

# Compare how poets present the theme of family love in 'Climbing my grandfather' and 'Follower'. (30 marks)

## Climbing My Grandfather

I decide to do it free, without a rope or net.  
First, the old brogues, dusty and cracked;  
an easy scramble onto his trousers,  
pushing into the weave, trying to get a grip.  
By the overhanging shirt I change  
direction, traverse along his belt  
to an earth-stained hand. The nails  
are splintered and give good purchase,  
the skin of his finger is smooth and thick  
like warm ice. On his arm I discover  
the glassy ridge of a scar, place my feet  
gently in the old stitches and move on.  
At his still firm shoulder, I rest for a while  
in the shade, not looking down,  
for climbing has its dangers, then pull  
myself up the loose skin of his neck  
to a smiling mouth to drink among teeth.  
Refreshed, I cross the screed cheek,  
to stare into his brown eyes, watch a pupil  
slowly open and close. Then up over  
the forehead, the wrinkles well-spaced  
and easy, to his thick hair (soft and white  
at this altitude), reaching for the summit,  
where gasping for breath I can only lie  
watching clouds and birds circle,  
feeling his heat, knowing  
the slow pulse of his good heart.

ANDREW WATERHOUSE

## Follower

My father worked with a horse-  
plough,  
His shoulders globed like a full sail  
strung  
Between the shafts and the furrow.  
The horse strained at his clicking  
tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing  
And fit the bright steel-pointed  
sock.  
The sod rolled over without break-  
ing.  
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned  
round  
And back into the land. His eye  
Narrowed and angled at the  
ground,  
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake,  
Fell sometimes on the polished  
sod;  
Sometimes he rode me on his  
back

Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,  
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.  
All I ever did was follow  
In his broad shadow round the  
farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,  
Yapping always. But today  
It is my father who keeps stumbling  
Behind me, and will not go away.

SEAMUS HEANEY