

## "Originally" Practice Critical Reading (45 mins)

We came from our own country in a red room  
which fell through the fields, our mother singing  
our father's name to the turn of the wheels.  
My brothers cried, one of them bawling, Home,  
Home, as the miles rushed back to the city, 5  
the street, the house, the vacant rooms  
where we didn't live any more. I stared  
at the eyes of a blind toy, holding its paw.

All childhood is an emigration. Some are slow,  
leaving you standing, resigned, up an avenue 10  
where no one you know stays. Others are sudden.  
Your accent wrong. Corners, which seem familiar,  
leading to unimagined, pebble-dashed estates, big boys  
eating worms and shouting words you don't understand.  
My parents' anxiety stirred like a loose tooth 15  
in my head. I want our own country, I said.

But then you forget, or don't recall, or change,  
and, seeing your brother swallow a slug, feel only  
a skelf of shame. I remember my tongue  
shedding its skin like a snake, my voice 20  
in the classroom sounding just like the rest. Do I only think  
I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space  
and the right place? Now, Where do you come from?  
strangers ask. Originally? And I hesitate.

### Questions

1. Explain how Duffy's use of sentence structure in lines 1 - 14 is effective in helping to recreate her experiences as a child. (4 marks)
2. Explain how the poet's use of language creates a youthful and/or vulnerable impression of the speaker. (2 marks)
3. Analyse how the writer's use of language in stanza 3 helps highlight the change in tone from the rest of the poem. (4 marks)
4. By referring closely to 'Originally', and to at least one other poem by Duffy, show how the poet uses word choice and/or imagery effectively to convey theme(s). (10 marks)