

Write a guided literary analysis on **one** passage only. In your answer you must address both of the guiding questions provided.

1.

### Ballad of Birmingham

*(On the Bombing of a Church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)*

“Mother dear, may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
In a Freedom March today?”

5 “No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jail  
Aren’t good for a little child.”

10 “But, mother, I won’t be alone.  
Other children will go with me,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our country free.”

15 “No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For I fear those guns will fire.  
But you may go to church instead  
And sing in the children’s choir.”

20 She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,  
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child  
Was in the sacred place,  
But that smile was the last smile  
To come upon her face.

25 For when she heard the explosion,  
Her eyes grew wet and wild.  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Calling for her child.

30 She clawed through bits of glass and brick,  
Then lifted out a shoe.  
“O, here’s the shoe my baby wore,  
But, baby, where are you?”

Dudley Randall, *The Ballad of Birmingham* (1969)

- (a) Describe the irony of the situation in the poem.
- (b) How effectively do you see the form of the poem as heightening its meaning?

2.

Herby Chin kept calling for his mother, until finally I heard the back door open and a rush of footsteps and voices from the kitchen; a chair fell over, curtains were whipped back, blinds whirled and snapped up. Mr. Chin was shouting instructions. Mrs. Chin called my name. Shadows moved, and bodies, tall and short, shuddered around the room. At the doorway of the  
5 bedroom, when she saw me look up at her, Mrs. Chin only hesitated for a second before she rushed beside the bed, shoved aside some pillows and clothes, and warily knelt beside me on the mattress: “*Don’t be afraid ... don’t be afraid ...*” I felt Mommy’s head move.

Mrs. Chin, with her strong farming hands, pulled apart the rigid arms and began lifting me up, up, up, from the dark between my mother’s breasts. Wetness clung to my legs. Sheets of  
10 wetness pulled away from me.

I was carried away at last, carried into the late morning air to the Chins’ heated cabin. Mrs. Chin told me again not to be afraid, put me down in a large chair in the midst of her own four children sitting around the table. Their small faces reflected back to me my own vacant stare.

“Now we have some *jook*,” Mrs. Chin said, as calmly as she could manage, putting a bowl  
15 of morning gruel in front of me.

They told me later that I ate, that I said nothing. I remember hearing the siren of the police car, Mrs. Chin scrubbing her hands furiously; and when night fell, Mr. Chin sat beside me and told all his four children and myself a story of Old China. There were many words I did not understand, phrases whose meanings were riddles. In the kerosene lamplight, he recited  
20 poetry and sang old songs, and slapped his overalls till the dust from his day’s labour settled over everyone. I remember the joy and excitement of his storytelling, and the quickening of my heart when he asked me what I would like.

“Tell another story!” I said, and knew suddenly, another’s voice, my mommy’s voice with its *Hoiping* tones, would never say again “*Long time ago ... in Old China ...*”

25 Mrs. Chin passed some pie a neighbour had brought by. The pie was freshly baked and steaming, and smelled of apples and cinnamon. It was made by a white lady named Mrs. Lawrence. She had white hair and wore glasses and had a kind face. She poked her head in and asked, “How is the little boy doing?”

“Good,” Mrs. Chin said. “Jung strong boy. Never cry.”

*The Jade Peony*, by Wayson Choy, copyright ©1995 by Wayson Choy.  
Reprinted by permission of the author and publishers. *The Jade Peony*,  
is published in Canada by Douglas & McIntyre  
and in Australia & New Zealand by Penguin.

- (a) What do you understand of the characters and the situation in this passage?
- (b) How does the writer effectively convey the context and the feelings of the narrating voice?
-