

Presented by Mrs Stevens

Read the following poem, then answer the questions that follow.

1. AN AFRICAN THUNDERSTORM	David Rubadiri
1 From the west	
2 Clouds come hurrying with the wind	
3 Turning sharply	
4 Here and there	
5 Like a plague of locusts	
6 Whirling,	
7 Tossing up things on its tail	
8 Like a madman chasing nothing.	
9 Pregnant clouds	
10 Ride stately on its back,	
11 Gathering to perch on hills	
12 Like sinister dark wings;	
13 The wind whistles by	
14 And trees bend to let it pass.	
15 In the village	
16 Screams of delighted children,	
17 Toss and turn	
18 In the din of the whirling wind,	
19 Women -	
20 Babies clinging on their backs -	
21 Dart about	
22 In and out	
23 Madly;	
24 The wind whistles by	
25 Whilst trees bend to let it pass.	
26 Clothes wave like tattered flags	
27 Flying off	
28 To expose dangling breasts	
29 As jagged blinding flashes	
30 Rumble, tremble and crack	
31 Amidst the smell of fired smoke	
32 And the pelting march of the storm.	

SECTION A: ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

- 1.1 Refer to line 6: '*Like a plague of locusts*'. Account for the clouds being described as a 'plague of locusts'. (2)
- 1.2 Refer to line 13: '*Like dark sinister wings*'. Suggest a reason for the speaker's use of The word 'sinister'. (2)
- 1.3 Refer to lines 22 - 24: '*Dart about / In and out / Madly*'. Comment on how the speaker's use of short lines contributes to the atmosphere of the poem. (3)
- 1.4 Refer to line 33: '*and the pelting march of the storm.*' Comment on how the diction and imagery in this line serves as an effective conclusion to the poem. (3)
- [10]**

SECTION B: MORE QUESTIONS ON THE POEM

- 2.1 Refer to line 9: '*Like a madman chasing nothing.*'
What impression of the wind is conveyed by this description? (2)
- 2.2 Suggest how the word, '*sinister*' (line 13) contributes to the mood of the poem. (2)
- 2.3 Refer to lines 20–24: '*Women – /Babies clinging ... In and out/Madly*'.
Discuss how these lines convey the attitude of the women towards the storm. (3)
- 2.4 Refer to lines 30–33: '*As jagged blinding .../of the storm.*'
Comment on whether these lines are an appropriate conclusion to the poem. (3)
- 2.5 What does the word '*plague*' suggest about the impact of the storm? (2)
- 2.6 Explain the effect of the alliteration in '*Toss and turn*'. (2)
- 2.7 Refer to lines 14 and 15: '*The Wind whistles by/And trees bend to let it pass.*'
Comment on the appropriateness of this image in the context of the poem. (2)
- 2.8 What effects do the references to '*madman*' and '*madly*' have? (2)
- 2.9 This poem could be read as a warning about the impact of colonialism in Africa.
Do you agree with this statement? Justify this response by referring to the imagery. (3)
- [21]**

SECTION C: EXAMPLE OF AN ESSAY QUESTION FROM X-kit Achieve

The storm in ‘**An African Thunderstorm**’ is a frightening, chaotic, ruthless force. With reference to the diction, imagery and tone, critically discuss this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page).

Plan your essay: Use three mind maps to prepare a draft, by organising references from the poem around the three key words in the question, like this:



The poet describes the approaching storm as powerful and destructive – ‘*a plague of locusts*’, something that is ‘*tossing*’ things with its tail, and that has ‘*dark sinister wings*’. The wind causes chaos and the effects of the storm on the people are devastating. The poet uses **diction and images** that create a sinister and **ominous tone**.

In Stanza 1, the storm is compared to locusts and a madman. This idea of madness is repeated in Stanza 3, when the women run about ‘*Madly*’. The poet compares the storm to a frightening animal, which has ‘*dark sinister wings*’. The physical effects of the storm are also frightening, such as the noise, which creates a ‘*din*’ and the lightning, which comes in ‘*jagged blinding flashes*.’

The poet also uses **diction (words) and images** that build an atmosphere of chaos. He uses verbs that emphasise the physical chaos, such as ‘*Turning/ Sharply*’, ‘*Whirling*’ and ‘*Tossing*’ in Stanza 1. The humans react chaotically in Stanza 3, when the screams of the children ‘*Toss and turn*’ in the wind and the women ‘*Dart about/In and out/Madly*’.

The power and ruthlessness of the storm is emphasised by the **images** of the helpless women, whose ‘*Clothes wave like tattered flags*’, an image that suggests their vulnerability and the ability of the storm to rob them of their dignity. The image in the last line of the poem, of the ‘*pelting march of the storm*’ underlines its relentlessness and cruelty and seals the **serious and devastating tone** of the poem.

The **tone** is ominous: words like ‘*plague*’ and ‘*madman*’ in Stanza 1, ‘*dark sinister*’ in Stanza 2, and ‘*madly*’, ‘*jagged blinding*’, ‘*Rumble, tremble, and crack*’ in Stanza 3 all contribute to an uneasy, uncomfortable mood. The overall effect of the words, images and tone of this poem is of a powerful force that is able to visit destruction on the people in its path.