



# THE UNIVERSE IS A HOUSE PARTY

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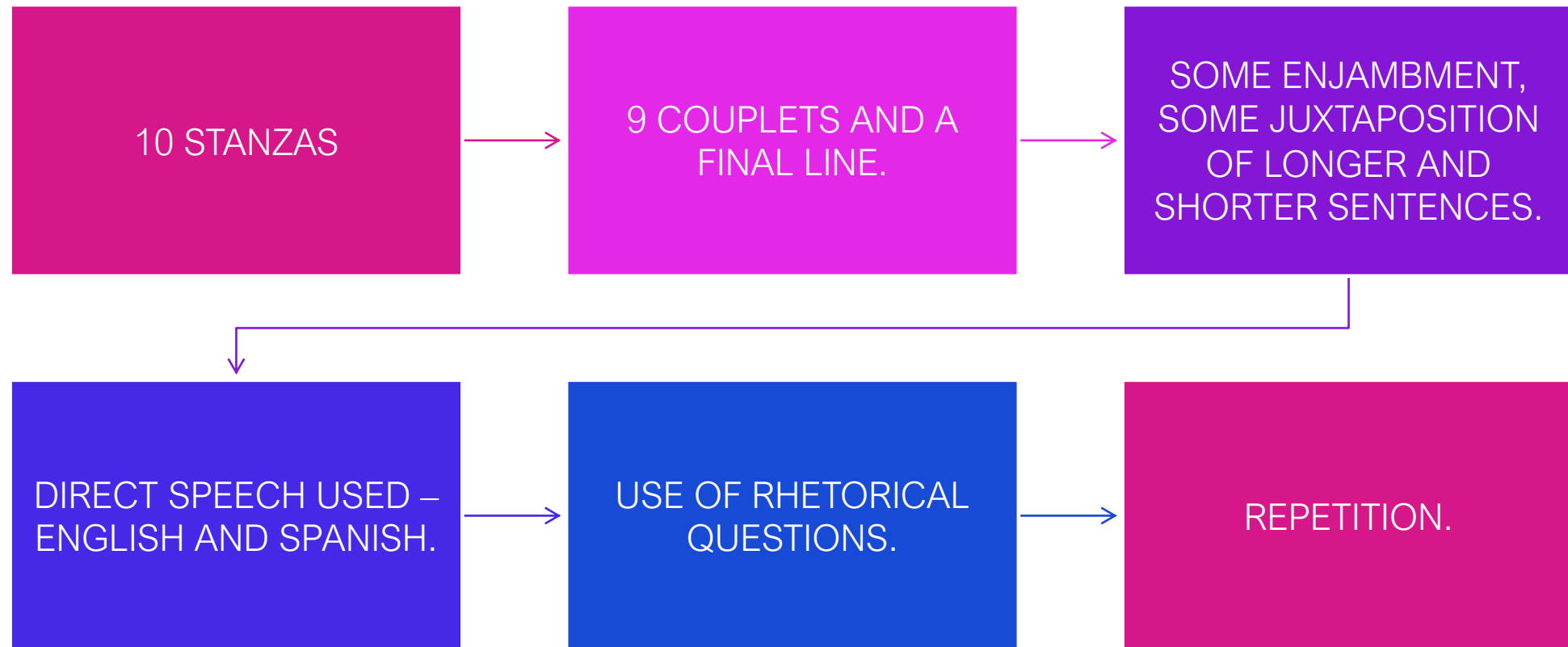
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## PRE READ DISCUSSION:

- What images come to mind when you think of a 'house party'?
- What images come to mind when you think of 'the universe'?
- What metaphor would you use to condense the vastness of the universe and make it more relatable to people? Finish the sentence 'The universe is a.....'



## FORM / THINGS OF NOTE





# OVERVIEW

Context: Smith's father worked on the Hubble Space Telescope project inspiring Smith's poetry and interest in the universe.

The poem compares the universe to a house party, the chaos of it. Smith imagines people on earth not being invited to the 'house party' because so much of space is unknowable, we are beside it, but not privy to all the goings on.

The poem describes how humans make telescopes in our efforts to contact beings from space, and how we imagine we will welcome them to our planet.

The end of the poem pictures these aliens and is entirely ironic; as we welcome them, they understand our insincere and territorial nature.



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## THEMES EXPLORED

01

The unknowable secrets of the universe.

02

Humanity's relationship to the earth are culture of wastefulness.

03

Introspection on American Society and its attitude towards immigration.

## KEY IMAGES EXPLAINED

- 'The universe is expanding. Look: postcards / and panties / bottles with lipstick on the rim'

The opening matter of fact scientific statement of fact is juxtaposed with the frivolous paraphernalia of the aftermath of a house party. Those objects signify consumption but also there is an undercurrent of sexuality.

- 'all of it whisked into file...drifting to the edge of what doesn't end, / Like the air inside a balloon'

Use of the simile here comparing something limitless to something that is 'a balloon', the idea of things being forgotten and discarded is evoked in the image.

## KEY IMAGES EXPLAINED

- 'A conflagration of suns?'

Serious of *rhetorical questions* used by the poet to evoke her awe and also, our ignorance as to the reality of the wider universe.

- 'bass throbbing / Through walls, and everyone thudding around drunk / On the roof'

This image of the house party is full of *onomatopoeia*, bringing the image to life and evoking our recklessness and lack of control.

## KEY IMAGES EXPLAINED

- ‘dream of beings / We’ll welcome with indefatigable hospitality: / *How marvellous you’ve come!*’

The image is a nod to the ‘American dream’, that fuels immigration and the direct speech response evokes irony in that increasingly immigration has become a contentious issue fraught with racism. This is captured in the ironic Spanish ‘Mi casa es su casa’ highlighting that a lot of immigrants are of Hispanic origin yet are treated poorly in the US.

- ‘Of course, it’s ours. If it’s anyone’s, it’s ours.’

The final line stands alone and the repetition of ‘ours’ evokes the irony of the previous image the insular nature of American society.



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TONE – MATCH AN IMAGE TO EACH OF THE WORDS BELOW.

Wonder

Curiosity

Critical

Ironic

Reflective

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## STUDENT TASK: PERSONAL RESPONSE

- Write a personal response to the poem; discuss, themes, key images and sound techniques (and what they evoke), and tone.