Good morning, fellow Year 10s. My name is Edward Kang, and I am here to explore the evocative poem ‘Country Towns’ and how the poet, Kenneth Slessor, romanticizes the country and its sleepy, old atmosphere. Now, imagine what the typical Australian country is like. What did you think about? Kangaroos? The blazing, unforgiving sun? The heat waves you can see just off the horizon? This is what defines the stereotypical Australian country. And what are the people like? They’re certainly not busy people, like in Williams street. They are carefree and relaxed, with faces purple because of sunburn, drinking, and the heat. Kenneth Slessor portrays the typical country town through the landscape, lifestyle and the people.

The first stanza, Slessor establishes on what the country town is like. He first addresses the country towns, thus generalizing and universalizing the ‘country towns of Australia. This makes it seem as if all country towns in Australia are like what is depicted in the poem. Slessor has already defined that the country towns have harsh weather conditions, because the willow and pepper tree withstand drought, and are usually seen in abundance in country towns. Slessor also depicts the lazy lifestyle of farmers, and how time never stops, because farmers are still riding on horses, nothing has changed in this town. It also creates a sensory image, we can hear the trot of the fat sturdy little horses, coming to the pub. The vivid image of a public house, which is a hotel, that has yellow wood, shows age, and to represent how old it is in Australian terms.

The poem also depicts the laidback and more ‘lazy’ aspect of Australia, by exploring the lifestyle of rural citizens. Slessor uses a particular style of phrasing, in which he universalizes; no names or personalities, the people and the animals that live in country towns. (Verandas, faces, dogs) This is to show that all the people there are like this, not just one or two. The diction ‘baked, musky’ invokes a smell of heat from the oven, which summarizes Australian summer in the country, and the smell of dust and haze, and the eucalypt oils from leaves, which is endemic to Australia, baking. Slessor also says that the people are baking too, no, not baking bread, but because they are exposed to constant sunlight and heat, purple of sunburn, and constant drinking too. The people are also constantly sleepy and lazy, because they are ‘dozing deeply’. This displays a sense of carelessness and ‘floating’, and the constant use of the d sounds, makes it sleepy – dozing, deep, dog, drowse.

For my visual representation, I have chosen to draw the typical rural house, with its porches and dogs not doing anything, to represent the ideas of doing nothing, and the oldness of the house in the middle, because this is the main aspect of the poem. The bright orange sun and sky represents the heat of the sun, and how generally we view the country as not morning, not night, but generally in the afternoon. I also have chosen to put a clock, which is spiraling, and never ending, to show that time is sluggish in the country, it stays the same even after generation after generation. This is also linked to inheritance, on how the general stores are always owned by a generation of a family. This signifies that whatever your parent’s jobs are, you will get them when u grow up. This signifies that it is always the same in the country, and that time is very sluggish.