‘Death of a Naturalist’
Seamus Heaney

1) **Understanding the Poem:**

   a. What is the poem about? (provide evidence from the text)

   b. Which literary/poetic devices are most effective? (Try to find at least four)

   c. How is the poem structured?

2) **Close Analysis:**

   What is the purpose and effect of the choices below?

   - Powerful negative **verbs/verb phrases** – “festered”, “had rotted”
- Powerful negative adjectives/noun phrases – “punishing sun”, “gross bellied”, “obscene threats”

- The use of sound in the alliterative phrase “coarse croaking”, the onomatopoeic “slap and plop” and the distasteful colloquial phrase “blunt heads farting”

3) Key Themes and Issues:

Below is a sample paragraph exploring one of the key themes presented in ‘Death of a Naturalist’. Read this, and then produce two more paragraphs on the key themes listed below with the same types of details in them.

The move from innocence to experience:

Death of a Naturalist is a metaphorical title and the “death” refers to the realisation of a young boy that there are harsh realities in the natural world and it is not a world of merely “dragonflies” and “spotted butterflies; it highlights the end (or death of) his innocence. Heaney emphasises the loss of innocence in the second stanza when he uses the alliterative, onomatopoeic and metaphorical phrase “coarse croaking”. This is highly effective because it is ambiguous: it informs the reader of the harsh unpleasant sound that the bull frogs make; also it suggests that the reason for the croaking is a “coarse” one as they are calling for a mate. This realistic and pragmatic approach to describing life in the countryside is typical of Heaney.

Growing up:
4) **Exam Question:**

Complete the below question in your exercise books.

In this poem Heaney explores ideas about nature. Write about the ways in which Heaney presents nature in this poem.