The National 5 Exam - breakdown

Critical reading:

1 x 45 minute essays on text [20]
1 textual analysis - Scottish text [20]  \text{\{1.5 hours\}}

Close reading:

1 hour [30]
Duffy (born 1955) is a Scottish poet, and is currently the UK’s first female (and first Scottish) Poet Laureate. Born in Glasgow, she moved with her family to Stafford when she was 7, where she was educated. She wrote poetry from an early age, and was first published at the age of 15. She has since written plays, critical works, and several volumes of poetry. Her poetry has been the subject of controversy. She follows in the poetic tradition of, for example, Robert Browning, in writing monologues from the point of view of disturbed characters. Her poem *Education for Leisure* caused a huge debate when an exam board decided to withdraw it from an exam syllabus because of a complaint about its contents. Duffy often tackles difficult subjects, encouraging the reader to explore alternative points of view.

Duffy’s poetry is often feminist in its themes and approach. Her collection *The World’s Wife* took characters from history, literature and mythology and gave them a female point of view, as a sister, a wife or a feminised version of a character.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16646622
Using mini WBs mind map the connotations of Valentine.

**Extension.** Are these real representations of relationships?
Saint Valentine's Day also known as Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine is observed on February 14 each year. It is celebrated in many countries around the world, although it remains a working day in most of them.

St. Valentine's Day began as a liturgical celebration of one or more early Christian saints named Valentinus. The most popular martyrology associated with Saint Valentine was that he was imprisoned for performing weddings for soldiers who were forbidden to marry and for ministering to Christians, who were persecuted under the Roman. During his imprisonment, he is said to have healed the daughter of his jailer, Asterius. Legend states that before his execution he wrote her a letter "from your Valentine" as a farewell.
Task: If you could choose a symbol that summed up the reality of relationships which would you choose?
Themes

- Relationships should be honest
- Refusal to accept relationships as simply ‘romanc’.
- Relationships are emotionally complex.
- One should be cautious in love (line 17)
Task: Knowing this, are you still satisfied with your choice of symbol?
Task

Duffy uses an onion as a metaphor for love. She extends this comparison throughout the poem.

Find quotations that help to depict the extended metaphor

‘it is a moon wrapped in brown paper’,
‘it promises light, like the careful undressing of love’,
‘it will blind you with tears, like a lover’,
‘its fierce kiss will stay on your lips’,
‘its planum loops shrink to a wedding ring’,
‘its scent will cling to your fingers, cling to your knife’.
Tone

- Cynical and distrusul
- Disapproving
- Tender
- Humorous
- Passionate
- Angry/ negave
Sketch key images from the poem. Support your image with quotation and technique.

‘Valenne ’

Not a red rose or a san heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflect
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its planum loops shrink to a wedding-ring,
if you like.

Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.
The title of the poem suggests romance.

Valentine
Not a red rose or a satin heart.

The title is juxtaposed with the negativity of the 1st line, which starts with a negative.

This statement sounds disapproving.
I give you an onion.

It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.

It promises light

like the undressing of love.

Short end stopped line sounds humorous in comparison to the ‘red rose’ or ‘satin heart’.

Onion is the first reference to a metaphor for love, which is extended throughout the poem.

Suggests it’s a gift

‘moon’ associated with love songs + sexuality. Said to influence moods and emotions, esp. women.

Like love, the unwrapping of the onion (brown outer layer) gives way to a more tender inside. Like love, revealing tenderness.
Here.

It will blind you with tears like a lover.

It will make your reflection a wobbling photo of grief.

Love distorts reality.

Pun of ‘blind’ literal sense of tears from peeling onion, metaphorical sense of love ‘being blind’.

Scent from the onion makes you cry, like love/relationships can make you cry

Are you recognisable to your old self before love?

Powerful end stopped short line reinforces sense of offering, although more like a direct order.
I am trying to be truthful.

Single end stopped line reinforces the statement.
Alliteration strengthens feeling that love should be honest.
Not a cute card or kissogram.

Single line juxtaposes with the line before. As if ‘cute cards’ or ‘kissograms’ are not truthful.
I give you an onion. Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips, possessive and faithful as we are, for as long as we are.

cynical

Repetition of line 2 reminds the reader of this ‘gift’

Extended metaphor

Sibilance reinforces ‘kissing’ sound creating onomatopoeic effect.

Taste lingers, like love

Suggests that love is temporary, but the scent overwhelming, lasting longer. Maybe suggests that lovers should only stay together for as long as they are passionate. Reinforced by end stopped line.
Another powerful command. More direct this time reinforced by end stop.

Take it.

Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-ring, if you like.

‘shrink’ has negative connotations; suggests a reduction – possibly from something not tarnished ‘platinum’ to reducing love to ‘wedding’. Does it suggest the speaker is cynical to long term commitment. Does she suggest it doesn’t last?

Reinforces negativity. Onus is placed on the listener.

Internal rhyme links sense of concentric rings.
Lethal.

Its scent will cling to your fingers, cling to your knife.

Single end stopped line powerful. Implied meaning is that love can be ‘lethal’.

Love ‘clings’ on. Scent could refer to bodily scent being strong and physical. Scents linger – possibly, for longer than the relationship.

Cross rhyme connects this repetition.

Ambiguous ending – implies threat. Kitchen knife may become weapon for a jealous lover.
Task  What message does each quotation carry about love?

‘it is a moon wrapped in brown paper’,
‘it promises light, like the careful undressing of love’,
‘it will blind you with tears, like a lover’,
‘its fierce kiss will stay on your lips possessive and faithful’,
‘its planum loops shrink to a wedding-ring, if you like’,
‘its scent will cling to your fingers, like a knife’.

‘it is a moon wrapped in brown paper’ - metaphor: helps the reader to understand the comparison further. The "moon" reminds the reader of fertility and femininity, "wrapped" hints at the layers that both love and an onion have.

‘it promises light, like the careful undressing of love’: "promise" reminds the readers of the vows that are made within a relationship, "careful undressing of love" - personification - hints at the tender, intimate moments between lovers and also reminds the reader that as the relationship deepens layers are taken off.
1. Which questions would you answer for "Valentine"?

a. Choose another poem by Carol Ann Duffy which comments on an aspect of human nature. Referring to the language and structure, show how she does this. [8]

b. With close textual reference, choose a poem in which an incident or a character is effectively described. Referring to the language and structure, show how she does this. [8]

c. Referring closely, choose a poem written in a specific form such as ballad, sonnet, elegy, monologue. Show the distinctive features of this form contribute to your appreciation of the text. [8]

d. Choose another poem which deals with an important issue such as war, crime, poverty or racism. Explain how the poet deepens your understanding of the issue by the choice of content and the skilful use of poetic techniques. [8]

2. Choose a question and answer it. You must include quotation, comments on connotation and technique.