Christmas Poems

‘Christmas Presents’

1. What is the title pun?
2. Comment on Fanthorpe’s use of language in the first two lines.
3. Explain the significance of the statement on the third line.
4. How does Fanthorpe use nativity imagery in the second stanza?
5. How does Fanthorpe explain why ‘next bed’s visitors’ were staring (you should try to find three reasons and answer this question in your own words)?
6. What happened to the patient in the next bed?
7. What is the effect of the last two lines of the poem?

‘Christmas Sounds’

1. What sounds would you normally associate with Christmas?
2. List the sounds that are actually described in this poem. Any comments on these?
3. Comment on the language used in the second line of the poem.
4. Do you think Fanthorpe is making any points about Christmas in this poem?

‘The Invitation’

1. Who is ‘speaking’ this poem and what is ‘the invitation’?
2. What comparison is being made in the second stanza?
3. What do you notice about the language in the poem?

‘The Wicked Fairy’

1. What two stories is Fanthorpe combining here and to what effect?
2. Comment on the last two lines of the poem.
3. Who are ‘the friends’ Fanthorpe refers to and why does she describe them in the way that she does?

1. Comment on how Fanthorpe presents Christmas in the above poems.
2. How suitable are the last five poems as an ending to the collection?
3. In what ways do the last five poems in Safe As Houses
   a) compare to the others in the collection and
   b) differ from them?

Think about themes and ideas, voices, techniques and use of language.