"Death of a whale" by John Blight

When the mouse died, there was a sort of pity:
the tiny, delicate creature made for grief.

Yesterday, instead, the dead whale on the reef
drew an excited multitude* to the jetty.
How must a whale die to wring a tear?
Lugubrious* death of a whale: the big feast for the gulls and sharks; the tug
of the tide simulating life still there,
until the air, polluted, swells this way
like a door ajar from a slaughterhouse.
Pooh! pooh! spare us, give us the death of a mouse
by its tiny hole; not this in our lovely bay.

Sorry, we are, too, when a child dies;
but at the immolation* of a race, who cries?

Questions:

1. What do you think is poet's motive in writing the poem?
   Purpose: People may be "comfortable" with death on a small scale, but are
   uncomfortable, hostile or even uninterested on a large scale or when it
   becomes unpleasant.

2. How is the reader meant to respond to the poem?
   * Agree with authors point of view
   * Agree with authors point of view

3. How has the poet positioned you, the reader to respond to the poem? - several techniques:
   - Compares small death of whale to smell from slaughterhouse, to express disgust of death on a large scale, "immolation" to describe the death of a race.

4. Are there other ways a reader might respond to it?

5. What values and attitudes are highlighted in the poem? Which of these are
   highlighted in a positive or negative way?
   - Compassion (positive): for the human
   - Suffering of large groups of people not just individual tragedy
   - Cruelty (negative): of people who do not relate to uncomfortable deaths.

6. What has the poet left out because it has assumed that the reader will have
   knowledge to understand the material in the poem?
   The poet does not
   - provide an example of the death of a whole race. For example, the genocide in Rwanda. It is assumed we will know this.

7. What has the poet left out in order to present a particular view?
   The poet does not explore the reasons why people may
   find it hard to relate to death in various circumstances.

8. What aspect of the subject matter, theme or characters has the poet emphasized in
   the poem?
   Emphasize: people are moved by small scale and individual
deads. They are offended by unpleasant
deads and death on a large scale.