

## Homecoming

---

This poem epitomises the idea that you do not have to explain a definitive meaning of a poem to the examiner; they are looking for you to explore possible meanings, consider ideas and images and make comparisons and contrasts with other poems.

1. Consider the meanings of the title. A 'homecoming' suggests the return home of a person after a long time away. It is often used to describe the celebration of people returning. The idea of coming home, though, can have other meanings. Think about the phrase, 'The chickens have come home to roost'. Do you think the title of the poem is a celebration, a realisation, a regret or something else?
2. What might the first line of the poem mean? 'Think, two things on their own and both at once.' Does it make sense? Can you puzzle it out?
3. The 'exercise' that Armitage refers to is a game of trust. Why might he have started the poem with a reference to it?
4. What is the colour of the jacket the speaker describes? What is the effect of using this colour? Why do you think the poet has made it so bright? You can't just write, 'It attracts the reader,' or, 'It makes the poem more interesting.'
5. Whose fault is it that the coat ended up on the floor? Find evidence to prove you are right. Why might this be important when considering the mother's response?
6. Why does the speaker refer to the mother as, 'you'?
7. The following are all well known phrases: 'puts two and two together', 'makes a proper fist of it,' and, 'points the finger'. Why has Armitage put them all together? What might it suggest about the outcome (what happens)?
8. The fact that the person who leaves in the middle of the night goes, 'no further than the call-box at the corner of the street,' suggests what?
9. What do the words, 'midnight', 'snooze' and 'father figure' suggest to you in the poem?
10. Think about the person who is 'waiting by the phone'; why do you think they are waiting? Who could they be waiting for? Are they excited; anxious; angry?
11. Why do you think Armitage chooses sixteen years as the length of time?
12. What do the words, 'wants to get things straight,' imply?
13. In the last stanza the speaker explains that their body is like the jacket. Why has Armitage done this?
14. What does the phrase, 'you say which,' illustrate about who the speaker is giving choice to? Why might this be?
15. What are the two meanings of, 'Step backwards into it,?' Think back to the beginning of the poem for one of them.
16. Why is, 'It's you' the last line? Why is the line so short?
17. If you had to summarise the meaning of the poem in ten words what would you say?
18. Which other poems can you link with this one? Explain the links.