

"Originally" Practice Critical Reading

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,
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
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
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
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

40. By referring closely to stanza 1 analyse the use of poetic technique to emphasise the dramatic impact moving to another country had on the family. (2 marks)
41. look at stanza 2.
"All childhood is an emigration"
Explain fully what the poet means by this. (2 marks)
42. In lines 12–16 analyse the use of poetic technique to convey the distress of the family members caused by their "sudden" emigration to a new environment. (3 marks)
43. Evaluate the effectiveness of stanza 3 as a conclusion to the poem. Your answer should deal with ideas and/or language. (3 marks)
44. Discuss how Carol Ann Duffy uses contrast in this poem and at least one other to highlight the poems' main concerns. (10 marks)