**How is the theme of suffering presented by Plath and Hughes?**

Mental suffering is explored with interest by Plath and the symptoms are seen to be disturbing.

This is conveyed in Miss Drake as Plath describes a patient entering some kind of mental institution

for the first time. The way Plath personifies objects as menacing to illustrate the way the main character

perceives the world is particularly frightening. The reader notices the “*malice*” of the table and the carpet

which has a pattern that “*opens its furred petals to devour and drag her down*”.The use of alliteration in this

line seems to add to the threatening tone and choice of the verb ‘*devour*’ really emphasises how the carpet

has become Miss Drake’s enemy, ready to eat her alive.

The mental suffering is further portrayed as we observe the paranoia of Miss Drake’s elaborate walk across the room. She is described by Plath as “*stepping carefully among her secret combination of eggshells”* which implies that she has grave concerns for what will happen if she does not place her feet in a certain place, adding to the reader’s sense that she appears to have lost all sense of perspective. Some readers may argue that Plath may be here trying to depict a battling quality amongst her sufferers as determination is clear from the ‘*careful steps’.*

Later, the short clauses add to the tension and the way that things are on a knife edge; the character

could break down at any second:*“Footing sallow as a mouse / Between the cabbage-roses”.*

Clearly, the depth of paranoia and suffering is presented by Plath as a terrifying way of living.

While Plath conveys how frightening the surrounding world can be to people suffering from mental problems,

Hughes illustrates how suffering can become evident at an early stage, then deteriorate. In *The Blue Flannel Suit*,

he refers to an “*unhealable face-wound’* which conveys how the stress and suffering of the character in the poem,

who returns to teaching, quickly manifests itself in a physical way. The reference to an “*execution uniform*” is interestingly similar to Plath’s ‘Miss Drake’ whose sense of freedom also appears restricted. While Plath tends to observe other people from a distance, Hughes’ depiction of the suffering seems more personal and guilt ridden as he uses the first person and often directly addresses the sufferer in his poetry, for example when

he says ‘*I saw the terrors that had killed you once already’.*

***Notice when I talk about Hughes, it is brief and used to make links with Plath. Don’t analyse in detail on it’s own.***

**THINGS TO FIND:**

* Clear overview comment (AO1)
* Clear links to the question (A01)
* Refers to the poets’ names(A01)
* Technique Analysis (A02)
* Language Analysis (A02)
* Structural Analysis (A02)
* Alternative Reading (AO3)
* Tentative style (AO3)
* Specific Comparisons/Contrasts (A03)