# Introductions

Here are some tips to help you write a good introduction to your exam essays. When writing an introduction you should:
- Keep it short
- Make sure that you respond directly to the question
- Use a key quotation to make your response clear from the start
- Name the poets and poems that you will be writing about
- Avoid phrases like 'I' or 'In this essay'

The following example introductions were written in response to the question 'Compare the way that Seamus Heaney conveys the experience of childhood trauma in 'The Barn' and another poem of your choice.'

**Example 1:**
In 'The Barn' and 'Mid-Term Break' childhood trauma is conveyed in a number of ways e.g. metaphor, imagery, contrast, rhyme and structure

**Comment [K1]:** Clear focus on the poems, but this is clearly a bit too short

**Comment [K2]:** The list here is also just a list of different poetic techniques. It doesn't really reveal understanding of the poem

**Example 2:**
Seamus Heaney was born on a farm in Northern Ireland. These two poems in particular deal with his childhood growing up on a farm. Heaney is now looking back and expressing his feelings of shame that he couldn't live up to the noble image of his father who was a farmer. In both of these poems Heaney uses everyday language, rhythm and agricultural phrases in the poems which directly relate to farming.

**Comment [K3]:** While factually true, this introduction starts off by focusing on the life of Heaney when it should be focusing on the poems

**Comment [K4]:** I am not really sure that 'shame' really counts as trauma, which suggests something more dramatic

**Comment [K5]:** Again a list of features used but no real comment on their effect

**Example 3:**
The poems 'Mid Term Break' and 'The Barn' by Seamus Heaney present to us two different perspectives of childhood trauma. The latter describes the horrific nightmare of being trapped in a barn at night, while 'Mid Term Break' reflects on the emotions a child goes through following the death of a close family member, or in this case a sibling.

**Comment [K6]:** Clear introduction of poems and poets done very quickly almost as an aside

**Comment [K7]:** Good focus on the issue

**Comment [K8]:** Clear summary of the 'story' of these two poems but it would be more interesting to talk about the moods / feelings / organising principles

**Example 4:**
'The Barn' and 'Death of a Naturalist' are both poems written by Seamus Heaney. The persona in both poems is a young child, likely to be Heaney's younger self. One of the common underlying themes of the two poems is that of childhood trauma. In 'Death of a Naturalist', the innocence of the persona's interest in frogspawn turns to trauma when the persona realizes the 'slime kings' want vengeance'. 'The Barn' has a slightly more sinister atmosphere of being trapped and isolated with 'no windows' and 'cobwebs clogging up your lungs', thus creating the experience of childhood trauma.

**Comment [K9]:** This is definitely not an interesting way to start an essay. I know this already – it's written in the question

**Comment [K10]:** This is better because now the candidate is talking about moods and feelings not just events

**Comment [K11]:** Again feelings are commented on here and smoothly embedded quotations help to create a forceful start

**Example 5:**
Seamus Heaney's 'Death of a Naturalist' and 'The Barn' are both written from the point of view of a young child. Heaney's 'Death of a Naturalist' focuses more on the persona's childlike innocence and the transition between childhood and adolescence and the loss of the persona's infant naivety whereas 'The Barn' concentrates on the persona's childlike fear of a barn and the various objects inside it. Both poems convey experiences of childhood trauma effectively, whether it be about hoards of angry frogs 'poised like mud grenades' in 'Death of a Naturalist' or 'great blind rats' in 'The Barn'

**Comment [K12]:** Phrases like this begin comparisons right from the start

**Comment [K13]:** Clear comparison

**Comment [K14]:** Comments not just on what happens but the bigger ideas / feelings/ moods or organising principles

**Comment [K15]:** Again clear comparison right from the start

**Comment [K16]:** Nice smooth use of quotations here to help create a forceful start