Mrs Midas

So he had to move out. We'd a caravan  
in the wilds, in a glade of its own. I drove him up  
under cover of dark. He sat in the back.  
And then I came home, the women who married the fool  
who wished for gold. At first I visited, odd times,  
parking the car a good way off, then walking.  
  
You knew you were getting close. Golden trout  
on the grass. One day, a hare hung from a larch,  
a beautiful lemon mistake. And then his footprints,  
glistening next to the river's path. He was thin,  
delirious; hearing, he said, the music of Pan  
from the woods. Listen. That was the last straw.  
  
What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed  
but lack of thought for me. Pure selfishness. I sold  
the contents of the house and came down here.  
I think of him in certain lights, dawn, late afternoon,  
and once a bowl of apples stopped me dead. I miss most,  
even now, his hands, his warm hands on my skin, his touch.

1. How does the poet’s use of language creates a dull, matter-of-fact tone in the first stanza of this extract? 2 Marks
2. How does the poet’s use of language creates a vivid picture of what she is describing in the second stanza of this extract? 4 Marks
3. How does the poet’s use of language convey the mixed feelings in the speaker’s mind in the third stanza of this extract? 4 marks
4. Referring to this extract and other poem/poems by the poet, discuss the way Duffy explores contradictory emotions in her poetry. 10 Marks

**Marking Scheme**

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| **Question** | **Expected Answer** | **Max Marks** | **Additional Guidance** |
| **1** | Candidates should analyse how the  poet’s use of language creates a dull,  matter-of-fact tone.  2 marks for detailed/insightful comment  plus quotation/reference.  1 mark for more basic comment plus  quotation/reference.  0 marks for quotation/reference alone.  (Marks may be awarded 2, 1+1) | **2** | Possible answers include:   * the very prosaic language used. * the complete absence of obvious poetic devices * the preponderance of monosyllables * the simplicity of the sentence structures: of the six sentences, five are grammatically “simple”. * the banality of some of the details (“He sat in the back.”, “And then I came home . . . ”) |
| **2** | Candidates should analyse how the poet’s use of language creates a vivid  picture of what she is describing.  2 marks for detailed/insightful comment  plus quotation/reference.  1 mark for more basic comment plus  quotation/reference.  0 marks for quotation/reference alone.  (Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 or 1+1+1+1) | **4** | Possible answers include:   * “Golden trout/on the grass”—enjambment creates a dramatic pause before the surprise of   where the trout is   * contrasting colours “Golden”/“grass [green]” highlights the visual image * the series of alliterations/assonances (“Golden . . . grass”, “hare . . . hung”, “beautiful lemon mistake”) creates a mellifluous sound, adds poetic quality to the scene * “a hare hung from a larch”—mysterious: a hare is associated with swift movement but here   is static, but there is no obvious connection to gold, until . . .   * . . .“a beautiful lemon mistake”—explains the hare has been turned to gold, bright   “lemon”—it is “beautiful” but a “mistake”   * the minor sentence “And then . . . path.”—dramatic, as if shocked, taken aback * “his footprints,/glistening”—   ambiguous: normally would refer to dew glistening, but here  the reader infers that it is gold   * the image of him as raving (“delirious”) and commanding her attention (“Listen.”) |
| **3** | Candidates should analyse how the poet’s use of language conveys the  mixed feelings in the speaker’s mind.  2 marks for detailed/insightful comment  plus quotation/reference.  1 mark for more basic comment plus  quotation/reference.  0 marks for quotation/reference alone.  (Marks may be awarded 2+2, 2+1+1 or  1+1+1+1) | **4** | Possible answers include:   * irritation suggested by the plosive harshness of “gets me” * the “not . . . but” structure shows she has to an extent forgiven the big issues (“idiocy or   greed”) yet harbours resentment at one remaining fault   * placing of “me” at end of sentence might suggest a sense of the attention he has failed to give her * the minor sentence “Pure selfishness.” is stark, unequivocal, needs no embellishment * “I think of him” concedes that he is not entirely forgotten * “dawn, late afternoon” possibly represent special times, with romantic associations for her * that she can be “stopped . . . dead” by something as ordinary as a “bowl of apples “suggests there is still a strong connection with the husband * the staccato, broken nature of the sentence, made up of short components seems to suggest a longing, a slow utterance of regretful thoughts * the alliteration in “miss most” has a sensual feel * the repetition of “hands” emphasises the absence of tactile pleasures * the list (“his hands, his warm hands . . . his touch”) emphasises the extended longing * repetition of “his” suggests he is still important to her in some way * “his”/“my” draws attention to the sense of a lost relationship * placing “touch” at very end emphasises what she misses (and focuses on central idea of poem) |
| **4** | Candidates should discuss  the way Duffy  explores contradictory emotions in her  poetry.  0 marks for reference/quotation alone.  Candidates can answer in  bullet points in this final question, or write a number of linked statements. | **10** | Up to 2 marks can be achieved for identifying elements of commonality as identified in  the question, i.e. use of contrast to highlight main concerns of this and other poems by  Duffy.  A further 2 marks can be achieved for reference to the extract given.  6 additional marks can be awarded for discussion of similar references to at least one other poem by the poet.  In practice this means:  Identification of commonality (2) (e.g.: theme, characterisation, use of imagery, setting,  or any other key element…)  from the extract:  1 x relevant reference to technique/idea/feature (1)  1 x appropriate comment (1)  (maximum of 2 marks only for discussion of extract) from at least one other text/part of the text:  as above (x3) for up to 6 marks  OR  more detailed comment x2 for up to 6 marks  Thus, the final 6 marks can be gained by a combination of 3, 2 and 1 marks depending on  the level of depth/detail/insight.  The aim would be to encourage quality of comment, rather than quantity of references.  Reference could be made to the  following:   * Mrs Midas: uncertain feelings for husband: dislikes the greed and selfishness, despises his lack of thought for her, but still misses physical contact * Originally: persona initially longs for “home”, resents having to fit in to new surroundings, but ends up with confused, contradictory feelings about her origins * War Photographer: caught between two worlds—the suffering of war and the complacency of home—and unable to fit in to either * Valentine: the two sides of love: the superficial promising (“moon . . . promises light”; the kiss; the ring) and the harsh, brutal reality * The Way My Mother Speaks: conflicting emotions as she looks back at what she is leaving and the uncertainty of the future   Many other references are possible. |