Student Handout: Analysing "London" by Sophie Herxheimer

Section A: Comprehension Questions

Who is the speaker in the poem, and what do we learn about their background?

1. What impressions does the speaker have of London upon arriving?
2. What is the speaker doing when they meet the bus conductor?
3. How does the bus conductor respond to the speaker?
4. What moment in the poem seems to signal a turning point in the speaker's feelings about London?

Section B: Language and Structure

1. What effect does the phonetic spelling (e.g., "zis", "Fanks Luv") have on the reader?
2. Why might the poet have chosen to write in this accent or dialect? How does it shape our understanding of the speaker's identity?
3. Find and explain two examples of figurative language (e.g., metaphor, simile, personification) in the poem.
4. How is humour used in the poem? What is its purpose?
5. Comment on the structure of the poem. Are there any formal poetic features (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, stanza structure) worth noting?

Section C: Writer's Purpose and Perspective

1. What themes does this poem explore? Consider ideas such as belonging, migration, home, or kindness.
2. How does the poet show the contrast between expectation and reality in the speaker's experience?
3. How is the speaker's tone towards London different at the start compared to the end of the poem?
4. What is the significance of the final line: "City vill be Home, verr eefen on ze Buss is Luff"?
5. Do you think this poem challenges or reinforces stereotypes about immigrants or Londoners? Give reasons for your answer.

Optional Extension / Creative Task

1. Imagine you are the speaker writing a letter home after your first few days in London. Write a paragraph (8–10 sentences) describing your experience in your own version of the speaker's voice.
2. Write a short poem in which you capture the feeling of arriving somewhere new. Use humour, imagery, and sound to create a strong voice.