

## Task for *Kath Walker in China*

### A sample plan

#### Main idea:

The poet acknowledges the influence on her of the boundless past of her people. This is an idyllic past that the poet treats with reverence. She contrasts it with a narrow present that she describes as 'This little now'. She states that the past – the thousands of generations of her ancestors – has produced her sense of identity and even her essence as a human being.

#### Point 1:

The poem is structured as three stanzas, each of which develops the main idea of the poem.

**Explanation:** The first stanza sets the scene in the present, the longer second stanza contains the beautiful description of the poet's dream of the past and the third stanza is a short conclusion that re-states the main idea.

**Examples:** 'This little now' is contrasted with the beautiful imagery of an idyllic past; the thousands of generations of her people's past have contributed to this 'accidental present'.

#### Point 2:

The language of the poem is simple but expresses a complex idea, that the present moment in time for all of us is the result of what has happened in boundless past time.

**Explanation:** The language in stanzas one and three is simple and written in sentences to express the poet's idea that the past is still alive, while the longer middle stanza contains a number of images that capture the beauty of nature within which her people lived.

**Examples:** a command to the reader; a sentence setting the scene; the language describing the dream is lyrical, a series of images that appeal to the reader's senses: 'The stars over me'; 'Soft cries of the night'.

#### Point 3:

The poet uses a number of contrasting images to illustrate the difference between her comfortable but narrow modern suburban life and that of the thousands of generations of her people living in harmony with nature.

**Explanation:** The modern suburban life of 'easy chair' and 'electric heater' is contrasted with the richness of the lives of her people living for generations in the past.

**Examples:** Images like 'camp fire in the bush' and the 'tall surrounding trees' making 'their own music' represent nature as a benign, powerful presence; the metaphor of 'blood' expresses how deeply her Aboriginal past influences her.

**Point 4:**

The main ideas of the poem are supported by a mood of reverence for the past and hope for the future, balanced by a sense of regret and loss.

**Explanation:** The poet communicates a sense of regret at what has been lost but also asserts hope that the past still exerts an influence on her and her people.

**Examples:** an atmosphere of peace and harmony in the description of the forest scene; a mood of belonging in the phrase 'among/My own people'; a sense of hope that the past is not 'wholly dead'.

**Conclusion:**

A powerful poem asserting solidarity with the Aboriginal past through the description of an idyllic pre-colonial existence; also stating a hope that this past is not completely gone and still lives on.