Set 1: Surfing – Poem and novel extract

Text 1: The Surfer, by Judith Wright

He thrust his joy against the weight of the sea;

climbed through, slid under those long banks of foam--

(hawthorn hedges in spring, thorns in the face stinging).

How his brown strength drove through the hollow and coil

of green-through weirs of water!

Muscle of arm thrust down long muscle of water;

and swimming so, went out of sight

where mortal, masterful, frail, the gulls went wheeling

in air as he in water, with delight.

Turn home, the sun goes down; swimmer, turn home.

Last leaf of gold vanishes from the sea-curve.

Take the big roller’s shoulder, speed and serve;

come to the long beach home like a gull diving.

For on the sand the grey-wolf sea lies, snarling,

cold twilight wind splits the waves’ hair and shows

the bones they worry in their wolf-teeth. O, wind blows

and sea crouches on sand, fawning and mouthing;

drops there and snatches again, drops and again snatches

its broken toys, its whitened pebbles and shells.

Questions for Text 1

1. What metaphor does the poet use for the way that the waves sting?
2. What sound device is used in the line ‘where mortal, masterful, frail, the gulls went wheeling’? What effect does it have?
3. What visual imagery shows the similarities between the surfer and the seagull?
4. What part of speech is the word ‘turn’? Who is telling whom to ‘turn’? How does the repetition of this word abruptly change the mood of the poem, at the beginning of the second stanza?
5. There are no gold leaves in the sea. So, what is the ‘Last leaf of gold’ that is vanishing ‘from the sea-curve’?
6. In the last stanza, what specific words build the extended metaphor of the ‘grey wolf sea’?
7. Is the impression of the sea meant to be wild and beautiful, or wild and threatening? Give evidence for your answer.
8. Summarise the poet’s meaning in The Surfer.

Text 2: Lockie Leonard: Human Torpedo by Tim Winton (Excerpt from Chapter 1)

Truly packin’ death.

About fifty yards out, there were a few kids sitting on their boards at the edge of a sandbar. A little rip was running alongside it, and a decent wave broke left and right from it. Lockie paddled out, shivering. He wished he had enough money for a wetsuit.

A big, hairy, country-looking kid with bad teeth swooshed past him on a wave. He was a pretty slack surfer, but confident. And big. When you’re twelve and three-quarters, and a new kid, everyone seems a bit on the mega side. There were four or five other kids out on the break, all decked out in full trendy surf gear, in every fluorescent colour: Ripcurl, Billabong, Quicksilver, Lightning Bolt. Lockie guessed that even their undies were 100 per cent Mambo. They eyed him off and his nerves shot all over the place. He didn’t hassle for the first few waves. Instead, he let them go.

The big, hairy kid paddled back and pulled up beside him. ‘You’re here on holiday.’ It wasn’t even a question.

Lockie shook his head. ‘Just moved here.’

‘From Perth, eh?’

‘Yeah.’

‘City boys always think they can surf.’

‘I can surf.’

No joke. Lockie Leonard could surf. He was lousy at football. He could be counted on to entirely stuff up a cricket match, and he wasn’t even any good at Monopoly, but he sure could ride a board. Genuine surf rat, grommet extraordinaire.

A set came. Lockie let them all scramble for the first wave and he put himself right at the peak and picked off the second without any trouble. He took the drop loose-kneed and casual, taking out a wide, leaning, bottom turn before hammering back up at the lip. As he swung round off the top again, he saw the big hairy kid dropping in from the shoulder. You rotten mongrel, he thought. The wave walled up and the other kid streaked away out in front, hooting and cutting up Lockie’s wave. Lockie dropped into a crouch, held an edge and came powering down the line, getting speed from each hit at the wave’s lip. It was like a rollercoaster and he could feel his hair streaming water as he closed on the other kid who looked over his shoulder, suddenly startled. Lockie just couldn’t stop himself. He pulled a big re-entry and came floating down right across the guy’s leg-rope. TWANG! The guy was off and cursing. Lockie weaved into the beach and climbed up onto the sand the moment the other kid’s board drifted in alone.

‘Yeee-haaaa!’ No more radical moves today. One wave was enough. Two might get his head punched in. He sprinted up the beach and threw his board into the back of the Falcon.

‘Dja see that?’

The Sarge put his bookmark in place and grinned. ‘I think you just made an enemy. You actually were like a torpedo there for a minute.’

‘Well, it was worth it.’

‘Used to ride like that myself, once.’

‘Pull the other one, Dad. It plays Jingle Bells.’

Questions for Text 2

1. “Packing death” is an Australian slang term from the 80s/90s that means feeling worried or anxious. In the first line, what does Lockie have to be worried about?
2. ‘Lockie guessed that even their undies were 100 per cent Mambo.’ What does this line of internal monologue tell us about the other kids out on the break? What does it tell us about Lockie?
3. The ‘big, hairy, country-looking kid’ makes a judgement about city boys, but how are readers meant to judge him?
4. Count the number of surfing terms that Winton uses. What effect do you think the author intended to create by using this language?
5. How does Lockie retaliate against the ‘rotten mongrel’? Do you think words would have been more powerful than actions in this scenario?
6. What simile is used to describe Lockie’s speed?
7. When Lockie ‘pulled a big re-entry’, what happened to the other surfer?
8. Lockie returns to shore immediately – why?
9. Who is the Sarge? Is he most impressed by Lockie’s surfing or his handling of the other people surfing? Explain your answer.

Set 1: Questions for Evaluation:

1. Both of these texts explore the experience of surfing. How have the authors used language features to present their ideas, evaluate the experience (directly or indirectly) and engage or challenge the audience?
2. Compare the perspective of the texts. How have the authors used written or visual elements to show their point of view? Are they trying to influence/persuade the audience? How do they want the readers/viewers to feel or act?
3. EVALUATE the texts. Which is most effective at getting the message across, and why? Use persuasive & evaluative language to justify your answer.

