”.

R: People travelled there to trade for the goods that were made there and because it was a nice place to live “such lush vines, ...such fresh air...such peace and serenity.”

R: They seem to brush aside the danger. The narrator says “the spoils were worth the risk” implying it was worth living there.

E: The narrator naively states that they prayed and made offerings to the goddess of Vesuvius, and this seemed to work to keep them safe. At the time, this would have been a popular belief.

V: Benevolent means kindly, a person or force that means you no harm and will look after you, their actions are well-meaning.

V: Annihilated means utterly destroyed and obliterated.

E: Petrified means terrified and to be turned to stone. It is an apt description for what happens to the narrator who is both horrified at the eruption and will be effectively petrified and preserved like a statue by the volcanic gas and ashes. Placing it on a single line, makes it stand out and become more dramatic. The reader pauses to take in the full meaning of what they are reading, echoing the shock of the narrator at this moment, frozen in terror.

E: In the poem, the volcano is personified as female. It is portrayed as being good to the people most of the time, “benevolent Mother”. However, it can change and become violent, “a vindictive monster” in a minute. Volcanic areas can be a good place to live because the soils are rich. Most don't erupt very often, so the benefits (the “spoils”) seem worth the risk of living there. However, when they erupt it can have a catastrophic effect on the area in a very short space of time. This is portrayed well by the changing moods of the personification imagery.

R: The narrator has choked on the poisonous gases and died on the spot.

I: The final lines work well:

- The ending is the traditional phrase at the end of a burial to bless the person's life and last resting place - in the end, we all return to be ash in the earth. Here it marks the end for the narrator, their death and final resting place, and the death of Pompeii.
- It is an apt line to end on as the whole town was built on the volcanic ash from previous eruptions (good fertile soil), now the town is buried (and preserved) by the volcanic ash. This ash will provide a rich fertile soil for future generations and the circle of life will continue. People who live on the ashes, will become ashes.

Answers - Stage 6 - Cat And Mouse:

1. The ellipses help convey that the message is incomplete. It shows they have not heard it correctly and are missing parts of information. They help build suspense.
2. Images where the sea is compared to a cat:
 - Waves that gently lapped at our boat half an hour ago, now claw their way up the sides
 - like a tiger, its paws sending the waves crashing into our boat
 - we fight the great sea cat who seems intent on playing with our tiny craft
 - We are powerless, subject to the tigress's whims as she toys with us
 - The playful sea cat is caught napping as we fly forwards.
 - Fractious marine kitty pounds the harbour wall in frustration
 - These mice have survived the great sea cat's game
3. It is effective as the waves seem to push them forwards and hold them back, like a cat playing with a mouse. They go one way, then the sea cat waves sweep them back into her paws. When they escape, the cat gets cross, just like a real cat if the prey escapes. We can imagine the waves being like a cat's paws scooping them into her clutches.
4. It shows he is really focussed and concentrating. His reactions are precision fast as he hopes to win the race to get away from those pursuing him, just like a racing driver. It also helps us imagine the roar of the engine as it comes to life, as the start of an F1 race is very noisy.
5. These descriptions show how powerful and forceful the waves are. They are towering over the boat and putting it in danger of being stampeded or buried in their depths.

V: Her stomach is turning over as she is feeling seasick. To retain her equilibrium, she needs to regain her balance which she can't do as the sea is pitching her about. She wants to feel "normal" again.

I: The clouds are described as, "the smattering of candy floss puffs have been rudely shoved away by an incoming herd of boulder grey bull clouds." The first image is gentle and non-threatening, but the second suggests there is danger. It helps the reader understand how the mood is changing and how the characters might be feeling.

V: How I know the children feel scared:

- I feel the first prickling of alarm
- We huddle inside the tiny steering cabin
- His frightened eyes meet mine: are we going to make it?
- We are powerless, subject to the tigress's whims as she toys with us
- Fear grips me and I begin to pray. A glance at my brother tells me he is doing the same
- Dad slows the motor and I look up. Is this it? Are we giving up?
- I grip the seat, urging us onwards
- I let out the breath I didn't even realise I was holding and gently ease my brother's white knuckled grip from the side of the boat
- And the fact they constantly look to their Dad for reassurance.

I: Dad is not worried during this encounter. He shrugs at the initial message and is then later described as being skilful and focused on getting home: "His face as mask of concentration as he resolutely points the bow towards home" and as having the skill and reactions of an F1 driver. At no point is he described as worried or scared and he does get them home safely.

V: The sea cat is cross at the end of the "game" and is described as, "Fractious marine kitty pounds the harbour wall in frustration".

Answers - Stage 6 - Inferno:

1. The paragraph starts with a cosy, glowing description, which makes the reader feel settled and happy, but it ends with everything on fire. The reader moves from a comfortable view to a scene of fear and destruction.
2. The personification makes the fire sound like an enemy that is intent on destroying the firefighters and the city. "Flames dance around us with a menacing glare, their march on the landscape an encroaching army, decimating everything in its path" makes it sound an unstoppable and powerful force of men.
3. Lots of military references to describe the battle with the fire. Fire is:
 - "an encroaching army" which is "marching"
 - "our crews battle as one to halt the advance of the scorching enemy"
 - Gallons of water are air-dumped from above us, splashing with the force of a bomb to flatten the enemy's fierce reach
 - Finally the fire is "vanquished".It shows how fierce the fire is and how difficult it is for the army of firefighters to beat it on the hillside.
4. The animals are described as "terrified" and "helpless" and the firefighter clearly feels sad at the end about the lifeless hillside, calling the wildlife "victims of blazing torture".
5. There is a contrast between the glowing opening colours and life on the hill at the start and the blackened colours left at the end. At the start the hillside is described as, "nature's normally picturesque idyll" with a "rosy sunrise" and trees swaying gently in the breeze. It is a "thriving hillside of stunning nature trails", full of wildlife. By the end there is nothing left, the fire has destroyed it all leaving, "Barren desert... a blackened wasteland. A few shrivelled trees remain, but the hill is lifeless, its inhabitants have perished, victims to the blazing torture of the blaze." The colour has gone and all that is left is darkness and death.

V: Decimate – destruction or removal of a large portion of something.

V: Annihilate - to utterly destroy or obliterate something

I: The proby is tentative because they have not faced this before and so feel nervous of what is to come.

They don't want to make a mistake.

They are also tentative because the task seems immense and they are not sure they can do it.

R: To be on the frontline to try to hose back the flames and control the fire.

R: Needs to be strong and able to hold the heavy equipment for hours at a time. Needs stamina to endure the long fight against the fire. Needs to be fit, because it is not easy to breathe or move in all the gear.

V: The first crew "trudge heavily" when their shift ends, the second crew "traipse wearily" down to their engine.

Answers - Stage 6 - Life On The Line:

1. Stresses that they understood the danger, they were not naïve about the potential problems of their location.
2. The sentences mimic the thought process of the narrator. She feels confused and does not know what will happen next and it all happens very quickly, one thing after another with no real pause or time to stop and process events. The sentence structure reflects this.
3. The short sentence and use of italics stress this dramatic moment and how frightening it was for the narrator. The repetition helps provoke a sense of the narrator's panic and fear in the reader. The structure provokes a heart-stop moment for the reader, mimicking what the protagonist is enduring.
4. The narrator is trying to remain focussed and going through her tasks as if it is a checklist. It is quite mechanical, whilst she recovers her sense of safety and shows she is trying to reassure herself that life is carrying on as normal.
5. Again, it is quite mechanical. Medical staff have to put aside emotion and focus in quite a methodical way, remaining calm for their patients, especially in an emergency. This way of describing the aftershocks shows they had no choice but to get on with their jobs, they could not process the emotions because they had to carry out their tasks and save lives.

R: St Francis is the Patron saint of travellers. They thought naming their city after him would bless them and the Saint would watch over them and keep them safe.

I: "The Big One" is the name for the large earthquake that is predicted to hit and destroy the city at some point.

V: Foibles of man implies that mankind made a silly or flawed decision in moving there and believing a Saint would keep them safe. Mankind is foolish to have faith in such things in the face of natural science.

I: Hydrants are described as, "Gushing their lifeblood into giant dark pools" as a way of stressing that the city is badly hurt and many people are in danger of losing their lives. The water, like the earthquakes, cannot be controlled,

I: The narrator loves living in San Francisco – she states, "We enjoyed the beautiful California weather and ocean views that took your breath away," and "we were blessed."

She is proud to work in the hospital, thinking only of her patients once the first quake finishes.

She sees caring for the sick as her duty, staying hours after her shift ends, to help those who need her.

I: The title has a double meaning. The people of the city literally built their lives on a tectonic fault line, but once the earthquake hits their "lives are on the line", a phrase that means their lives are at risk. The doctor puts her life on the line staying to help others. It works well as a title.

Answers - Stage 6 - The Helicidae War:

1. Military references to a war, to camouflage, to an arsenal, to a battle, ammunition, to manoeuvres, to an enemy being vanquished, a shell-armoured army, a defence, the underground force seeking to evade capture by going to ground, fighting valiantly, to giving the dead a proper burial.
2. The phrases give the impression it is a battle for land or territory with a real enemy, not just getting rid of garden snails. At first, we don't realise they are fighting snails, the author makes it sound much more serious. When we realise who the enemy is, the text becomes more humorous.
3. The author is proud of their garden, they "carefully pull back leaves, trying to avoid touching the last delicate blooms of the year in case I bruise their fragile petals" and refer to their "precious produce" and "glorious garden, especially my sumptuous tomato patch and brilliant brassicas". They also refer to the produce as "the spoils of my labour" meaning they have worked hard to grow it.
4. The alliteration is effective. The repeated s and p sounds create a slurping sound effect, so it mimics what the snail is doing as it eats the tomato, helping the reader to picture the scene clearly.
5. In a war, forces believe it is their duty to "give the dead a proper burial" to honour the fight they gave. The author, having described this as a war, is likening their experience to that of a soldier. The bucket would also be full of yucky dead snails, so she would want to empty it and bury the remains, so they don't make a mess in the garden.
6. The description of the peacefulness of the Autumn evening contrast directly with the hunt, capture and death of the snails. It almost lulls you into a sense of security, which makes the deaths more vivid.

V: Recompense is a reward or pay back of some kind. Here she is crouched in an uncomfortable position and has to be very patient, but she is paid back because what she is waiting to see and find happens. She bears the discomfort to win the battle.

V: "Spoils of my labour" is the reward for all the hard work she has put into the garden. In this case a juicy ripe tomato she has grown. It also links to the phrase "spoils of war", meaning the things that can be salvaged at the end of a battle.

R: They hide under pots and heavier planting and in the soil.

I: The author may have won this battle but not the war. The title implies it is an ongoing fight. There are several references to "tonight" the gardener has won, but she also says she has done her duty "for now" and that she covers "the soil around my plants with spent coffee grounds in the hope that this will deter further invasions," so she clearly does not think the war is over.