 ‘Commission’, “The Turning” by Tim Winton

After reading the short story, answer the following questions.

Comprehension questions

1. Define the term ‘commission’. How is this used in two different ways in the narrative?
2. What is Vic Lang’s issue with his mother’s request?
3. Compare and contrast the description of living with ‘drunks’ to the description of Bob Lang on p.222.
4. What does Vic realise about his father and the reason his mother sent him to get her husband?
5. What are the factors that led to the family and Bob’s breakdown? How does it reflect how he got sober?

Analysis Activities

1. How does Vic’s impression of the desert environment and the shack reflect Bob Lang’s identity?
2. Identify the paradoxes of Bob’s character and what this tells us about our own sense of identity?
3. Why does Winton not use the dialogue conventions in this narrative?
4. Despite separation, time and the animosity felt towards his father, Vic realises that his character is similar to that of his father. What do you think Winton is trying to communicate about the development of character when it comes to the nature versus nurture debate?