



‘It’s Not’

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Leaving Cert HL & OL

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Pre read discussion:



What do you believe happens after death?

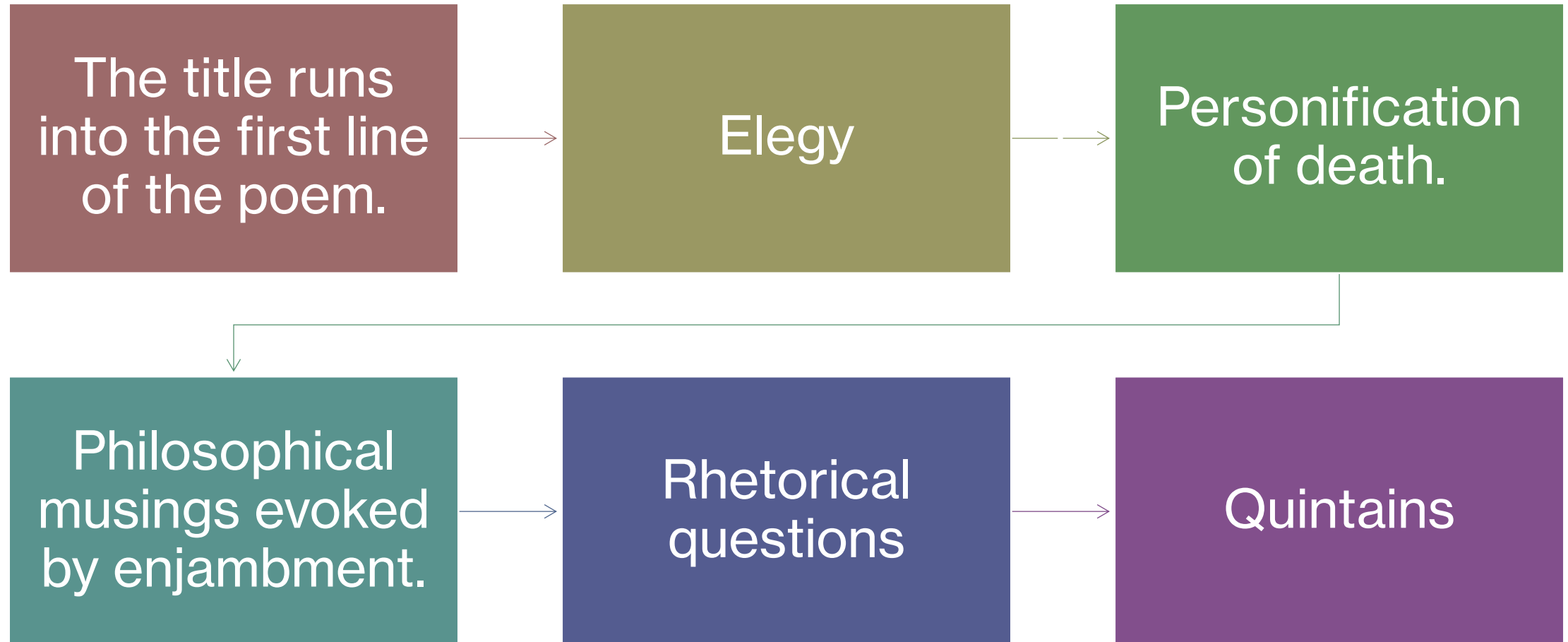


Is death a grim reaper figure seeking reparation for our deeds on earth?



Or is death a benevolent figure leading us to a heavenly afterlife?

Form / Things of note





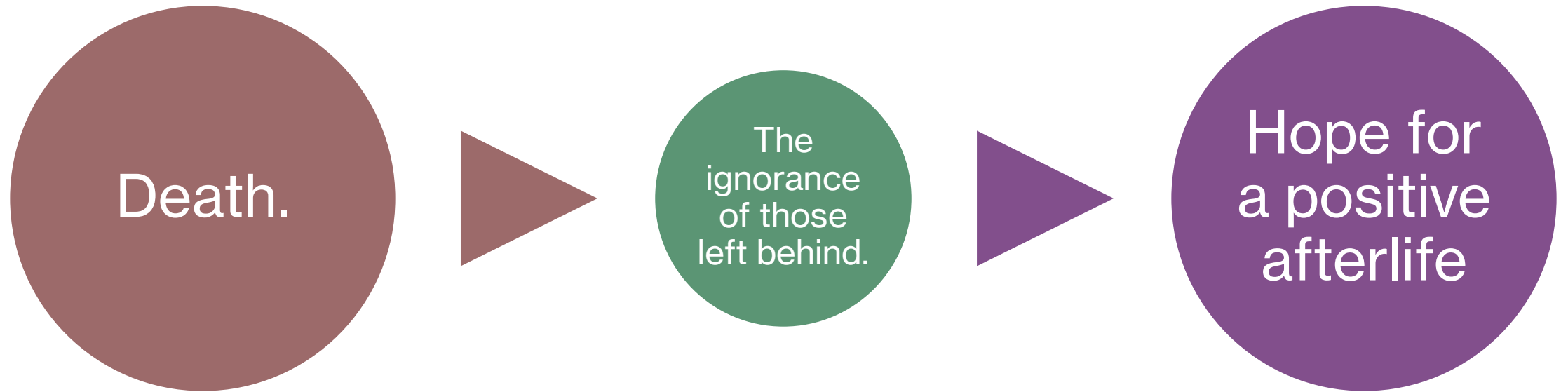
Overview

The poem is Smith contemplating her father's death.

She personifies death and describes how death doesn't think of the family left behind only of the dead person.

She questions how we perceive people once they have passed, and asserts we have a choice about how we envision death and the afterlife, for her it is hopeful.

Themes Explored





Key Images Explained

- 'It's Not

That death was thinking of you or me...Death was thinking what it owed him'

The **enjambment** in the poem begins in from the title running into the opening image, which contributes to the feeling that this is an internal train of thought which we also see with the use of **rhetorical questions** later in the poem. Death is **personified** and rather than her father 'paying his dues', death owes *him*. The loved ones left behind are not a consideration.



Key Images Explained

- **‘Death led him past / the aisles of tools, the freezer lined with meat, / The television saying over and over *Seek / And ye shall find.*’**

In this ***image***, Smith evokes the paraphernalia that is unique to each person’s life, his ‘tools’ and ‘freezer’, as well as evoking the idiosyncrasies of her father’s nature; his penchant for watching biblical TV.



Key Images Explained

- Smith asks two ***rhetorical questions***:

‘So why do we insist / He has vanished..?’

She pushes back against a nihilistic view of death.

‘Why not that he / swimming only through this life....gliding further into what life itself denies?’

The evocative ***metaphor*** of the swimmer is impactful, it imagines the afterlife as a continuation of this life only it also has a grace and ease to it, which is comforting to the bereaved.

Key Images Explained

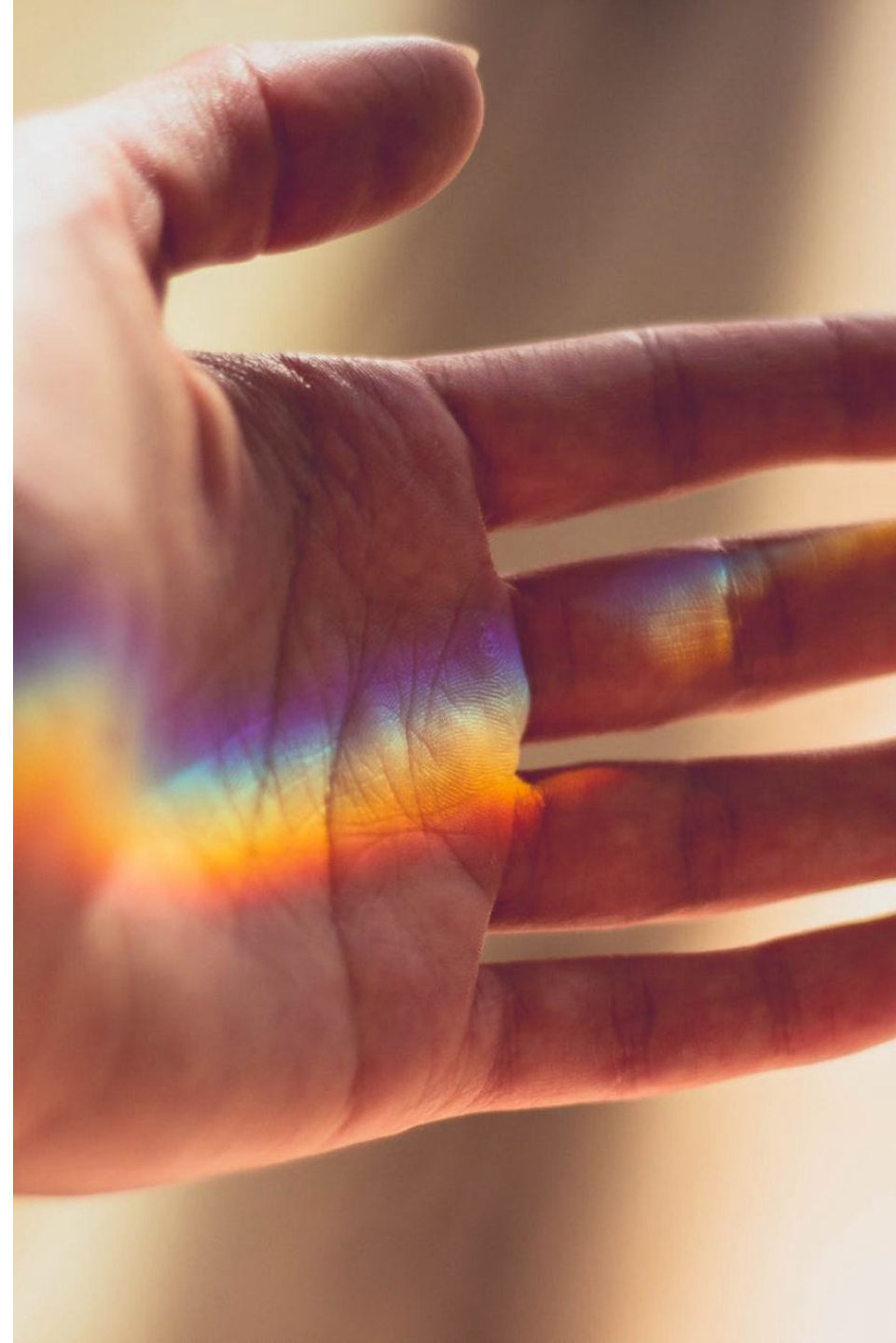
- ‘When I try, I see the white cloud of his hair / In the distance like an eternity’.

The final **simile** of the poem is full of comfort, it propounds that all we need do is ‘try’ and we can see an image of loved ones near by. The **soft alliteration** of ‘h’ adds to this sense of comfort. The final word of the poem, ‘eternity’, makes us think of life everlasting.



Tone

- Comforting
- Hopeful
- Elegiac



Student Task: Personal Response

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

