**English 3201 – Poem 3**

**“Peppermint Rock” by Tom Dawe (p.186, *Quest)***

**Student:**

Tom Dawe is one of Newfoundland’s distinguished poets. He has published over 17 volumes of work which include poetry, folklore, and children’s work. He has been described as the master of free verse and is well known for his ability to create works that are filled with realistic detail and images depicting nature and life.

**Free verse poetry** is a poetic form that avoids using fixed patterns of meter. Free verse can avoid rhymes, but still make good use of imagery, for example.

**Peppermint Rock**

By: Tom Dawe (p.186 *Quest)*

If somebody asked me

For my earliest memory,

It would have to be

That day in Avalon

When I, just a drooling toddler,

Dropped a great peppermint knob

Into my infant brother’s mouth.

There in the crib cage,

Below a framed picture

of somebody’s guardian angel,

he was kicking and crying,

a gaping hole of a mouth,

one chasm of grief

through which my world

was tumbling.

To appease the spirit of this pit,

I rolled one of my precious

candy boulders

To the brink of the lip

and let it slip . . .

Here everything goes mas:

The baby, blue-black

Swirls upside down

And mother is slapping his back.

She is shouting at me.

I scurry under a table,

Her wrath like a dogfish

after me.

I wait for that worst

Which always happens.

Up in the glassy pictures

The ancestors all frown down.

Queen Victoria grows another layer on her chin.

The guardian angel goes

For his or her sword . . .

The candy,

A slimy shiny ball,

Chuckles on the floor . . .

I can laugh at it now,

The way I tried

To stuff his face that day.

It is only in my moralizing

Moments

Or bouts of self-purity

That I want to change this poem

And call it my earliest lesson:

How a gesture of pure

Unadulterated generosity

Can be so misunderstood,

Or an act of kindness

Can sometimes kill.

1. What **metaphors** does the poet use to describe how the toddler viewed his howling brother’s mouth? Explain.

1. **Diction** is used effectively in this poem. Give two (2) examples of diction that you feel were most **effective** and explain why those words are **ideal** in the context of the poem.

1. Using two (2) specific references, explain why the **title** “Peppermint Rock” is effective.

1. In the last stanza, the poet admits that he could have told his story as a **lesson** rather than as a memory.
2. Why did he include this stanza?
3. What does the poet’s decision to express the story as a memory tell readers about his world view?

1. Choose your earliest lesson or memory (a memory you are comfortable writing about and sharing) and turn it into a free verse poem. Pay close attention to diction as this poet did. Be sure to include;
2. powerful mental images
3. point of view of a young child
4. a definite mood around the event it describes
5. effective diction to express the child’s point of view and create the mood