

## Task for *Selected Poetry and Prose*

### 'The Discursive Mode' – first three paragraphs

There have been many histories of poetry, but its natural history has yet to be written. The fantastic variety and profusion of living forms in nature are all related and depend on one another. The naturalist knows this well and he knows that, while these relations are never simple in themselves, they often depend on a few quite simple natural laws which constitute the science of ecology.

Man is part of nature, and human ecology is a part of general ecology. The arts of man rise and flourish and decay as do the races and species of living things; they are rooted in the mind and heart, they depend on the climate of society in much the same way as plants and animals depend on soil and seasons.

The balance of nature in any region undisturbed by man appears to be relatively constant. Each species of plant or animal has its natural and prodigal fertility kept in check by natural enemies and the limitation of its supply of food. But each species depends on other species for a suitable and protective environment and this becomes apparent when the balance is upset. Disappearance of one species because of the failure of controls on its natural enemies may lead to disappearance of the predators as well. And this may in turn lead to further disturbance of the balance of nature. Destruction of tall timber may lead to the disappearance of many types of undergrowth which it sheltered, and destruction of certain lowly types of plants may lead to leaching of the soil, which leads ultimately to destruction of the major forms of vegetation.