 Checking your understanding of ‘A Comparison’

Complete the following comprehension questions to consolidate your understanding of Plath’s essay.

1. What reasons does Plath give for envying the novelist?
2. How does the line, “I can take about a minute” change Plath’s line of argument and view of ‘the novelist’? Explain in detail.
3. What reasons does Plath give for promoting the “smallish, unofficial garden-variety poem”?
4. What is the effect of including the poetic extract:

‘The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet black bough.’

1. What is the effect of Plath’s questioning: “How would the novelist manage that?”
2. What messages about poems does Plath seek to convey through her metaphors of the ‘yew tree’ and the ‘toothbrush’?
3. What are Plath’s final comments about novels and poems? Which text-type does she prefer and why?
4. Extended response: ‘Plath does not envy the novelist.’

Evaluate the truth of this statement, making detailed reference to ‘A Comparison’.