

The main character in this short story is a boy, though we don't get to know his name or age. At this mid-point in the story, he is playing amongst some rubble on the site of a demolished building. Everything seems normal to begin with, however....

1 One evening, the boy was crouched on top of the mound making a new town out of a heap of broken glass. He liked this time of day best – after tea, before bed. The air seemed to get grainy as its colour changed from vinegary yellow to candyfloss blue. He could rub it between his fingers like dust and slow time down. At the top of the mound he was in charge and he didn't want to go home to bed. He collected green glass shards¹ and broken brown bottle necks. He tumbled fragments of old window in his hands like shattered marbles. He pushed the glass into the mound, making houses, balancing roofs on them, building towers. The last of the sunlight caught and glinted in the tiny glass walls.

10 More of the black birds than he'd ever seen before rushed overhead and gathered on the lamppost. The orange light hadn't yet switched on but the shadows were growing. He heard nine chimes of the town hall clock. For a moment, the lamppost looked like a tall thin man wearing a large black hat. When the man turned towards him, he looked like a lamppost. The man had a greyish-green coat speckled with rust and a black hat that quivered with beaks and feathers. The man didn't need to climb the mound; he was face to face with the boy with his feet still planted in the pavement.

16 'What are you making?' asked the man.

The boy didn't answer.

'Every child is always making something. Shake them out and they're full of dust and dreams.'

20 The boy stood up, ready to run, but then he remembered that at the top of the mound he was king. He dug his heels into the rubble.

'I'm making a new town, better than this one. The sun can shine in through the walls. The buildings look grander. It'll be a great glass city.'

'All it needs is people,' said the man.

25 'Yes, it needs people,' said the boy. And when he looked down, tiny creatures were scuttling beneath the glass roofs. They looked like ants or spiders, but the sky was darkening and the creatures were moving too fast to be sure. He looked to the man but there was only the lamppost and as its orange light snapped on, the birds launched into the sky.

The boy plunged down the mound and ran, hoping he wouldn't get told off for being late home.

Before he reached the end of the street he knew something was wrong. The world was too quiet.

30 Where were the sounds of cars? Of footballs being kicked against walls? There were no shouts from parents calling everyone in.

'Mum?' He pushed open their front door. The house was in darkness but the telly was switched on. His mum wasn't in any of the rooms. A half-drunk cup of tea had been left on the arm of the settee.

35 The boy thundered back along the silent streets. He stood in the orange light beneath the lamppost. 'Give them back,' he shouted.

Nothing happened, although he could hear the rustle of feathers coming from the darkness above the light.

The boy ran to the top of the mound. 'Give them back!'

40 'But I haven't got them,' The man's face glowed. 'You have.'

In the gloom, it was hard to make out the tiny creatures beneath the glass roofs. They were no longer moving. The boy couldn't be sure what was a particle of rubble and what was a person sleeping in their broken-glass house. 'How do I get them back?' he asked.

But the man was a lamppost again.

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

0 1

Read again the first part of the Source from lines 1 to 7.

List four things from this part of the Source about the boy.

[4 marks]

1 _____

2 _____

0 2

Look in detail at this extract from lines 5 to 15 of the Source:

He tumbled fragments of old window in his hands like shattered marbles. He pushed the glass into the mound, making houses, balancing roofs on them, building towers. The last of the sunlight caught and glinted in the tiny glass walls.

More of the black birds than he'd ever seen before rushed overhead and gathered on the lamppost. The orange light hadn't yet switched on but the shadows were growing. He heard nine chimes of the town hall clock. For a moment, the lamppost looked like a tall thin man wearing a large black hat. When the man turned towards him, he looked like a lamppost. The man had a greyish-green coat speckled with rust and a black hat that quivered with beaks and feathers. The man didn't need to climb the mound; he was face to face with the boy with his feet still planted in the pavement.

How does the writer use language here to describe the boy playing in the evening?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

[8 marks]

0 3

You now need to think about the **whole** of the Source.

This text is from the middle of a short story.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the Source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

[8 marks]

0 4

Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the Source from line 16 to the end.

A reviewer wrote: 'This end part of the extract where the boy's game comes to life takes a darker and more chilling tone.'

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of the boy's game
- evaluate how the writer creates a dark and chilling tone
- support your response with references to the text.

[20 marks]
