**Discuss the following passage from Act 5, scene 1, exploring Shakespeare’s use of language and dramatic effect.**

**GRAVEDIGGER** Here's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

**HAMLET** Whose was it?

**GRAVEDIGGER** A whoreson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

**HAMLET** Nay, I know not.

**GRAVEDIGGER** A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! A' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

**HAMLET** This?

**GRAVEDIGGER** E'en that.

**HAMLET** Let me see.

*Takes the skull*

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now – your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning, quite chap-fallen. Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must  
come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

**HORATIO**

What's that, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

**HORATIO**

E'en so.

**HAMLET**

And smelt so? Pah!

*Puts down the skull*

**HORATIO**

E'en so, my lord.

**HAMLET**

To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

**HORATIO**  'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

**HAMLET**

No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?  
Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter flaw.