

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

EITHER

1 Read carefully the poem opposite, which is part of a longer poem.

How does the poet vividly present fears about the future?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writing draws your attention to future dangers
- how the poet powerfully portrays indifference to the future
- the effect of presenting the reader with a series of questions.

Signs from the Old Times

What will we choose?

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Mildly indifferent to storm or sunlight?

¹ *anomie*: lack of social values

OR

- 2 Read carefully the extract opposite, in which the world is threatened by a growing covering of ice. This has now reached the protective wall built to hold it back.

How does the writer powerfully portray a world under threat?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer uses the narrator to represent the people's feelings
- what makes the description of the birds so disturbing
- how the writer presents a world that has changed.

Had we really imagined that our guardian wall would contain all of the snow and ice and storm on one side of it, leaving everything on the other side warm and sweet? No, we had not; but we had not, either, really taken into our understandings that the threat would strike so hard into where we now all lived ... into where we were crowding, massed, jostling together, with so much less of food and pleasantness than our former selves, our previous conditions, seemed like a dream of some distant and favoured planet that we only imagined we had known.

We stood there, looking into hills and valleys where grass still grew, though more thinly, and where the movement of water was still quick and free; we saw how the herds of animals of the cold spread everywhere, making our ears ring and hurt with their savage exulting bellowing because they had found some grass. We were a company of thin yellow light-boned birdlike creatures, engulfed in the thick pelts of the herds, wildly gazing at a landscape that no longer matched us. And, as we had taken to doing more and more, we gazed up, our eyes kept returning to the skies, where the birds moved easily. No, they were not the small and pretty birds of the warm times, flocks and groups and assemblies darting and swirling and swooping as one, moving as fast as water does when its molecules are dancing. They were the birds of this chilly time, individual, eagles and hawks and buzzards¹, moving slowly on wings that did not beat, but balanced. They too had heavy shoulders and their eyes glared from thick feathers, and they circled and swept about the skies on the breath of freezing winds that had killed our familiar flocks sometimes as they flew; so that, seeing the little brightly coloured bodies drop from the air, we had looked up and imagined we could see, too, the freezing blast that had struck them down out of the sky. But they *were* birds, these great savage creatures; they could move; they could sweep from one end of a valley to the other in the time we could hold a breath. We had once been as they were, we told ourselves, as we stood there on the wall slowed and clumsy in our thick skins – the wall which, on the side towards the ice, was dimmed and clouded, no longer a brilliant shining black, but shades of grey. Frosted grey.

¹ *eagles and hawks and buzzards*: birds of prey

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