Exploring character and setting using extracts

The Woman in Black by Susan Hill

Task 1: Focus on setting

Read from ‘On the causeway path …’ to ‘clinging cobwebby thing, fine and yet impenetrable’ (‘The Sound of the Pony and Trap’, p.85) then answer the following questions.

a) What dangers are there in this setting? Explain why they are dangerous.

b) How does Arthur Kipps feel about crossing the causeway?

c) Write down the evidence that shows Arthur feels tiny compared to the marshes surrounding him.

d) Do the descriptions of the mist in paragraph two suggest the danger is increasing or decreasing? Use evidence in your answer.

Task 2: Focus on narrator

Read from ‘I realized that the mist played tricks …’ to ‘risk being sucked into the marsh myself,’ (‘The Sound of the Pony and Trap’, pp.87-88) then answer the following questions.

a) What problems does Arthur Kipps face?

b) What is the narrator unable to do in the first four or five lines?

c) What evidence is there to suggest Arthur is frightened?

d) How does this fear increase?

e) How has Susan Hill made Arthur seem helpless in their situation? Use evidence to support your answer.

f) Is Arthur right to not go out and rescue the pony, trap and passengers?

Task 3: Focus on setting and atmosphere

Read from ‘When I got inside the house again …’ to ‘the suspension of all extremes of emotion,’ (‘The Sound of the Pony and Trap’, pp.89-92) then answer the following questions.

a) Which two physical actions describe Arthur’s state of mind in paragraph one?

b) How do the dim lamps around the house match the feelings of the narrator?

c) Why does Arthur have a drink of brandy?

d) How does the drink negatively affect Arthur?

e) Can we say that Arthur’s problems have gone away in the final paragraph? Use evidence to try and balance your argument to argue both yes and no.

NB All page references and extracts are taken from the Vintage 2012 edition.