**Belfast Confetti**

Suddenly as the riot squad moved in it was raining exclamation

marks,

Nuts, bolts, nails, car-keys. A fount of broken type. And

the explosion

Itself – an asterisk on the map. This hyphenated line, a burst

of rapid fire …

I was trying to complete a sentence in my head, but it kept

stuttering,

All the alleyways and side streets blocked with stops and

colons.

I know this labyrinth so well – Balaklava, Raglan, Inkerman,

Odessa Street –

Why can’t I escape? Every move is punctuated. Crimea Street.

Dead end again.

A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon face-shields. Walkie-

talkies. What is

My name? Where am I coming from? Where am I going?

A fusillade of question-marks.

**Task 1**

Draw a table and put the quotes highlighted above in the first column. In the second column, note what they refer to in the poem. In the third column note any feelings or emotions the narrator might be feeling at this point. The first has been done for you.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Quote | Represents what? | Feelings or emotions |
| raining exclamation  marks, | The Belfast confetti raining down after the explosion. Could also be gunfire or things being thrown. Links to the point that the riot squad moved in. | Fear, wanting to escape |
| broken type | The Belfast Confetti | By using the idea of random letters (type) coming down, it suggests confusion. |
| an asterisk on the map. | The explosion itself | Conveys fear and the sense of seeing the explosion hit then fan out. |
| hyphenated line | A burst of rapid fire – gunfire from a machine gun | Fear, shock |
| stops and colons. | Official road blocks or debris from the explosion blocking roads. | Confusion, fear, panic |
| punctuated | Stopped, or watched, or changed | Panic, not being in control, unable to go the way he wants/knows |
| A fusillade of question-marks. | Questions being fired at him by a soldier | Confusion, feels it is aggressive, too quick to respond to. |

Task 2:

Answer the following questions in full sentences:

1. What event is being described in this poem? A bomb exploding in the street
2. Where is the narrator? Near the blast (in Belfast)
3. What is the effect of starting the poem with the adverb ‘Suddenly’? It suggests it was unexpected and all happened really quickly. Gives reader a sense of being there at that moment.
4. Why does the sentence in his head keep ‘stuttering’? What does it suggest about how he is feeling? ‘Stuttering’ suggests it keeps stopping. He can’t form a coherent sentence. It could suggest he is confused, upset or panicking and unable to put into words what he has seen.
5. Look up the word ‘labyrinth’ then explain why this line is confusing or paradoxical. ‘I know this labyrinth so well’. ‘Labyrinth’ means a maze so it is strange that he says he knows a maze well. He may be implying that he usually knows the streets so well but in the aftermath of the explosion, everything is different and confused. Not only is he panicking but many of the streets are blocked so he is unable to follow his usual routes. He feels trapped and unable to escape
6. What does this list describe? ‘A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon face-shields. Walkie-talkies.’ Why does he state it in this way rather than more obviously? It actually describes the soldier who has approached him. By describing him using just the list of his riot gear and weapon, it depersonalises the soldier and makes him seem very frightening and unfamiliar. This helps us understand the narrator’s fear.
7. What is the effect of 3 questions in succession in the penultimate line? It suggests questions are being asked quickly giving little time to respond. It shows the pace of events and reflects the quick reactions of the military. It helps the reader understand what he means by a fusillade of questions as we experience it with him.

TASK 3:

Now imagine that this is the aftermath of the bombing described in ‘Belfast Confetti’. Label and annotate the picture with phrases, words and punctuation marks from the poem to show what has happened and what the people caught up in the event could be thinking, feeling or saying.



How you interpret the blast is largely up to you but you know the asterisk represents the site of the explosion so that would probably be central.