

Poems about Words

Adisa is a performance poet who aims to get as many people as possible interested in poetry. Maya Angelou was a famous American poet and writer. She was well known for the powerful way she performed her poems. Both these poems explore the pleasure of language and words.

Spellbound (abridged)

- Ride with me
 On this lyrical roller coaster
 My syllable slices
 Will feed your hunger
- 5 As they pop up and down
 Like a Jamaican toaster
- [...]
- Submerge yourself, in this
 Lip-hop metaphor
 Resistance is futile,
- 10 As I hold the key to the door
- I leave you tongue-tied like Houdini
 You'll never escape my barrel of words
 Your belly expands with laughter
 As you guzzle on my contagious verbs
- 15 My acid adjectives
 Hack deep into your heart
 Reprogramming your software
 Be afraid!
 Be very afraid
- 20 For this is just the start

Adisa

I Love the Look of Words (an extract)

- Popcorn leaps, popping from the floor
 of a hot black skillet*
 and into my mouth.
 Black words leap,
- 5 snatching from the white
 page. Rushing into my eyes. Sliding
 into my brain which gobbles them
 the way my tongue and teeth
 chomp the buttered popcorn.
- 10 When I have stopped reading,
 Ideas from the words stay stuck
 in my mind, like the sweet
 smell of butter perfuming my
 fingers long after the popcorn
- 15 is finished.

Maya Angelou



Glossary

skillet — frying pan

1 Find and copy one simile from lines 1-6 of *Spellbound*.

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1 mark

2 *Spellbound* uses the pronoun "you". What effect does this have on the reader?

.....
.....

1 mark

3 a. What is the message of lines 10-15 of *I Love the Look of Words*?

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.....

2 marks

b. How similar is the message of lines 15-18 of *Spellbound*? Explain your answer.

.....
.....

2 marks

4 Both poems compare words to food. Why do you think the poets chose this comparison?

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.....

2 marks

5 Which poem do you prefer? Explain your answer.

.....
.....

2 marks

Total
out of 10

Answers

1. “they pop up and down / Like a Jamaican toaster”
2. E.g. It makes the reader feel more involved in the poem because it seems like the poet is talking directly to them.
3. a. E.g. The things you read have a big effect on you because they stay in your mind for a long time. The poet says this is a good thing — like the smell of buttered popcorn. b. E.g. The message is quite similar because it also says that reading can have a really big effect on you. However, it’s a bit different, because it says, “Be afraid”, which makes you think that the effects of reading might be dangerous.
4. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Because they both enjoy words so much that they crave them, in the same way that people crave their favourite foods. They also want to show that bodies absorb and process words, just like they eat and digest food.
5. Any appropriate answer. E.g. *Spellbound*, because lines like “On this lyrical roller coaster” make the poem seem fun and exciting. I also like the way the poet plays with words like “lip-hop” instead of “hip-hop”.
OR E.g. *I Love the Look of Words*, because I think the description of eating popcorn is very effective, and I think it is a really good idea to compare reading to eating something delicious.