Extract 1

Midwinter--invincible, immaculate. The Count and his wife go riding, he on a grey mare and she on a black one, she wrapped in the glittering pelts of black foxes; and she wore high, black, shining boots with scarlet heels, and spurs. Fresh snow fell on snow already fallen; when it ceased, the whole world was white. 'I wish I had a girl as white as snow,' says the Count. They ride on. They come to a hole in the snow; this hole is filled with blood. He says: 'I wish I had a girl as red as blood.' So they ride on again; here is a raven, perched on a bare bough. 'I wish I had a girl as black as that bird's feather.' As soon as he completed her description, there she stood, beside the road, white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked; she was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her. The Count lifted her up and sat her in front of him on his saddle but the Countess had only one thought: how shall I be rid of her?

1. Why is the colour black repeatedly associated with the countess?
2. How does the extract link with the male gaze?
3. What is the significance of the raven?
4. Why the does the count want a ‘girl as red as blood’? What does this suggest about his character and what he desires?
5. Do you find the terms of this description of his wishes unusual? Why/ why not
6. The chid who is created is ‘...the child of his desire and the countess hated her.’ The word ‘desire’ is ambiguous. How may it be interpreted?
7. Why do you think the Countess hated the girl upon sight?
8. How do the reactions of the Count and his wife to the Snow Child reveal the true intentions behind his wishes?
9. Take the time to further focus on AO2, AO3 and AO4 and make annotations around your extract.

The Countess dropped her glove in the snow and told the girl to get down to look for it; she meant to gallop off and leave her there but the Count said: 'I'll buy you new gloves.' At that, the furs sprang off the Countess's shoulders and twined round the naked girl. Then the Countess threw her diamond brooch through the ice of a frozen pond: 'Dive in and fetch it for me,' she said; she thought the girl would drown. But the Count said: 'Is she a fish, to swim in such cold weather?' Then her boots leapt off the Countess's feet and on to the girl's legs. Now the Countess was bare as a bone and the girl furred and booted; the Count felt sorry for his wife. They came to a bush of roses, all in flower. 'Pick me one,' said the Countess to the girl. 'I can't deny you that,' said the Count.

So the girl picks a rose; pricks her finger on the thorn; bleeds; screams; falls.

1. What do the Countess’ actions tell the reader about her feelings towards:
   1. her husband
   2. the snow child
2. Why do you think the Countess is so envious of the Snow Child?
3. The actions of the Countess bring about a transformation between herself and the snow child. Look at the first description of the two females then the description after the Countess has tried to rid herself of the girl? What happened to them?
4. What do you think the transference of the clothing and jewellery symbolise?
5. What do you think the rose which kills the Snow Child symbolises?
6. Take the time to further focus on AO2, AO3 and AO4 and make annotations around your extract.

Weeping, the Count got off his horse, unfastened his breeches and thrust his virile member into the dead girl. The Countess reined in her stamping mare and watched him narrowly; he was soon finished.

Then the girl began to melt. Soon there was nothing left of her but a feather a bird might have dropped; a bloodstain, like the trace of a fox's kill on the snow; and the rose she had pulled off the bush. Now the Countess had all her clothes on again. With her long hand, she stroked her furs. The Count picked up the rose, bowed and handed it to his wife; when she touched it, she dropped it.

1. Carter follows the girl’s death with a sentence in which the Count shatters any illusions about his original ‘desire’ for a girl, and where the prick caused by the thorn is used metaphorically to take the reader in a new direction altogether. Looking carefully at this section of the story, discuss what you think about his response to the death of the girl and what Carter us revealing about his moral values.
2. The Countess does nothing to prevent his actions, but ‘...watched him narrowly; he was soon finished.’ Why do you think she does nothing, and what does she reveal about her attitude towards husband’s sexuality at the end of the sentence?
3. What is Carter suggesting about men and their desires through the Countess acting as a mere spectator?
4. What is Carter’s message about the actions of a male upon the female condition?
5. How do you interpret the actions of the count in handing his wife ‘the rose’ which has just killed the Snow Child?
6. How do you interpret the final sentence?
7. Take the time to further focus on AO2, AO3 and AO4 and make annotations around your extract.