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Introduction

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| **Introduction** |

This GCSE pack is designed to prepare students for the unseen poetry element of the English Literature GCSE.

The pack has been devised for use with the AQA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC Eduqas specifications for GCSE English Literature. The activities and ideas will help students to develop confidence in approaching unseen poems, exploring the key elements including language, structure and tone.

The pack contains six pairs of poems with accompanying resources (including a comparison resource), teaching notes and practice exam questions. The resources have been created in a specific order and are designed to empower students and improve their confidence as they work their way through the pack.

Each resource has space for student answers and notes so they can easily keep track of their work – excellent for revision!

There is a final pair of poems with practice exam questions (no resources or teaching notes) so that students can gain realistic exam experience. Please note that the final pair of poems are quite challenging so you might like to provide your students with some contextual information for these.

The poems are paired in units as follows:

1. ‘At The Draper’s’ by Thomas Hardy with ‘Remember’ by Christina Rossetti
2. ‘Late Love’ by Jackie Kay with ‘Love and Friendship’ by Emily Brontë
3. ‘Finding the Keys’ by Robin Robertson with ‘October’ by Robert Frost
4. ‘Calling Card’ by Tracey Herd with ‘For Meg’ by Fleur Adcock
5. ‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am’ by Amy Lowell with ‘Frost Fair’ by Rowyda Amin
6. ‘Long Life’ by Elaine Feinstein and ‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’ by Beatrice Garland
7. ‘An Aviary of Small Birds’ by Karen McCarthy Woolf and ‘Mother o’Mine’ by Rudyard Kipling

*Our thanks go to contributor Trevor Millum who has written this pack.*

Top tips resource

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| --- |
| **Top tips for approaching an unseen poem** |

Don’t panic

The poem may well appear unfamiliar or difficult at first sight. It will be the same for everybody. Read it through twice without trying to understand everything. Read it again and make notes on anything you find interesting without at this stage worrying about what the question is asking you to focus on. Then go back to the question and make more specific notes alongside the poem.

Things to look out for:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Repetition** | Repeated words, phrases or sounds - they will be significant |
| **Contrasts** | Slow/fast, hot/cold, light/dark, happy/sad, old/new, old/young and so on |
| **Beginnings** and **endings** | Especially endings, as this is where a poet may sum up or contradict the previous lines |
| **Punctuation** and **line** **breaks** | Usually a poem will be punctuated in the same way as prose but because of the line breaks, it is less noticeable. Look out for very short and very long sentences or a lack of sentences. Where a line breaks may or may not be significant; just be aware of them and anything that stands out, such as a single word or two on a line. |
| **The title** | It may be obvious as in ‘Remember’ or it may be an important guide to the poem, as in ‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’. |

Voice/persona

Pay attention to the poet’s voice. Who is the ‘speaker’ in the poem? Is it the poet or has she/he taken on a persona (i.e. speaking in the voice of a character?) In either case, who is being spoken to? Is it a general audience (you and me) or a particular person? Often a poet will write very personal poems and yet publish them for a general audience, for example, Elizabeth Barratt Browning’s sonnets to Robert Browning.

The poem may contain **unfamiliar words**. Mostly these will be explained by the examiner but if others remain, you will almost always be able to work out their meaning or their gist through the context. Don’t worry too much about them; you are not being tested on your knowledge of individual words.

Technical terms

Make sure you know the most common terms such as metaphor, simile, alliteration and so on. But don’t overdo their use. You will not get marks for saying ‘black as death’s pyjamas is a simile’ (or a comparison, or figurative language). You will get marks for saying what its effect is or why it is important.

Form and structure

The **form** of the poem is the way the poet has arranged it. This may be obvious in the case of a sonnet or another traditional verse form but it can be difficult to describe poems written in free form without a discernible pattern – except to say just that **if it is relevant.** For example, if the poem is written in a way which reflects conversation or colloquial speech, it may be relevant to note that ‘the free form of the poem reflects …etc.’

**Structure** is subtly different. It might be seen as the skeleton that lies beneath the outward form of the poem, or something even less solid, the muscles and tendons, perhaps. It can reflect the meaning of the poem more easily than the form. For example, in Keats’ poem ‘To Autumn’, the form is a clear three-verse pattern with a regular rhyme and rhythm. The structure reflects the changing nature of autumn as it moves from warm harvest time through to chillier signs of coming winter.

Words words words

Look out for **verbs, nouns and pronouns**. A quick underlining of the verbs in a poem can often reveal interesting things. They may tend to be very active as   
in ‘Frost Fair’, or calmer, more neutral as in ‘Long Life’. Similarly with nouns: are there lots? Are they mainly concrete or abstract? Are they meant literally or figuratively? And finally, pronouns can say a lot too – see **voice and persona**.

Tone or mood

This is one of the trickiest things to describe. Try, through practice, to build up a vocabulary of helpful words. If you are stuck, you can use phrases such as ‘It feels as if the writer is …’ or ‘the mood reminds me of …’

Sound

Because most poems are now read on the page we often overlook how they sound when read aloud. Try to read the poem aloud ‘in your head’ – it can be done! It will help you notice sound repetitions which may add to the poem’s effect. Never write ‘The poet has used assonance in the third line …’; it doesn’t add anything of interest. Instead try to write something like ‘The assonance in the third line (especially the sound of …) underlines the feeling of ....’

Figurative language

This is a general term for comparisons, metaphors, similes and imagery. ‘It felt like riding on the dome of St Pauls in an earthquake’ is clearly figurative language, a comparison of one real thing (riding on the elephant) to something imagined. It happens to be a simile rather than a metaphor but do not labour over the difference – the important thing is to notice that it is figurative language and to comment on it, **if appropriate**, e.g. **i**s it effective and why?

It is also useful to notice where a poet does not use figurative language. Elaine Feinstein, in ‘Long Life’, uses hardly any, relying on the description of actual things.

Poetic terms you should know:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| alliteration | assonance | blank verse | couplet |
| dramatic monologue | enjambment and end-stopped line | iambic pentameter | metaphor |
| onomatopoeia | personification | rhyme | simile |
| sonnet | stanza |  |  |

Unit 1

A Teaching notes – At the Drapers

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| **Teaching notes** |

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| --- | --- |
|  | **‘At the Draper’s’ Thomas Hardy** *(1840-1928)* |

First encounter

* Some scene setting would be useful, given the context of Victorian/Edwardian attitudes to and styles of mourning. However, historical knowledge is not needed to deduce the motives and emotions of the characters in this brief sketch.
* With a little practice it should be possible for two students to read the dialogue as if it were a play. Try to involve students in varying the tone of voice. How does the wife speak her lines? Is she shocked or embarrassed, or perhaps a bit cross at being spied on? Is the husband genuinely wanting to avoid upsetting her – or is he making a point?

Getting closer to the poem

* Explore what may have taken place before and after the extract as a way of getting students to see that this is a narrative – and only one snippet from a much longer, imagined, one.
* There are some deliberately unfamiliar terms in the selection of words to describe the husband’s attitude. Ask students to look them up and share the findings. The husband’s tone of voice is crucial to the way the poem is interpreted. Do students find him sincere or self-pitying? Did he wish to avoid upsetting her or does he wish to show her up as more interested in fashion than in his death? How does the language used by Hardy help to support one or other interpretation?

Structure

* The formality of the structure supports something informal: a conversation. One can read too much into these things but it is worth drawing attention to the formality of mourning and its associated rites together with the highly informal emotions in the hearts of the characters – typical of our (perhaps stereotyped) view of the period’s ‘buttoned-up’ attitudes?

The words on the page

* It is left to the draper’s use of language to make the most telling impact. Elsewhere Hardy’s vocabulary is, like the husband’s, restrained.
* In the third verse ‘latest’ and ‘lovely’ contrast markedly with ‘cold’ and ‘ashen’. Then notice how the husband continues implacably to make his point with ‘screwed in a box’ – surely the most powerful point in the poem. Students may well pick these words out as important and note their juxtaposition with the final word: ‘adorning’.

Inside the poem

* Hardy avoids figurative language in this poem, focusing on the drama of the exchange, using his skills as a novelist to good effect. It is an effective dialogue with its exclamations and interruptions but, of course, heightened and made less realistic by being in rhyming verse.
* The rhymes are very clever. ‘Fashion’ and ‘ashen’ make a telling contrast and the final verse doubles the rhyme and the impact with ‘dress you / distress you’ and ‘mourning/adorning’.

A further encounter

* These questions can lead to interesting – and lengthy – discussions. The important thing to bring out of them is the way that a short poem, describing a brief moment in two lives, can evoke a whole relationship.
* In the situation of an exam hall, there is no time to enact scenes and discuss relationships. However, students need to be aware that the poem they may be presented with has implications far beyond anything they can deal with in the time allowed for an answer. They need to be able to spot the possibilities and then prioritise: assess the wider picture and then focus in on what is required.

At the Draper’s

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| --- | --- |
|  | **‘At the Draper’s’ Thomas Hardy** *(1840-1928)* |

|  |
| --- |
| “I STOOD at the back of the shop, my dear,  But you did not perceive me.  Well, when they deliver what you were shown  *I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”  And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,  “O, I didn’t see you come in there—  Why couldn’t you speak?”—’Well, I didn’t. I left  That you should not notice I’d been there.  “You were viewing some lovely things. ‘*Soon required*  *For a widow, of latest fashion’;*  And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man  Who had to be cold and ashen  “And screwed in a box before they could dress you  ‘*In the last new note in mourning*,’  As they defined it. So, not to distress you,  I left you to your adorning.”  **Glossary:** *draper* - a shop which sold fabric and sewing items and often dresses also. |

First encounter

1. Read the poem through. Pause. Read it again. The words are spoken by a husband to his wife but it is not a usual love poem. Write it out as if it were prose. Here’s how it could begin:

“I stood at the back of the shop, my dear, but you did not perceive me. Well, when they deliver what you were shown *I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”

And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said, “O, I didn’t see you come in there—Why couldn’t you speak?”

‘Well, …

1. How does the fifth line of the poem give us a clue as to what the poem is about?



1. Do you think the writer, Hardy, is the ‘he’ in the poem? Give your reasons.



Getting closer

The poem is like a story – or an extract from a story. In pairs, one of you write a brief summary of what might have happened before this extract and the other write a brief summary of what might happen afterwards. How do they compare?

**What happened after**

**What happened before**

1. What is the husband’s tone of voice?



Choose one of the above or add your own. Explain your choice.



Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The poem has a very clear and formal structure. How does this reflect the theme of the poem?



The words on the page

1. Notice how these phrases are emphasised with double quotation marks:

“Soon required for a widow, of latest fashion;” and “In the latest new note in mourning,”.

What is their significance?



1. The poem is very restrained in its use of adjectives. In the third verse, though, there is an interesting contrast of adjectives. Pick out these adjectives and explain how they contrast with each other.



1. What do you think are the most important words in the poem. Why?



Inside the poem

1. **Imagery:** does the poem make use of figurative language (e.g. simile or metaphor)? If yes, describe where and with what effect. If no, why do you think this is so?



1. **Sound:** The poem is meant to be read as a piece of dialogue. How close do you think it is to actual speech, bearing in mind it was written roughly one hundred years ago?



1. **Rhyme and rhythm:** The poem has a very definite pattern both in rhythm and rhyme. Some of the rhymes are unusual. Do the rhymes add to the effect of the poem or do they distract from it? Explain your thinking.



A further encounter

1. ‘At the Draper’s’ requires several readings. After you have read it a few times, think about these points and discuss your thoughts with a partner:

* The husband did not wish his wife to see him at the draper’s so why does he now reveal it?
* How is the wife portrayed?
* How might the wife describe her visit to the draper’s?

Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. What is your personal response to the poem?



1. Does the poem work as a ‘snapshot’ of an event?



Teaching notes – Remember

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| **Teaching notes** |

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| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Remember’**  **Christina Rossetti**  *(1830-1894)* |

First encounter

* ‘Remember’ is not a particularly difficult poem but students may need some help with the context of Victorian notions of love and death. However, for some students it may be helpful to read the poem without the verse form:

Remember me when I am gone away, gone far away into the silent land; when you can no more hold me by the hand, nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.

Remember me when no more day by day you tell me of our future that you planned: only remember me; you understand it will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while and afterwards remember, do not grieve: for if the darkness and corruption leave a vestige of the thoughts that once I had, better by far you should forget and smile than that you should remember and be sad.

* The poem is a personal one which prompts the question, why did the writer publish a poem which appears to be written to a particular person with a private and very personal message?

Getting closer to the poem

* The terms that students choose are less important than their reasons. Developing a vocabulary to describe tone or the general impact of a poem (or any piece of writing) is a key skill so help and encouragement here is valuable. Tease out why ‘resigned’ or ‘philosophical’ might be better descriptors than ‘sad’, for example.

Structure

* At this stage, students should be able to recognise a sonnet. If not, a short revision session is in order! They do not need to know the intricacies of Shakespearean or Petrarchan forms, just a basic understanding.
* There is a change at the beginning of the sestet, and Rossetti indicates this clearly with the word ‘Yet’. See if students can put this into their own words, such as "She wants him to remember her but then she says it’s all right if he forgets her for a while …"

Language – the words on the page

* Students will notice the obvious repetition of ‘remember’ but might miss all the personal pronouns: so many uses of ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘you’. These have the cumulative effect of making this a very personal message. There is also a significant number of negatives: ‘forget’, ‘no’, ‘nor’, ‘not’ … By the end of the poem, we are not likely to forget the theme!
* Adjectives are used sparsely and, for a poem which is about thoughts and feelings, there are a lot of active verbs: ‘hold’, ‘turn’, ‘stay’, ‘tell’, planned and so on as well as nouns. Although the message is hypothetical, it is expressed in a very concrete manner, with plenty of specific examples. It could have been a vague statement full of abstractions but is the more powerful for avoiding them.
* Asking students to pick out ‘important’ words is a way of getting them to read closely. It does not matter which words they choose, it is the discussion about the choices which will help understanding.

Inside the poem

* Rossetti uses very little imagery and not a lot can be made of the two examples, which offer little in the way of simile or metaphor! Interestingly, the very religious Rossetti sees death as silent, dark and rotting rather than a joyful afterlife.
* We want to get students into the habit of considering sound effects and there is a definite preponderance of long vowel sounds, which they should be able to notice. Whether this has any significance beyond contributing to the melody of the lines is debatable – but students may have some interesting suggestions.
* The rhyme and rhythm of the sonnet is obvious. How far it influences the reader or listener will depend on how it is read. Try reading it with an exaggerated da-dum da-dum rhythm which also emphasises the rhyme, and then contrast it with a more subtle interpretation. The poem should rise above its form.

Response

* Students’ responses need to be directed away from a like/dislike reaction into something more considered. Most importantly, it should be possible to appreciate something without having to like it.

Remember

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Remember’**  **Christina Rossetti**  *(1830-1894)* |

|  |
| --- |
| Remember me when I am gone away,  Gone far away into the silent land;  When you can no more hold me by the hand,  Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  Remember me when no more day by day  You tell me of our future that you plann’d:  Only remember me; you understand  It will be late to counsel then or pray.  Yet if you should forget me for a while  And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  For if the darkness and corruption leave  A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  Better by far you should forget and smile  Than that you should remember and be sad. |

First encounter

1. Read the poem through. Pause. Read it again.
2. Now read the first line and the last two lines. Sum up what you think the poem is about.



1. Do you think the writer of the poem, Rossetti, is also the ‘I’ in the poem?  
   Why do you think that?



1. Is the poem aimed at a general readership or a particular audience?



Getting closer to the poem

1. How would you describe the tone of the poem? Choose one of these descriptors or add your own and say why:





Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The poem is written in a particular form, which you should recognise. If you do not, check with a partner and/or your teacher. In this form, there is often a change at about the ninth line so that the final lines offer a slight contrast to the first eight. What kind of change do you notice here?



The words on the page

1. Now look at the language the poet uses. Would you say the words used are generally familiar to you? If there are any words - such as ‘vestige’ - that are unfamiliar, see if you can work out the likely meaning from the context.
2. What repetition do you notice? Don’t forget to look out for little words such as pronouns. What is the significance of this repetition?



1. What is the overall balance between nouns, verbs and adjectives? There is no need to count them, a general impression is enough and may give you an insight into the poet’s approach.



1. What do you think are the most important words in the poem apart from the ones that are repeated?



Inside the poem

1. **Imagery:** What do you think is the effect of ‘silent land’ and ‘darkness and corruption’? Overall, what would you say about Rossetti’s use of imagery?



1. **Sound:** Is there a particular vowel sound that is more common than others? What, if any, would be the effect of this repetition?



1. **Rhyme and rhythm:** There is a very clear rhyme pattern and a rhythm to the poem. Do they, in your opinion, help or hinder an appreciation of the poem’s message? Why?



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. What is your personal response to the poem?



Comparison resource

This table gives you a template to help in a comparison of the poems of Rossetti and Hardy. Make notes around the poems. You may find it helpful to highlight or underline words and phrases in the poems and link them to a central note. Your notes can then be used as a basis for a fuller answer (see table on the next page).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **‘Remember’**  Remember me when I am gone away,  Gone far away into the silent land;  When you can no more hold me by the hand,  Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  Remember me when no more day by day  You tell me of our future that you plann’d:  Only remember me; you understand  It will be late to counsel then or pray.  Yet if you should forget me for a while  And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  For if the darkness and corruption leave  A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  Better by far you should forget and smile  Than that you should remember and be sad.  **Christina Rossetti** | **‘At the Draper’s’**  “I STOOD at the back of the shop, my dear,  But you did not perceive me.  Well, when they deliver what you were shown  *I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”  And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,  “O, I didn’t see you come in there—  Why couldn’t you speak?” — “Well, I didn’t. I left  That you should not notice I’d been there.  “You were viewing some lovely things. ‘*Soon required*  *For a widow, of latest fashion*’;  And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man  Who had to be cold and ashen  “And screwed in a box before they could dress you  ‘*In the last new note in mourning*,’  As they defined it. So, not to distress you,  I left you to your adorning.”  **Thomas Hardy** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| While it is likely that Rossetti is writing personally,  Hardy is … | Hardy suggests the feelings of the husband by … |
| Rossetti’s emotions are more … | Both poems have a definite verse form. ‘Remember’  is a … |
| Both writers use language which is … | The use of imagery in the poems is … |
| The use of ‘yet’ in ‘Remember’ indicates …  *(Is there a change of emphasis in ‘*At the Draper’s*’?)* | Rossetti contrasts the present and the future, the physical and the abstract, e.g. … |
| Hardy’s poem also contains contrasts … | Overall, I think … |

To the teacher

Comparing texts is a sophisticated skill and students need to be introduced to it gently. Many exam questions will ask them to focus on specific elements. This table offers a way of organising a general comparison in order to build some confidence in their abilities to see similarities and differences. Having the two poems immediately visible next to each other is an additional help.

If the table can be enlarged to A3, so much the better and students may like to work on it in pairs. Further notes can be made in the spaces under the poems.

Alternatively, the table could be projected onto a whiteboard and filled in as a class discussion activity.

Exam questions

AQA exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15** | **At the Draper’s**  “I STOOD at the back of the shop, my dear,  But you did not perceive me.  Well, when they deliver what you were shown  *I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”  And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,  “O, I didn’t see you come in there—  Why couldn’t you speak?”—“Well, I didn’t. I left  That you should not notice I’d been there.  “You were viewing some lovely things. ‘*Soon required*  *For a widow, of latest fashion*’;  And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man  Who had to be cold and ashen  “And screwed in a box before they could dress you  ‘*In the last new note in mourning*,’  As they defined it. So, not to distress you,  I left you to your adorning.”  *Thomas Hardy* |

1. In ‘At the Draper’s’, how does the poet presents the speaker’s feelings about his wife?

**[24 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10** | **Remember**  Remember me when I am gone away,  Gone far away into the silent land;  When you can no more hold me by the hand,  Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  Remember me when no more day by day  You tell me of our future that you plann’d:  Only remember me; you understand  It will be late to counsel then or pray.  Yet if you should forget me for a while  And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  For if the darkness and corruption leave  A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  Better by far you should forget and smile  Than that you should remember and be sad.  *Christina Rossetti* |

1. In both ‘At the Draper’s’ and ‘Remember’ the speakers describe how people deal with the prospect of death. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***At the Draper’s***  “I STOOD at the back of the shop, my dear,  But you did not perceive me.  Well, when they deliver what you were shown  *I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”  And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said, 5  “O, I didn’t see you come in there—  Why couldn’t you speak?”—“Well, I didn’t. I left  That you should not notice I’d been there.  “You were viewing some lovely things. ‘*Soon required*  *For a widow, of latest fashion’;* 10  And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man  Who had to be cold and ashen  “And screwed in a box before they could dress you  ‘*In the last new note in mourning*,"  As they defined it. So, not to distress you, 15  I left you to your adorning.”  *Thomas Hardy* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Remember***  Remember me when I am gone away,  Gone far away into the silent land;  When you can no more hold me by the hand,  Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  Remember me when no more day by day 5  You tell me of our future that you plann’d:  Only remember me; you understand  It will be late to counsel then or pray.  Yet if you should forget me for a while  And afterwards remember, do not grieve: 10  For if the darkness and corruption leave  A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  Better by far you should forget and smile  Than that you should remember and be sad.  *Christina Rossetti*   1. Compare the ways the writers present the prospect of death in *At the Draper’s* and *Remember*.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas exam style question

**SECTION C (UNSEEN POETRY)**

Answer **both** part a) **and** part b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b)*.

1. Read the two poems, *At the Draper’s* by Thomas Hardy and *Remember* by Christina Rossetti. In both of these poems the poets write about the prospect of death.
2. Write about the poem *At the Draper’s* by Thomas Hardy and its effect on you.

[15]

*You may wish to consider:*

* *what the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *the ideas the poet may want us to think about;*
* *the poet’s choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *how you respond to the poem.*

**At the Draper’s**

“I STOOD at the back of the shop, my dear,

But you did not perceive me.

Well, when they deliver what you were shown

*I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”

And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,

“O, I didn’t see you come in there—

Why couldn’t you speak?”—“Well, I didn’t. I left

That you should not notice I’d been there.

“You were viewing some lovely things. ‘*Soon required*

*For a widow, of latest fashion*’;

And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man

Who had to be cold and ashen

“And screwed in a box before they could dress you

‘*In the last new note in mourning*,’

As they defined it. So, not to distress you,

I left you to your adorning.”

*Thomas Hardy*

1. Now compare *At the Draper’s* by Thomas Hardy and *Remember* by Christina Rossetti.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about
* the poets’ choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create
* how you respond to the poems.

**Remember**

Remember me when I am gone away,

Gone far away into the silent land;

When you can no more hold me by the hand,

Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.

Remember me when no more day by day

You tell me of our future that you plann’d:

Only remember me; you understand

It will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while

And afterwards remember, do not grieve:

For if the darkness and corruption leave

A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,

Better by far you should forget and smile

Than that you should remember and be sad.

*Christina Rossetti*

OCR exam style question

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express feelings about the prospect of loss.

You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which also explores death.

**[20]**

*At the Draper’s* by Thomas Hardy

“I stood at the back of the shop, my dear,

But you did not perceive me.

Well, when they deliver what you were shown

*I* shall know nothing of it, believe me!”

And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,

“O, I didn’t see you come in there—

Why couldn’t you speak?”—“Well, I didn’t. I left

That you should not notice I’d been there.

“You were viewing some lovely things. ‘*Soon required*

*For a widow, of latest fashion*’;

And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man

Who had to be cold and ashen

“And screwed in a box before they could dress you

‘*In the last new note in mourning*,’

As they defined it. So, not to distress you,

I left you to your adorning.”

*Now* by Robert Browning

Out of your whole life give but a moment!

All of your life that has gone before,

All to come after it, - so you ignore

So you make perfect the present, –condense,

In a rapture of rage, for perfection’s endowment,

Thought and feeling and soul and sense –

Merged in a moment which gives me at last

You around me for once, you beneath me, above me–

Me– sure that despite of time future, time past, –

This tick of our life-time’s one moment you love me!

How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet –

The moment eternal – just that and no more –

When ecstasy’s utmost we clutch at the core

While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

Unit 2

Teaching notes – Late love

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| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

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| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Late Love’  Jackie Kay** *(b.1961)* |

First encounter

* The questions here are to provoke discussion. The tone of the poem suggests that the negative view of those not in love is that of the ones who are in love but this is not overtly stated. This is a question of reading between the lines and of admitting that two diverging views are possible.

Getting closer to the poem

* This section focuses more closely on the tone and asks students to discriminate between some subtle differences. There is an opportunity to discuss the distinction between ‘ironic’ and ‘sarcastic’, for example. Again, there is room for disagreement; is Kay being merely observant or is she herself looking down on both sets of people?

Structure – the way the poem is built

* There are many reflections of the first stanzas in the second part. Less able students could take the highlighted version below and look for equivalents in the third and fourth stanzas.

How they strut about, people in love,

how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,

their hair, glossy, their skin shining.

They don’t remember who they have been.

How filmic they are just for this time.

How important they’ve become – secret, above

the order of things, the dreary mundane.

Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.

* There are, of course, many differences too. Perhaps the most striking occurs with the fourth stanza and the last, separate line, which moves away from the caricatures of the preceding stanzas and seems more reflective and sympathetic – the poet’s own voice coming through, perhaps?

The words on the page

* Students should be on firmer ground here, looking at the writer’s language choices and their effect. While focusing on word choice, draw attention to the significant repetition of ‘they’ and ‘their’. Doesn’t this give the poem a very ‘us’ and ‘them’ feeling?

Inside the poem

* The poem does have a coherence and a form which is made quite explicit in the way the poet has divided it into four equal stanzas and with lines of similar length. Students can have some fun spotting rhyme and near rhyme. The change of tone towards the end of the poem together with the final line make for a challenge. What is it that is miles away, fading? And why is the poem called ‘Late Love’? There is no hint in the rest of the poem that the topic is that of people falling in love later in life but perhaps that is what Kay wishes us to pick up on. Maybe younger people who are ‘in love’ don’t go around so full of themselves?

Thoughts, response, conclusion

* It will be interesting to hear how students respond to the poem. Its theme does seem rather worldly for a young readership – but young readers can surprise with their insights.

The poet on the poem

* This quote from Jackie Kay is included in order to add to a final discussion – though it doesn’t answer all of the questions posed above!

‘Late Love’ is the opening poem in my collection Life Mask, a book that dwells on the various masks we wear. In this poem, I was interested in how people in love differ from people who have fallen out of love and how physically that manifests itself. I was also interested in the idea that when people are madly in love they are in love with the idea of being in love as much as they are with each other, and so the world feels as if it belongs to them, and they feel invincible, forgetting the other, sadder state of not being desired or wanted.

I wanted the poem to explore both states – in and out of love – and turn on a line, the way that love can change in a day. And I hoped that the poem might make people laugh with recognition. I wanted to explore the idea that being in love itself can be a kind of a mask, and that there is a certain amount of kidding that must go on – ‘I’ve never felt like this before’ etc. – for the crazy state to be entered fully!

Late Love

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Late Love’  Jackie Kay** *(b.1961)* |

|  |
| --- |
| How they strut about, people in love,  how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,  their hair, glossy, their skin shining.  They don’t remember who they have been.    How filmic they are just for this time.  How important they’ve become – secret, above  the order of things, the dreary mundane.  Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.    How dull the lot that are not in love.  Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;  how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge  up and down streets in the rain,    remembering one kiss in a dark alley,  a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait  for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.  The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush    already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.  **Glossary:** *mundane* – dull and routine. |

First encounter

1. What kind of person does the writer seem to be? (Someone who has never been in love? Someone once in love but no longer? Someone who finds the idea of ‘being in love’ foolish? Or… ?) Do you find the portrayal of people in love and not in love realistic?



1. Try to sum up how the poem depicts the two sorts of people *in your own words*.

Those who are in love are



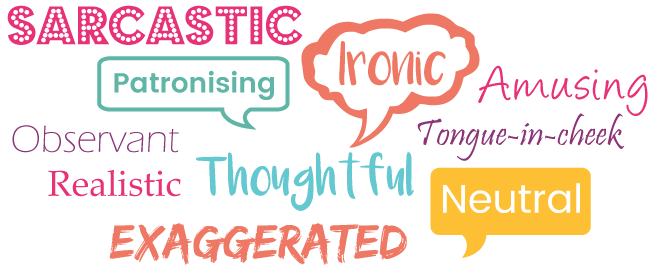
Those who are not in love are



1. (Do you know someone who is ‘in love’? Are they like that? And someone who is not ‘in love?’) Do you think the description of those who are not in love is actually the viewpoint of the writer or of those who are in love, looking down on those who are not?

Getting closer to the poem

1. How would you describe the tone of the poem? These words might be helpful but feel free to add your own and to put them in order of how accurate they are, according to your views.



1. Pick out three words from the poem which describe each type of person:

Those who are in love:



Those who are not in love:

Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The poem is clearly in two halves and the second half mirrors the first half in a number of ways. Pick out the similarities and differences between the two halves.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stanzas one and two** | **Stanzas three and four** |
| Similarities | |
| **Begin with ‘How …’** | **Begin with ‘How …’** |
| Differences | |
|  |  |

The words on the page

1. Pick out words and phrases which show that the writer is critical of ‘people in love’:



1. Pick out the key words in the third stanza which depict the people not in love in a negative way:



1. Read the poem leaving out the word ‘How’. What difference does that make to the effect?



Inside the poem

1. **Rhythm and sound:** The poem has no formal pattern of rhythm or rhyme and yet there is a sense of an underlying pattern. How regular are the lines and the stanzas (count the stressed syllables)? Can you detect rhymes or   
   near rhymes?



1. **Change of tone:** There is a clear change of direction between the second and third stanzas but there is also a change of tone between the third and fourth stanza. How is the fourth stanza different from the others?



1. **The ending:** What do you make of the ending?



1. **The title:** Looking back now at the title, how well does it fit the poem?



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. Is this a poem which perhaps speaks mainly to an older readership, to people who have ‘seen it all’, and ‘been there, done that’? Or does it have a relevance to a younger reader?



Teaching notes – Love and friendship

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| **Teaching notes** |

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| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Love and Friendship’  Emily Brontë** *(1818-1848)* |

First encounter

* Some students may need assistance and could be given a word bank to choose from. Here are some words and phrases to start with:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| beautiful | fragrant | in bouquets |
| thorns | sharp | prickles |
| winter | shiny | long-lasting |

Getting closer to the poem

* What does the writer tell us about a) the rose, b) the holly? Literally, she tells us that the rose is sweet in spring and its summer blossoms scent the air; the holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms. Figuratively, she implies that the rose is short-lived and the holly is long-lasting. It should be possible to tease this out with a minimum of guidance
* Some of the statements are very close in meaning, the idea being to encourage discussion that will get to the core of the poem’s argument.

Structure – the way the poem is built

* Some students may find a guided response helpful:

1. The holly may look dark but – it is implied – it will bloom
2. The rose will flourish in spring and summer, but
3. Therefore so that

The words on the page

* This activity will focus students’ attention on the poet’s word choices and make them aware that there are subtle changes over time in the way words are used. For example, we rarely use ‘fair’ to mean ‘pretty’ or ‘beautiful’ these days; we tend to use it to mean light-coloured.

Inside the poem

* The terms are ‘extended metaphor’, ‘personification’ and ‘rhetorical question’. It’s good for students to have these and other terms readily available as long as they don’t see them as an end in themselves.

Thoughts, response, conclusion

* Students who are familiar with *Wuthering Heights* could have an interesting discussion arising from these questions. If not, some background will be of interest but reassure students that such knowledge will not be expected in an exam.

Love and Friendship

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Love and Friendship’  Emily Brontë** *(1818-1848)* |

|  |
| --- |
| Love is like the wild rose-briar,  Friendship like the holly-tree—  The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms  But which will bloom most constantly?    The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,  Its summer blossoms scent the air;  Yet wait till winter comes again  And who will call the wild-briar fair?    Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now  And deck thee with the holly’s sheen,  That when December blights thy brow  He still may leave thy garland green.  **Glossary:** *garland* – wreath. |

First encounter

1. Read the poem through twice then look again at the first two lines. What associations are conjured up by a wild rose and by holly? Jot down your thoughts and then compare them with those of a partner.



Getting closer to the poem

1. What does the writer tell us about a) the rose b) the holly?

The rose:



The holly:

1. Why does she consider the holly to be superior?



1. Discuss these statements about the message of the poem with a partner. Label them 1-6 in order, with 1 being the best description of the poem’s message.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Love and friendship are different and should not be confused |
|  | Friendship is better than love |
|  | Friendship is longer lasting than love |
|  | Love is fragile but friendship is hardy |
|  | Holly’s beauty will outlast that of the wild rose |
|  | Friendship can be relied upon but love cannot |

Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The poem is a kind of argument, rather like a lawyer building a logical case. What are the stages in Brontë’s argument? Look out for words which organise the argument, such as ‘but’, ‘yet’ and ‘then’.



The words on the page

1. Brontë’s diction is very simple. However, if the poem were to be written today, some of the words chosen might be different. Consider these words:



1. Find a word to replace each of them in the poem:

Yet wait till winter comes again

And who will call the wild-briar ?

Then ­­­­ the rose-wreath now

And thee with the holly’s ,



That when December thy

He still may leave thy garland green.

Inside the poem

1. The poem takes two plants and compares them throughout the poem to two emotions. Find out the term that is used to describe a comparison that is carried on throughout a poem (or for a substantial part of a poem).



1. Another poetic technique is used in the last two lines.   
   What is it?



1. What kind of questions does Brontë ask?



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. Is Emily Brontë right? What experiences might have influenced her to come to her conclusion about love and friendship? Whether you agree with her or not, what is your response to the poem?



Comparison resource

‘Late Love’ and ‘Love and Friendship’: Use the table to make brief notes on similarities and differences between the poems.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **‘Late Love’**  How they strut about, people in love,  how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,  their hair, glossy, their skin shining.  They don’t remember who they have been.    How filmic they are just for this time.  How important they’ve become – secret, above  the order of things, the dreary mundane.  Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.    How dull the lot that are not in love.  Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;  how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge  up and down streets in the rain,    remembering one kiss in a dark alley,  a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait  for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.  The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush    already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.  **Jackie Kay** | **‘Love and Friendship’**  Love is like the wild rose-briar,  Friendship like the holly-tree—  The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms  But which will bloom most constantly?    The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,  Its summer blossoms scent the air;  Yet wait till winter comes again  And who will call the wild-briar fair?    Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now  And deck thee with the holly’s sheen,  That when December blights thy brow  He still may leave thy garland green.  **Emily Brontë** |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **First thoughts**  They are from different periods. ‘Love and Friendship*’* is older because …  The tone of ‘Love and Friendship is’ … | | **Form**  Both use a verse form which consists of … | |
| **Structure**  *‘*Late Love*’* is in two parts, the first … | | **Language**  Both poems use simple language. Brontë’s use of verbs is restrained, e.g. … | |
| **Imagery**  *‘*Love and Friendship*’* employs an extended metaphor which … | **Themes**  As well as the theme of love, Brontë’s poem reflects a rural background, whereas …  Both poems have a message. While Brontë conveys her views explicitly, Kay … | | **In conclusion** … |

To the teacher

The aim here is to get students used to comparing poems and one of the first steps is to see them side by side and to comment on their various characteristics (whether they are similarities or differences) without having to pay attention to a specific question. Once students are more confident in making comparisons, they can move on to address particular questions with a bank of experience to draw upon. If, later, they were to be asked to comment on the two poets’ attitudes towards love, they would need to extract those parts of their comparison notes which were relevant, e.g. more on tone, structure, theme and message and less on form.

Even in their brief notes, students should be helped to use terms such as ‘whereas’, ‘on the other hand’, ‘in contrast to’ and so on. They should also be encouraged to conclude with a considered personal response.

Exam questions

AQA exam style question

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| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15** | **Late Love**  How they strut about, people in love,  how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,  their hair, glossy, their skin shining.  They don’t remember who they have been.    How filmic they are just for this time.  How important they’ve become – secret, above  the order of things, the dreary mundane.  Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.    How dull the lot that are not in love.  Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;  how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge  up and down streets in the rain,    remembering one kiss in a dark alley,  a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait  for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.  The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush    already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.  Jackie Kay |

1. In ‘Late Love’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about people who are in love?

**[24 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10** | **Love and Friendship**  Love is like the wild rose-briar,  Friendship like the holly-tree—  The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms  But which will bloom most constantly?    The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,  Its summer blossoms scent the air;  Yet wait till winter comes again  And who will call the wild-briar fair?    Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now  And deck thee with the holly’s sheen,  That when December blights thy brow  He still may leave thy garland green.  Emily Brontë |

1. In both ‘Late Love’ and ‘Love and Friendship’ the speakers describe feelings of being in love. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel exam style question

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| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***Late Love***  How they strut about, people in love,  how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,  their hair, glossy, their skin shining.  They don’t remember who they have been.    How filmic they are just for this time. 5  How important they’ve become – secret, above  the order of things, the dreary mundane.  Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.    How dull the lot that are not in love.  Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless; 10  how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge  up and down streets in the rain,    remembering one kiss in a dark alley,  a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait  for the phone to ring, maybe, baby. 15  The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush    already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.  *Jackie Kay* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Love and Friendship***  Love is like the wild rose-briar,  Friendship like the holly-tree—  The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms  But which will bloom most constantly?    The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring, 5  Its summer blossoms scent the air;  Yet wait till winter comes again  And who will call the wild-briar fair?    Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now  And deck thee with the holly’s sheen, 10  That when December blights thy brow  He still may leave thy garland green.  *Emily Brontë*   1. Compare the ways the writers present love in *Late Love* and *Love and Friendship*.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas exam style question

**SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)**

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).*

1. Read the two poems, *Late Love* by Jackie Kay and Love and *Friendship* by Emily Brontë. In both of these poems the poets write about love.
2. Write about the poem Late Love by Jackie Kay, and its effect on you.

[15]

*You may wish to consider:*

* *What the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *The ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
* *The poet’s choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *How you respond to the poem.*

**Late Love**

How they strut about, people in love,

how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,

their hair, glossy, their skin shining.

They don’t remember who they have been.

How filmic they are just for this time.

How important they’ve become – secret, above

the order of things, the dreary mundane.

Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.

How dull the lot that are not in love.

Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;

how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge

up and down streets in the rain,

remembering one kiss in a dark alley,

a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait

for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.

The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush

already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.

*Jackie Kay*

1. Now compare *Late Love* by Jackie Kay and *Love and Friendship* by Emily Brontë.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the poets’ choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
* how you respond to the poems.

**Love and Friendship**

Love is like the wild rose-briar,

Friendship like the holly-tree—

The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms

But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,

Its summer blossoms scent the air;

Yet wait till winter comes again

And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now

And deck thee with the holly’s sheen,

That when December blights thy brow

He still may leave thy garland green.

*Emily Brontë*

OCR exam style question

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express attitudes towards romantic love.

You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in details one other poem from your anthology which expresses a different attitude towards love.

**[20]**

*Late Love* by Jackie Kay

How they strut about, people in love,

how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,

their hair, glossy, their skin shining.

They don’t remember who they have been.

How filmic they are just for this time.

How important they’ve become – secret, above

the order of things, the dreary mundane.

Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.

How dull the lot that are not in love.

Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;

how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge

up and down streets in the rain,

remembering one kiss in a dark alley,

a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait

for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.

The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush

already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.

*Love and Friendship* by Emily Brontë

Love is like the wild rose-briar,

Friendship like the holly-tree—

The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms

But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,

Its summer blossoms scent the air;

Yet wait till winter comes again

And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now

And deck thee with the holly’s sheen,

That when December blights thy brow

He still may leave thy garland green.

Unit 3

Teaching notes – Finding the keys

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| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Finding the keys’ Robin Robertson**  *(b.1955)* |

First encounter

* Students may notice all sorts of things about the poem at a first or second reading. They may pick out the lack of sentences and/or the very short sentences. They may notice the alliteration in the first few lines or the oddity of ‘handles’, ‘hinges’, ‘latches’ and ‘keyholes’. Whatever they notice is a starting point for discussion about the importance of first impressions, which is key to a poem’s impact, *and* its dangers!

Getting closer to the poem

* *Getting closer to the poem* and *Structure* force students to look closely at the text. There are many inter-connections between the sections which could be brought out using a whiteboard projection and drawing the links. ‘Deer’ and ‘antlers’ or the two mentions of ‘seed’ could be examples.
* The phrases in the table are a challenge. Can we really say what Robertson means by the ‘many griefs of autumn’? This is good practice because there will be things that they will not fully understand – indeed, that their teacher might not fully understand – and this is the case with poetry.

The words on the page

* The use of ‘Keys’ as a title and an ending is similar in its resistance to being pinned down. It’s a play on words but is it more than that? What has been lost and found? Is it an example of rich allusion, a reference to the genetic key in the ash seed or of the poet merely (or also) enjoying word play? It links to ‘latches’ and ‘keyholes’ and so on – but do the twigs and branches really look like hinges and handles? Perhaps they do; it might make us look again.

Inside the poem

* There is a lot to talk about in this poem but one would not expect students to comment on everything. An exam question would probably focus on something like ‘How effective is the poem in portraying the seasons?’ The answers to the tasks set for the students above would provide more than enough material for an answer to such a question. As a practice exercise, having worked through the tasks, ask students to pick out five key points they would select in order to answer ‘How effective is the poem in portraying the seasons?’
* Students having difficulty with this could begin by arranging some bullet points in order of priority, e.g.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| many snapshots of the seasons | short phrases get your attention | the images are unusual |
| uses sound as well as sight | he has looked at things differently | is knowledgeable about nature |
| … and described them in new ways | writes familiar words in unusual ways | and adding short quotes as examples. |

* All students should be helped and encouraged to develop their vocabulary. Here are some alternative phrases for some of the bullet points:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| evocative snapshots | arresting images | unconventional angles |
| staccato phrases | close observation | +? |

Finding the keys

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Finding the keys’ Robin Robertson**  *(b.1955)* |

|  |
| --- |
| The set seed and the first bulbs showing. The silence that brings the deer. The trees are full of handles and hinges; you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves. Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open slowly in a spur of green.  \*  The small-change colours of the river bed: these stones of copper, silver, gold. The rock-rose in the waste-ground finding some way to bloom. The long  spill of birdsong. Flowers, all turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs. |
| That woody clack of antlers.  In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn.  The dawn light through amber leaves and the trees are lanterned, blown  the next day to empty stars. Smoke in the air; the air, turning.  \*  Under a sky of stone and pink faring in from the north and promising snow:  the blackbird. In his beak, a victory of worms.  The winged seed of the maple, the lost keys under the ash. |

First encounters

1. What is the first thing you notice about the poem?



1. Read the poem again, if possible aloud. In an exam you won’t be able to do this so practise hearing it ‘in your head’, saying the words to yourself very carefully.
2. Ignore the title. What title would you give the poem? Why?



Getting closer to the poem

1. Each section of the poem contains a series of brief descriptions, like snapshots. They comprise both sights and sounds. In each section, which of these conjures up the season best?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Sights | Sounds |  |
| Spring | set seed and bulbs  twigs and branches  green buds | silence  buds tick and crack | The green buds spur of green sums up spring best |
| Summer |  |  |  |
| Autumn |  |  |  |
| Winter |  |  |  |

Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The writer has neatly divided the poem into four parts, representing the four seasons. In pairs, draw or find four images that represent the different seasons. Now allocate the four sections of the poem to the correct season. What ways are the four parts linked? (Look for things which are mentioned in one part and referred to again later.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The set seed and the first bulbs showing.  The silence that brings the deer.    The trees are full of handles and hinges;  you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves.    Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open  slowly in a spur of green. | The small-change colours of the river bed:  these stones of copper, silver, gold.    The rock-rose in the waste-ground  finding some way to bloom. The long    spill of birdsong. Flowers, all  turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs. |
| That woody clack of antlers.  In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn.    The dawn light through amber leaves  and the trees are lanterned, blown    the next day to empty stars.  Smoke in the air; the air, turning. | Under a sky of stone and pink  faring in from the north and promising snow:    the blackbird.  In his beak, a victory of worms.    The winged seed of the maple,  the lost keys under the ash. |

The words on the page

1. The language of the poem is mostly straightforward but there are some words which might need some extra thought. It may not be the words themselves that are difficult but the way in which they are used, for example: small-change colours / spill of birdsong / griefs of autumn / trees are lanterned / victory of worms.
2. You may not be sure, but jot down some suggestions of what the poet is getting at with these phrases. When you have completed the table share your ideas with a partner. Did they have similar suggestions to you?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| small-change colours |  |
| a spill of birdsong |  |
| the griefs of autumn |  |
| the trees are lanterned | Lanterns give out light – not always very bright – perhaps the light is just struggling to come through the leaves … |
| a victory of worms |  |

Inside the poem

1. Think about:
2. The way the poem is punctuated. What effect does this have?



1. Read the poem aloud to a partner. Every time you come across an example of onomatopoeia or alliteration try to emphasise this.
2. **Sound:** What effect do the sounds of the words in the poem have?   
   Where do you notice this most?



1. **Imagery:** You have seen that the writer uses unusual phrases and there are other interesting images in the poem: ‘keyholes’, ‘hinges’ and so on. Select two or three examples and comment on how effective they are.



Thoughts, response, conclusion…

1. What do you think is the significance of ‘keys’ in the poem?



1. Does this poem evoke the seasons for you? If not, why not? Write two or three sentences in answer to this.



Teaching notes – October

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘October’ Robert Frost**  *(1874-1963)* |

First encounters

* While the poem itself is not particularly difficult, the questions to the students are quite demanding. We are giving them less and less information and expecting them to undertake more of the close reading themselves.
* The mood of the poem seems to be quiet and meditative but with something of restrained desperation in the pleas to October to slow down! The use of ‘O’ and ‘thy’ (unusual for Frost) indicate the prayer-like quality, together with the specific requests – ‘retard’, ‘beguile’ and so on. If students find the idea of appealing to the season absurd, remind them how one might casually look out of the window before a match or a trip, murmuring, ‘Oh, please don’t rain!’

Getting closer to the poem

* The requests/prayers cannot, of course, be literally granted but perhaps there is a way in which the we (and/or the writer) can slow down so that we are more able to appreciate the season passing?

Structure – the way the poem is built

* The first part offers a familiar description, including the knowledge that (in England just as in new England) a mild autumn day can well be followed by the opposite. The final lines, though, are more unusual. Few of us are worrying about our grapes! It’s as if he has suddenly remembered his vines and the gentle movement of the lines is abruptly altered by the interjection of ‘Slow, slow!’, realising that there is a practical reason for wanting the mildness of the season to be extended.

The words on the page and inside the poem

* The strength of the poem lies in its use of verbs rather than adjectives. It’s all about wanting things to happen or not happen. Repetition has some part to play, particularly in slowing down the poem at line 7 and the ‘ow’ sound in ‘slow’ is prevalent throughout the poem and does, to some extent, slow the pace. The poem rhymes throughout but in an artless, seemingly random way. To begin with we think it will be an ABAB pattern but this is soon disturbed. Is it too fanciful to describe the way the rhymes fall as like the way the leaves fall from the trees? Whatever students’ feelings about that suggestion, it is the case that the rhymes and the rhythms hold the poem together but in a very gentle, loose manner.

Thoughts, response, conclusion

* Students’ responses are considered important by examiners and the more reflective, the better. A thoughtful response might recognise that the average reader does not have grapes to worry about but could empathise with the desire to delay the onset of winter at the same time as appreciating the qualities of autumn.
* *Note: Some grape varieties are deliberately left until after the first frost – but they do still need their fill of warmth first. This information may or may not interest your students.*

October

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘October’ Robert Frost**  *(1874-1963)* |

|  |
| --- |
| O hushed October morning mild,  Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,  Should waste them all.  The crows above the forest call;  Tomorrow they may form and go.  O hushed October morning mild,  Begin the hours of this day slow.  Make the day seem to us less brief.  Hearts not averse to being beguiled,  Beguile us in the way you know.  Release one leaf at break of day;  At noon release another leaf;  One from our trees, one far away.  Retard the sun with gentle mist;  Enchant the land with amethyst.  Slow, slow!  For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,  Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  Whose clustered fruit must else be lost —  For the grapes’ sake along the wall. |

**Glossary:**  *beguile* – to charm or enchant.  
 *amethyst* – a gem with a purple colouring

First encounter

1. Read the poem through and then read it again, pausing for a few seconds at each full stop. At each pause, think of a word that describes the mood of the sentence you’ve just read. When you’ve read the poem, choose three words that sum up the overall mood.



1. There is a hint or echo of a hymn or prayer in the poem, especially in the first half. Which words convey that impression?



1. What is the focus of Frost’s plea to October?



Getting closer to the poem

1. At line 7 the poet begins a whole list of imperatives – i.e. words which ask or command. Working with a partner, go through the poem highlighting these command words or phrases then write them below:



1. Is there any way in which these requests could be granted?



Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The poem has a very definite beginning, middle and end. In pairs, one of you sums up what the beginning is about. The other should sum up what the middle is about. Compare your thoughts, then together sum up what the ending is about.

Beginning

Middle

End

The words on the page

1. Frost is very restrained in his use of adjectives. How many can you spot? Read through the poem with a partner and take it in turns to spot the adjectives. What kinds of words are more important in his poem? Why?



1. How important a part does repetition play in the poem?



Inside the poem

1. How would you describe the rhyme and rhythm of the poem?



1. How far does the rhyme and rhythm reflect the mood of the poem?



1. What is the effect of the interruption of ‘Slow, slow!’?



1. Which vowel sounds tend to dominate the poem? What effect does that have?



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. What is your reaction to the poem? Does it reflect your thoughts about autumn or does it seem to describe somewhere that is very different from your experiences?



Comparison resource

Remember when you compare poems bear in mind the following features:

* The ‘voice’ of the poet – the tone, the approach or persona of the poet.
* Language – the vocabulary used by the poet ,repetitions, person and tense , grammar
* Techniques – imagery, sound effects, rhyme and rhythm
* Structure – verse form and variations, the ‘direction’ of the poem

Task

**Compare the two poets’ descriptions of nature and the passing of time.**

Before you start, use one highlighter to mark the similarities in the poem and another highlighter to mark the differences, focusing on the comparison points above.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **‘October’** | **‘Finding the Keys’** |
| O hushed October morning mild,  Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  *Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,*  *Should waste them all.*  The crows above the forest call;  Tomorrow they may form and go.  O hushed October morning mild,  Begin the hours of this day slow.  Make the day seem to us less brief.  Hearts not averse to being beguiled,  Beguile us in the way you know.  Release one leaf at break of day;  At noon release another leaf;  One from our trees, one far away.  Retard the sun with gentle mist;  Enchant the land with amethyst.  Slow, slow!  For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,  Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  Whose clustered fruit must else be lost —  For the grapes’ sake along the wall.  Robert Frost | The set seed and the first bulbs showing. The silence that brings the deer. The trees are full of handles and hinges; you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves. Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open slowly in a spur of green.  The small-change colours of the river bed: these stones of copper, silver, gold. The rock-rose in the waste-ground finding some way to bloom. The long spill of birdsong. Flowers, all turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs.  That woody clack of antlers. In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn. The dawn light through amber leaves and the trees are lanterned, blown the next day to empty stars. Smoke in the air; the air, turning.  Under a sky of stone and pink faring in from the north and promising snow: the blackbird. In his beak, a victory of worms. The winged seed of the maple, the lost keys under the ash.  Robin Robertson |

*Compare the two poets’ descriptions of nature and the passing of time.*

To the teacher

Provide the two poems side by side and ask students to use highlighters or some other means of marking the text in order to show similarities and pick out differences. In the example below, the grey highlighting marks similarities to do with slowness and quiet. Together with italics it marks the mention of the wind’s effect on the leaves and with underline, the two mentions of birds. The blue highlighting picks out some of the differences, explained underneath the table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **‘October’** | **‘Finding the Keys’** |
| O hushed October morning mild,  Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  *Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,*  *Should waste them all.*  The crows above the forest call;  Tomorrow they may form and go.  O hushed October morning mild,  Begin the hours of this day slow.  Make the day seem to us less brief.  Hearts not averse to being beguiled,  Beguile us in the way you know.  Release one leaf at break of day;  At noon release another leaf;  One from our trees, one far away.  Retard the sun with gentle mist;  Enchant the land with amethyst.  Slow, slow!  For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,  Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  Whose clustered fruit must else be lost —  For the grapes’ sake along the wall. | The set seed and the first bulbs showing.  The silence that brings the deer. The trees are full of handles and hinges;  you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves. Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open  slowly in a spur of green.   \*  The small-change colours of the river bed:  these stones of copper, silver, gold. The rock-rose in the waste-ground  finding some way to bloom. The long spill of birdsong. Flowers, all  turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs.   \*  That woody clack of antlers.  In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn. The dawn light through amber leaves  and the trees are lanterned, *blown the next day* to empty stars.  Smoke in the air; the air, turning.   \*  Under a sky of stone and pink  faring in from the north and promising snow: the blackbird.  In his beak, a victory of worms. The winged seed of the maple,  the lost keys under the ash. |

Marking ‘O hushed October morning mild’ is a reminder to comment on the very different voices of the poets. Where Frost makes a personal appeal to the season, Robertson seems quite absent from the writing. This feeling is emphasised by the stark verb-less phrases: the jottings of the neutral observer.

‘Amethyst’ is a reminder of the single use of colour in ‘October’ (unusual in a poem about autumn!) compared with Robertson’s frequent use of colours. ‘For the grapes’ sake’ is another indication of Frost’s personal involvement and a very specific focus of attention, again an unusual one in autumn writing.

In ‘October’ there is one mention of crows, whereas in ‘Finding the Keys’ not only are there more creatures, they are active: singing, clacking antlers, finding worms. The marking of ‘tick’, ‘crack’ and ‘clack’ points to the use of sound in Robertson’s poem and its absence in Frost’s.

= = = = =

When marking the texts, students might want to jot a short note to themselves as reminders of aspects to pick up on when they write a full answer. They should also look out for questions like this one which make two requests. Having discussed the poets’ descriptions of nature, they need to say something about time. The difference between the poems is quite clear but they may need help in finding the right words. Here are some suggestions for discussion. Students will also need to allocate the words/phrases to the appropriate poem(s).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| delay |  | natural pace |  | negative |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | accepting the passing of |  | positive |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| the passage of time |  | anxious |  | relaxed |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | hold back |  | realistic |  |

Exam questions

AQA exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15**  **20** | **Finding the keys**  The set seed and the first bulbs showing.  The silence that brings the deer.  The trees are full of handles and hinges;  you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves.  Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open  slowly in a spur of green.  \*  The small-change colours of the river bed:  these stones of copper, silver, gold.  The rock-rose in the waste-ground  finding some way to bloom. The long  spill of birdsong. Flowers, all  turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs.  \*  That woody clack of antlers.  In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn.  The dawn light through amber leaves  and the trees are lanterned, blown  the next day to empty stars.  Smoke in the air; the air, turning.  \*  Under a sky of stone and pink  faring in from the north and promising snow:  the blackbird.  In his beak, a victory of worms.  The winged seed of the maple,  the lost keys under the ash.  *Robin Robertson* |

1. In ‘Finding the Keys’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about nature?

**[24 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10** | **October**  O hushed October morning mild,  Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,  Should waste them all.  The crows above the forest call;  Tomorrow they may form and go.  O hushed October morning mild,  Begin the hours of this day slow.  Make the day seem to us less brief.  Hearts not averse to being beguiled,  Beguile us in the way you know.  Release one leaf at break of day;  At noon release another leaf;  One from our trees, one far away.  Retard the sun with gentle mist;  Enchant the land with amethyst.  Slow, slow!  For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,  Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  Whose clustered fruit must else be lost —  For the grapes’ sake along the wall.  *Robert Frost* |

1. In both ‘Finding the Keys’ and ‘October’ the speakers describe feelings about nature and the passing of time. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***Finding the Keys***  The set seed and the first bulbs showing.  The silence that brings the deer.  The trees are full of handles and hinges;  you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves.  Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open 5  slowly in a spur of green.  \*  The small-change colours of the river bed:  these stones of copper, silver, gold.  The rock-rose in the waste-ground  finding some way to bloom. The long 10  spill of birdsong. Flowers, all  turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs.  \*  That woody clack of antlers.  In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn.  The dawn light through amber leaves 15  and the trees are lanterned, blown  the next day to empty stars.  Smoke in the air; the air, turning.  \*  Under a sky of stone and pink  faring in from the north and promising snow: 20  the blackbird.  In his beak, a victory of worms.  The winged seed of the maple,  the lost keys under the ash.  *Robin Robertson* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***October***  O hushed October morning mild,  Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,  Should waste them all.  The crows above the forest call; 5  Tomorrow they may form and go.  O hushed October morning mild,  Begin the hours of this day slow.  Make the day seem to us less brief.  Hearts not averse to being beguiled, 10  Beguile us in the way you know.  Release one leaf at break of day;  At noon release another leaf;  One from our trees, one far away.  Retard the sun with gentle mist; 15  Enchant the land with amethyst.  Slow, slow!  For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,  Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  Whose clustered fruit must else be lost — 20  For the grapes’ sake along the wall.  *Robert Frost*   1. Compare the ways the writers present nature and the passing of time in *Finding the Keys* and *October*.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas exam style question

**SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)**

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).*

1. Read the two poems, *Finding the Keys* by Robin Robertson and *October* by Robert Frost. In both of these poems the poets write about nature and the passing of time.
2. Write about the poem *Finding the Keys* by Robin Robertson, and its effect on you.

[15]

*You may wish to consider:*

* *what the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *the ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
* *the poet’s choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *how you respond to the poem.*

**Finding the Keys**

The set seed and the first bulbs showing.

The silence that brings the deer.

The trees are full of handles and hinges;

you can make out keyholes, latches in the leaves.

Buds tick and crack in the sun, break open

slowly in a spur of green.

\*

The small-change colours of the river bed:

these stones of copper, silver, gold.

The rock-rose in the waste-ground

finding some way to bloom. The long

spill of birdsong. Flowers, all

turned to face the hot sky. Nothing stirs.

\*

That woody clack of antlers.

In yellow and red, the many griefs of autumn.

The dawn light through amber leaves

and the trees are lanterned, blown

the next day to empty stars.

Smoke in the air; the air, turning.

\*

Under a sky of stone and pink

faring in from the north and promising snow:

the blackbird.

In his beak, a victory of worms.

The winged seed of the maple,

the lost keys under the ash.

*Robin Robertson*

1. Now compare *Finding the Keys* by Robin Robertson and *October* by Robert Frost.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the poets’ choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
* how you respond to the poems.

**October**

O hushed October morning mild,

Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;

Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,

Should waste them all.

The crows above the forest call;

Tomorrow they may form and go.

O hushed October morning mild,

Begin the hours of this day slow.

Make the day seem to us less brief.

Hearts not averse to being beguiled,

Beguile us in the way you know.

Release one leaf at break of day;

At noon release another leaf;

One from our trees, one far away.

Retard the sun with gentle mist;

Enchant the land with amethyst.

Slow, slow!

For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,

Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,

Whose clustered fruit must else be lost —

For the grapes’ sake along the wall.

*Robert Frost*

OCR exam style question

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express feelings of regret for the passing of time.

You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which expresses the poet’s thoughts on the passing of time.

**[20]**

**The Bluebell**

A fine and subtle spirit dwells

In every little flower,

Each one its own sweet feeling breathes

With more or less of power.

There is a silent eloquence

In every wild bluebell

That fills my softened heart with bliss

That words could never tell.

Yet I recall not long ago

A bright and sunny day,

‘Twas when I led a toilsome life

So many leagues away;

That day along a sunny road

All carelessly I strayed,

Between two banks where smiling flowers

Their varied hues displayed.

Before me rose a lofty hill,

Behind me lay the sea,

My heart was not so heavy then

As it was wont to be.

Less harassed than at other times

I saw the scene was fair,

And spoke and laughed to those around,

As if I knew no care.

But when I looked upon the bank

My wandering glances fell

Upon a little trembling flower,

A single sweet bluebell.

Whence came that rising in my throat,

That dimness in my eye?

Why did those burning drops distil —

Those bitter feelings rise?

O, that lone flower recalled to me

My happy childhood’s hours

When bluebells seemed like fairy gifts

A prize among the flowers,

Those sunny days of merriment

When heart and soul were free,

And when I dwelt with kindred hearts

That loved and cared for me.  
  
I had not then mid heartless crowds

To spend a thankless life

In seeking after others’ weal

With anxious toil and strife.

‘Sad wanderer, weep those blissful times

That never may return!’

The lovely floweret seemed to say,

And thus it made me mourn.

*Anne Brontë*

**October**

O hushed October morning mild,

Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;

Tomorrow’s wind, if it be wild,

Should waste them all.

The crows above the forest call;

Tomorrow they may form and go.

O hushed October morning mild,

Begin the hours of this day slow.

Make the day seem to us less brief.

Hearts not averse to being beguiled,

Beguile us in the way you know.

Release one leaf at break of day;

At noon release another leaf;

One from our trees, one far away.

Retard the sun with gentle mist;

Enchant the land with amethyst.

Slow, slow!

For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,

Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,

Whose clustered fruit must else be lost —

For the grapes’ sake along the wall.

*Robert Frost*

Unit 4

Teaching notes – Calling card

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Calling Card’**  **Tracey Herd**  *(b.1968)* |

First encounter

* Emphasise to students the importance of their reading of whatever poem is set for the Unseen. However insistent the ticking of the clock, time must be spent on at least two unhurried readings. A third reading can be accompanied by jotting down initial thoughts, ideas and questions.

Getting closer to the poem

* At first glance, ‘Calling Card’ is an odd title. A calling card contains a small amount of significant information. Wikipedia defines it as ‘a card used socially to signify a visit made to a house if the occupant is absent, or as an introduction for oneself; the precursor to the modern business card.’ It is all that is left behind; though in the case of Marina Keegan, she left many words behind, not just a few. ‘Calling’ also resonates with other images in the poem such as broadcasting. Even so, it is appropriate for students to comment that a title (or indeed other parts of a poem) is ambiguous.

Structure

* The poem is divided into paragraphs, like an essay. However, if we were to write it out without line breaks, would it fit any particular category of prose writing? The majority of stanzas start with the specific and move to the abstract. For example, from the very specific and deliberate 8252 sunrises to the vague ‘wander through eternity …’ Guide students to look for contrasts between stanzas and within them in any poem they analyse.

The words on the page

* ‘Yellow’ crops up three times and there is also the echo of ‘travel’ in ‘travelling’. How significant these are is a matter for discussion.
* It is not just the words that are important, it is the way that they will go onwards and outwards like a radio signal into space. Draw students’ attention to the end of the fourth stanza with the words ‘never left you’. Is there a contradiction here? Are the words ‘still travelling outwards’ or are they ‘earthbound’? This provides an opportunity to discuss deliberate or unwitting contradictions in poems. As long as it is relevant to the question, an examiner will be impressed by a student (tentatively) questioning something in a poem. It could be suggested that Marina’s words are like some conceptions of the soul, attached to the earthly body for a while before breaking free.

Inside the poem

* There is very little that is still in the poem. The energy and movement is constant except when we come to the description of the car wreck. Again, noticing contrasts like this is very helpful and will show that a student has read a poem attentively.
* If some students have difficulty compiling notes on themes, offer some hints.
* The power of words: most of stanza 3 / so important they swirled around you / words haunting us / final stanza
* The contrast between the prosaic and the unusual: the photograph, the number of sunrises and sunsets, the accident location and detail, the ashes *vs* radio tower, swirling like moths, buds, stars …
* Coming to terms with the death of a young person: the first stanza / your words will travel outwards forever / the writer will always remember her (stanza 5) / ‘you were rare’ / up there with the stars.

Thoughts, response, conclusion

* The student’s personal response is an opportunity for an ‘On the one hand / on the other’ statement. An answer might praise the effectiveness of the descriptions and the way they evoke the personality of Marina Keegan as well as the reactions of the writer but also indicate their failure to engage the emotions of the reader.

Calling card

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Calling Card’**  **Tracey Herd**  *(b.1968)* |

|  |
| --- |
| At the last party,  the punctual, the late arrivals,  the ones who never made it  are all one and the same.  Girl in the vivid, yellow peacoat,  with hands tucked into your sleeves,  bangles upon bangles; only  in a photograph, could you be silent.  Your life comprised 8,252 sunrises  and one less sunset.  You are at the top of your  radio tower, speaking  out into the universe.  Your words, considered and private  will travel outwards forever  … *thoughts that wander*  *through eternity* … |

|  |
| --- |
| The car hit the guard rail,  Dennis, Mass, on Route 6,  with your boyfriend asleep at the wheel,  prosaic details you’d have discarded. They meant nothing, just a mess of metal and broken glass. Your words couldn’t protect you, but they never left you, swirling around your body like moths.  It’s us they’ll haunt, bearing  their bright, yellow buds.  I’ll never be able to look at  a yellow rose again  without thinking of you.  Your ashes were scattered  against the wind, your body  burned into charred scraps  of paper, random phrases,  all we are in the end.  But you, you were rare. Your words  are up there with the stars,  still travelling outwards  with the occasional earthbound sigh. |

First encounter

1. Read the poem through and then read it again, aloud.

What are your first impressions?



1. This is a ‘eulogy’ (something written in praise of someone who has died). How well did the poet know Marina Keegan? Base your response on the information in the poem.



Getting closer to the poem

1. The title is never referred to in the poem. What is a calling card and how much information does one tend to contain? Why has Herd given that title to this poem?



Structure

1. The poem is divided into stanzas of unequal length. Each one is like a paragraph, each introducing a slightly different topic. What is each one about? With a partner, take it in turns to sum up what each stanza is about. Then complete the following table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stanza 1** | Seems separate from the others – a generalisation (about death?) and not about Marina specifically. |
| **2** | Introduces Marina. She … |
| **3** |  |
| **4** |  |
| **5** |  |
| **6** |  |

1. There is also a vaguely chronological movement through the poem: before the accident, the accident, after the accident. Could the first stanza fit equally well at the end of the poem?

The words on the page

1. Herd’s eulogy is equally concerned with Marina Keegan’s words as with her body. Make two lists of quotes under those two headings. Where does ‘Your life’ fit?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Body** | **Words** |
|  |  |

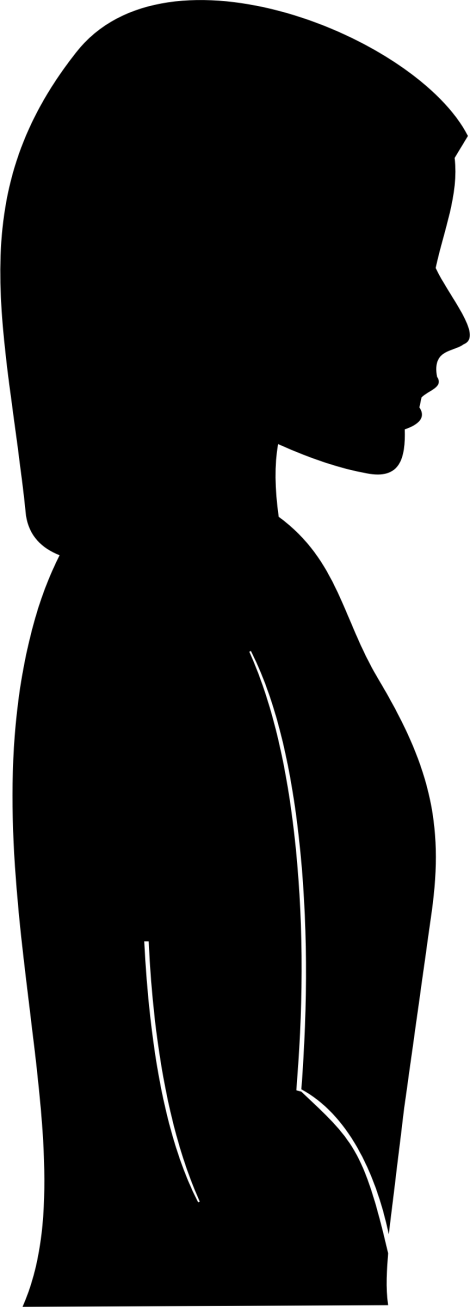
1. The second stanza gives us a snapshot of Marina. What can we deduce about her from this small vignette?



1. Look at the repetition of ‘your’ and make a note of the words which follow it. Repetition is always worth investigating. Are there other significant repetitions?

**your**

1. In the third stanza, Herd mentions the sunrises, sunsets and the universe. Make a note of other words and phrases which have similar connotations.



1. ‘Only in a photograph could you be silent’. Make a note of other words and phrases which refer to Marina’s liveliness, her talkativeness.

Inside the poem

1. Make a note of the images Herd uses which are connected with words. Which are the most effective, in your opinion? Give your reasons.



1. Read through the poem again, noticing how many words and phrases seem to create images of scattering, of movement. Is there anything that is still?



1. In a poem of this length, it is impossible to discuss everything. Often the exam question will give you a focus. If not, decide to concentrate on a particular theme. Here are some possibilities:

the power of words

the contrast between the prosaic and the unusual

coming to terms with the death of a young person

unusual

Jot down some notes for a paragraph or two on one of these themes.



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. Although this is a personal eulogy, does it have an impact on you – or is it just like a media report on an accident?



Teaching notes – For Meg

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘For Meg’**  **Fleur Adcock** *(b.1934)* |

First encounter

* Who is the poet addressing? The literal answer is ‘Meg’, the oft repeated ‘you’ of the poem. But obviously Meg can’t read or hear it, so who is it actually written for? ‘In memoriam’ poems may be written for a personal kind of therapy in which case, though, why publish? This is an item for discussion, not something which has an answer.

Getting closer to the poem

* The mood of the poem is hardly elegiac; it’s gossipy, conversational, over-excited at times. It’s as if Adcock is re-creating Meg’s liveliness, her exuberance, in the only way she knows: in words. Most of the words in the list could be applied to Meg. Again, they are there to provoke discussion. As should gradually become clear, the poem tells us as much about Fleur as it does about Meg.

Structure – the way the poem is built

* The stanza structure exists as much for the appearance on the page as for any internal requirements of scansion or sense. The poem moves from what Adcock cannot do, to a short recollection, to a lengthy recollection and a final summing up. This does throw more than usual emphasis on the closing lines.
* The length of the lines is flexible; there are five or six stresses in each one but the overall effect is of natural speech. Each of the three long stanzas ends with a short sentence which undercuts or reflects on the preceding lines. This is the kind of thing that students need to look out for.

The words on the page

* Verbs: there is plenty to choose from. While the poet ‘staggered’, ‘swayed’, ‘wobbled’ and ‘clung’, Meg ‘galloped’, ‘beamed’, ‘clicked proficientl’y and ‘laughed’. These simple words at the heart of the poem bring out the essential contrasts between the two women.

Inside the poem

Now you’ve done the scariest thing there is;

and all the king’s horses, dear Meg, won’t bring you back.

* Points to discuss about the final lines include: the reference back to the King of Nepal’s horses, the reference to Humpty Dumpty (who had a great fall), the return to the theme of ‘scary’ and the insertion of ‘dear Meg’.

Thoughts, response, conclusions

* All we really know about Meg is that she was braver or more foolhardy than the poet; in fact the poem tells us as much or more about Adcock as it does about Meg. Students should look out for this kind of disjunction between what a title says and what the poem actually does. In the final analysis, the poem is about the contrast between the two women. It is, after all, ‘For Meg’, not ‘About Meg’.
* It will, of course, be a matter of opinion as to how sad the poem is. For those who knew her, it would have a more powerful impact compared to the effect on a readership that has never known her.

For Meg

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘For Meg’**  **Fleur Adcock** *(b.1934)* |

|  |
| --- |
| Half the things you did were too scary for me.  Skiing? No thanks. Riding? I’ve never learnt.  Canoing? I’d be sure to tip myself out  and stagger home, ignominiously wet.  It was my son, that time in Kathmandu,  who galloped off with you to the temple at Bodnath  in a monsoon downpour, both of you on horses  from the King of Nepal’s stables. Not me.  And as for the elephants - my God, the elephants!  How did you get me up on to one of those?  First they lay down; the way to climb aboard  was to walk up a gross leg, then straddle a sack  (that’s all there was to sit on), while the creature  wobbled and swayed through the jungle for slow hours.  It felt like riding on the dome of St Paul’s  in an earthquake. This was supposed to be a treat.  You and Alex and Maya, in her best sari,  sat beaming at the wildlife, you with your camera  proficiently clicking. You were pregnant at the time.  I clung with both hot hands to the bit of rope  that was all there was to cling to. The jungle steamed.  As soon as we were back in sight of the camp  I got off and walked through a river to reach it.  You laughed, but kindly. We couldn’t all be like you.  Now you’ve done the scariest thing there is;  and all the king’s horses, dear Meg, won’t bring you back. |

First encounter

1. Read the poem to yourself and then read it aloud or listen to someone reading it to you. What impression do you get of the writer?

The writer seems to be



1. A poem written in memory of someone is clearly going to be personal, so we know that Adcock is the ‘speaker’ – i.e. she has not taken on the persona of another character. But who is she addressing?

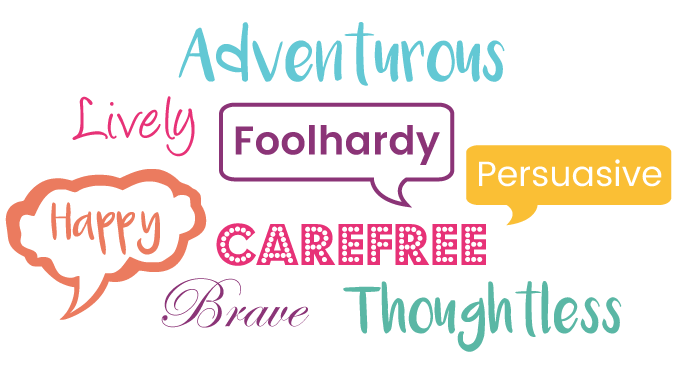


Getting closer to the poem

1. What is the tone or mood of the poem?



1. Imagine the writer is talking about Meg to someone who didn’t know her. Which two words from the following list might she use to describe her?



Explain your choices:



Structure – the way the poem is built

1. The poem moves through a series of stages. What is each one about?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The first 4 lines |  |
| Lines 5-8 |  |
| Lines 9 – 24 |  |
| The final 2 lines |  |

1. Three things to think about:

You will notice that the poem builds to a climax and then ends quite suddenly. Does that seem satisfactory – or does it leave you wanting more?



The poem is presented in stanzas of the same length (apart from the closing two) and in lines of similar length. Why do you think the writer has chosen to end the lines where she does?

What do you notice about the end of each of the three long stanzas?

The words on the page

1. The language of the poem is mainly straightforward. If there are any words which are unclear to you, try to work out the meaning from the context. ‘Ignominiously’ and ‘proficiently’ are two of the more complex words. Interestingly they underline a contrast between the writer and Meg. How would you describe that contrast?



The writer is whereas Meg is

1. Look at the verbs in the poem. Pick out three that you think are particularly important and say why.



Inside the poem

1. There is a lot of description in the poem but only one use of imagery, a striking simile.

What is it and how effective is it?



1. The final lines of a poem are usually important. In this poem they are additionally emphasised by being set on their own. Make a note of anything you find interesting or significant in the two lines.



Thoughts, response, conclusions

1. Your reaction to the poem:
2. How far does it give you a picture of what Meg was like?



1. Is this a sad poem?



Comparison resource

Adcock and Herd have each written poems in memory of someone they knew. Explore the ways in which they express their feelings for that person. How effectively do they portray Meg and Marina?

Here is one way of organising your thoughts.

**Adcock**

**Herd**

Language is straightforward, as if she is writing to …

She focuses on memories rather than …

What we learn about Meg is that …

Also …

Neither creates a sombre mood …

Their style is conversational, e.g. …

They have chosen to write in a free verse from …

Both employ lots of detail, e.g. …

Language is more lyrical than Adcock, for example …

She pays more attention to …

Herd’s portrayal of Marina is …

Overall …

You will need to add a conclusion. It could be along the lines of: ‘Although their styles are similar, the two poems are very different in the way they portray the dead person. Firstly … ‘‘

To the teacher

This comparison may be set as a separate activity or used as a follow-up, building on the work done on the two poems and helping to develop confidence in comparing poems.

In addition to the points covered in the work on the individual poems, the following might be useful when guiding students who need extra help or when reviewing their answers.

* Herd pays more attention to the subject of the eulogy, especially to what she did. She also gives at least some physical description of the person in the second stanza and even details the manner of her death.
* Adcock tells us very little about Meg except that she did (relatively) scary things. We learn far more about Fleur than about Meg.
* Adcock seems more concerned with a past – perhaps quite a distant one – while Herd’s words are very much of the present.
* There is a definite climax, even a shock, at the end of Adcock’s poem whereas the climax of Herd’s is in the middle: ‘The car hit the guard rail …’

Students will come up with their own similarities and differences. One of the key tasks is to guide them into organising their material coherently.

Exam questions

AQA exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15**  **20**  **25** | **Calling Card**  At the last party,  the punctual, the late arrivals,  the ones who never made it  are all one and the same.  Girl in the vivid, yellow peacoat,  with hands tucked into your sleeves,  bangles upon bangles; only  in a photograph, could you be silent.  Your life comprised 8,252 sunrises  and one less sunset.  You are at the top of your  radio tower, speaking  out into the universe.  Your words, considered and private  will travel outwards forever  … *thoughts that wander*  *through eternity* …  The car hit the guard rail,  Dennis, Mass, on Route 6,  with your boyfriend asleep at the wheel,  prosaic details you’d have discarded.  They meant nothing, just  a mess of metal and broken glass.  Your words couldn’t protect you,  but they never left you,  swirling around your body like moths. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **30**  **35**  **40** | It’s us they’ll haunt, bearing  their bright, yellow buds.  I’ll never be able to look at  a yellow rose again  without thinking of you.  Your ashes were scattered  against the wind, your body  burned into charred scraps  of paper, random phrases,  all we are in the end.  But you, you were rare. Your words  are up there with the stars,  still travelling outwards  with the occasional earthbound sigh.  *Tracey Herd* |

1. In ‘Calling Card’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about the girl at the party?

[24 marks]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15**  **20**  **25** | **For Meg**  Half the things you did were too scary for me.  Skiing? No thanks. Riding? I’ve never learnt.  Canoing? I’d be sure to tip myself out  and stagger home, ignominiously wet.  It was my son, that time in Kathmandu,  who galloped off with you to the temple at Bodnath  in a monsoon downpour, both of you on horses  from the King of Nepal’s stables. Not me.  And as for the elephants - my God, the elephants!  How did you get me up on to one of those?  First they lay down; the way to climb aboard  was to walk up a gross leg, then straddle a sack  (that’s all there was to sit on), while the creature  wobbled and swayed through the jungle for slow hours.  It felt like riding on the dome of St Paul’s  in an earthquake. This was supposed to be a treat.  You and Alex and Maya, in her best sari,  sat beaming at the wildlife, you with your camera  proficiently clicking. You were pregnant at the time.  I clung with both hot hands to the bit of rope  that was all there was to cling to. The jungle steamed.  As soon as we were back in sight of the camp  I got off and walked through a river to reach it.  You laughed, but kindly. We couldn’t all be like you.  Now you’ve done the scariest thing there is;  and all the king’s horses, dear Meg, won’t bring you back.  *Fleur Adcock* |

1. In both ‘Calling Card’ and ‘For Meg’ the speakers describe feelings about someone that has died. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***Calling Card***  At the last party,  the punctual, the late arrivals,  the ones who never made it  are all one and the same.  Girl in the vivid, yellow peacoat, 5  with hands tucked into your sleeves,  bangles upon bangles; only  in a photograph, could you be silent.  Your life comprised 8,252 sunrises  and one less sunset. 10  You are at the top of your  radio tower, speaking  out into the universe.  Your words, considered and private  will travel outwards forever 15  … *thoughts that wander*  *through eternity* …  The car hit the guard rail,  Dennis, Mass, on Route 6,  with your boyfriend asleep at the wheel, 20  prosaic details you’d have discarded.  They meant nothing, just  a mess of metal and broken glass.  Your words couldn’t protect you,  but they never left you, 25 |

|  |
| --- |
| swirling around your body like moths.  It’s us they’ll haunt, bearing  their bright, yellow buds.  I’ll never be able to look at  a yellow rose again 30  without thinking of you.  Your ashes were scattered  against the wind, your body  burned into charred scraps  of paper, random phrases, 35  all we are in the end.  But you, you were rare. Your words  are up there with the stars,  still travelling outwards  with the occasional earthbound sigh. 40  *Tracey Herd* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***For Meg***  Half the things you did were too scary for me.  Skiing? No thanks. Riding? I’ve never learnt.  Canoeing? I’d be sure to tip myself out  and stagger home, ignominiously wet.  It was my son, that time in Kathmandu, 5  who galloped off with you to the temple at Bodnath  in a monsoon downpour, both of you on horses  from the King of Nepal’s stables. Not me.  And as for the elephants - my God, the elephants!  How did you get me up on to one of those? 10  First they lay down; the way to climb aboard  was to walk up a gross leg, then straddle a sack  (that’s all there was to sit on), while the creature  wobbled and swayed through the jungle for slow hours.  It felt like riding on the dome of St Paul’s 15  in an earthquake. This was supposed to be a treat.  You and Alex and Maya, in her best sari,  sat beaming at the wildlife, you with your camera  proficiently clicking. You were pregnant at the time.  I clung with both hot hands to the bit of rope 20  that was all there was to cling to. The jungle steamed.  As soon as we were back in sight of the camp  I got off and walked through a river to reach it.  You laughed, but kindly. We couldn’t all be like you.  Now you’ve done the scariest thing there is; 25  and all the king’s horses, dear Meg, won’t bring you back.  *Fleur Adcock*   1. Compare the ways the writers present someone who has died and their feelings for that person in *Calling Card* and *For Meg*.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas exam style question

**SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)**

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).*

1. Read the two poems *Calling Card* by Tracey Herd and *For Meg* by Fleur Adcock. In both these poems the poets write about their memories of someone who has died.
2. Write about the poem *Calling Card* by Tracey Herd, and its effect on you.

[15]

You may wish to consider:

* *what the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *the ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
* *the poets choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *how you respond to the poem.*

**Calling Card**

At the last party,

the punctual, the late arrivals,

the ones who never made it

are all one and the same.

Girl in the vivid, yellow peacoat,

with hands tucked into your sleeves,

bangles upon bangles; only

in a photograph, could you be silent.

Your life comprised 8,252 sunrises

and one less sunset.

You are at the top of your

radio tower, speaking

out into the universe.

Your words, considered and private

will travel outwards forever

… *thoughts that wander*

*through eternity* …

The car hit the guard rail,

Dennis, Mass, on Route 6,

with your boyfriend asleep at the wheel,

prosaic details you’d have discarded.

They meant nothing, just

a mess of metal and broken glass.

Your words couldn’t protect you,

but they never left you,

swirling around your body like moths.

It’s us they’ll haunt, bearing

their bright, yellow buds.

I’ll never be able to look at

a yellow rose again

without thinking of you.

Your ashes were scattered

against the wind, your body

burned into charred scraps

of paper, random phrases,

all we are in the end.

But you, you were rare. Your words

are up there with the stars,

still travelling outwards

with the occasional earthbound sigh.

*Tracey Herd*

1. Now compare *Calling Card* by Tracey Herd and *For Meg* by Fleur Adcock.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the poet’s choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
* how you respond to the poems.

**For Meg**

Half the things you did were too scary for me.

Skiing? No thanks. Riding? I’ve never learnt.

Canoing? I’d be sure to tip myself out

and stagger home, ignominiously wet.

It was my son, that time in Kathmandu,

who galloped off with you to the temple at Bodnath

in a monsoon downpour, both of you on horses

from the King of Nepal’s stables. Not me.

And as for the elephants - my God, the elephants!

How did you get me up on to one of those?

First they lay down; the way to climb aboard

was to walk up a gross leg, then straddle a sack

(that’s all there was to sit on), while the creature

wobbled and swayed through the jungle for slow hours.

It felt like riding on the dome of St Paul’s

in an earthquake. This was supposed to be a treat.

You and Alex and Maya, in her best sari,

sat beaming at the wildlife, you with your camera

proficiently clicking. You were pregnant at the time.

I clung with both hot hands to the bit of rope

that was all there was to cling to. The jungle steamed.

As soon as we were back in sight of the camp

I got off and walked through a river to reach it.

You laughed, but kindly. We couldn’t all be like you.

Now you’ve done the scariest thing there is;

and all the king’s horses, dear Meg, won’t bring you back.

*Fleur Adcock*

OCR exam style question

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read Long Distance II by Tony Harrison (from the OCR anthology) and the poem below (*For Meg* by Fleur Adcock) and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express their feelings for the person that had died.

You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which expresses memories for another person.

**[20]**

***For Meg* by Fleur Adcock**

Half the things you did were too scary for me.

Skiing? No thanks. Riding? I’ve never learnt.

Canoing? I’d be sure to tip myself out

and stagger home, ignominiously wet.

It was my son, that time in Kathmandu,

who galloped off with you to the temple at Bodnath

in a monsoon downpour, both of you on horses

from the King of Nepal’s stables. Not me.

And as for the elephants - my God, the elephants!

How did you get me up on to one of those?

First they lay down; the way to climb aboard

was to walk up a gross leg, then straddle a sack

(that’s all there was to sit on), while the creature

wobbled and swayed through the jungle for slow hours.

It felt like riding on the dome of St Paul’s

in an earthquake. This was supposed to be a treat.

You and Alex and Maya, in her best sari,

sat beaming at the wildlife, you with your camera

proficiently clicking. You were pregnant at the time.

I clung with both hot hands to the bit of rope

that was all there was to cling to. The jungle steamed.

As soon as we were back in sight of the camp

I got off and walked through a river to reach it.

You laughed, but kindly. We couldn’t all be like you.

Now you’ve done the scariest thing there is;

and all the king’s horses, dear Meg, won’t bring you back.

Unit 5

Teaching notes – A London Thoroughfare

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am’ Amy Lowell**  *(1874-1925)* |

First encounter

* ‘Sidewalks’ should be the most obvious indicator of Lowell’s US origins. The poem is quite unusual in expressing her feelings quite so obviously, both her dislike of the ‘squalid and sinister’ city and her love of the moon. Perhaps this says more about her mood than it does about the city. Some terms which might help some students describe mood are:

out of sympathy with

repulsed by

repelled by

disagreeable

Getting closer to the poem

* There are a number of words and phrases which are not in themselves negative but which add up to an overall mood. ‘Lights glare’, ‘feet shuffle’, for example, and the ‘river’ is slow-moving yet going nowhere.
* ‘Light’ is a theme, whether the too bright lights of the city which make the moon appear feeble, or the black and silver of the river/road. Everything is monochrome, like an old black and white film.

Structure – the way the poem is built

* The first lines should lead students to detect a gradual movement from the broader picture down to the windows opposite and then to the poet herself and her final reflection on her feelings, summed up with ‘And this is an alien city’.

The words on the page

* The first activity could be carried out as a class, using a projected version of the text which could be gradually amended using suggestions from students. A few subtle changes can make a big difference, though ‘squalid and sinister’ require something more drastic.
* The following words are repeated:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Three times: | city | lamps | moon | window |  |  |
| Twice: | cold (coldly) | river | silver | slow-moving | street | white |

* In discussion, tease out why some words might be expected to be repeated – ‘city’ and ‘street’, for example, and others are more intriguing – ‘slow-moving’, ‘silver’ and ‘cold’, for example.

Inside the poem

* **Imagery.** There is the metaphor of the street as river, which is sustained throughout the first stanza – perhaps enough to be termed an extended metaphor? It’s not an attractive image: slow-moving, black and silver, going nowhere. Yet it is going somewhere; perhaps it’s the writer who is going nowhere. The moon is a dominant image in the second half of the poem, clear and round and yet thin and lustreless, rather like the description. The fact that the moon is ‘she’ might prompt students to see this as an example of personification but as it doesn’t behave in any way like a person, it’s not a good example!
* **Shape.** The poem is long and thin: not particularly like a street but not unlike a meandering river. The line breaks and punctuation (shouldn’t the first comma be a full stop or semi-colon?) create an unsettled effect. The isolation of ‘And lies’ is especially unsettling with its double meaning. The poem, like the observer, is not restful in the way that it might be perceived on a moonlit night.
* **The ending.** ‘I know the moon, / And this is an alien city.’ We might expect a ‘But’ instead of the ‘And’ – does this make a big difference or not? Taken literally, Lowell is saying she knows the moon better than the city, which is a bit of poetic whimsy. Students could be asked to express in their own way the feeling that Lowell is articulating here. ‘The city feels foreign to me but at least the moon is the same as the one at home – even though the streetlights make it dimmer than it would be back there …’

Thoughts, response, conclusion

* The poem is a kind of internal monologue. It may not be too fanciful to say that the poet is projecting her feelings onto the scene. If students do not relate very strongly to the poem, it could be instructive. Some poems will speak to them, some will leave them cold. The important thing is that they are guided to finding ways of expressing their responses intelligently.

A London Thoroughfare. 2 a.m.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am’ Amy Lowell**  *(1874-1925)* |

|  |
| --- |
| They have watered the street,  It shines in the glare of lamps,  Cold, white lamps,  And lies  Like a slow-moving river,  Barred with silver and black.  Cabs go dow­­n it,  One,  And then another,  Between them I hear the shuffling of feet.  Tramps doze on the window-ledges,  Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.  The city is squalid and sinister,  With the silver-barred street in the midst,  Slow-moving,  A river leading nowhere. |

|  |
| --- |
| Opposite my window,  The moon cuts,  Clear and round,  Through the plum-coloured night.  She cannot light the city;  It is too bright.  It has white lamps,  And glitters coldly.    I stand in the window and watch the moon.  She is thin and lustreless,  But I love her.  I know the moon,  And this is an alien city.  **Glossary:** *alien* – unfamiliar. |

First encounter

1. Where do you think the writer comes from? What are her feelings about the city? Do you think they would be the same at 2 o’clock in the afternoon?



1. Write a short paragraph to sum up the mood of the poem. Condense the paragraph to a sentence then finally a single word.

**Paragraph**



**Sentence**



**Word**

Getting closer to the poem

1. Sometimes the poet’s negative feelings are directly expressed, e.g. ‘The city is squalid and sinister’. Elsewhere the negativity is more indirect. Highlight the words or phrases which, to you, express negative feelings. Share these with a partner – how do your answers compare?
2. Light plays an important part in the poem. Jot down all the references to light, dark and the moon.

Light

Moon

Dark

Structure – the way the poem is built

1. Look at the first line of each stanza. How do these show the focus of attention in the poem gradually changing?



The words on the page

1. Here are the words of the first stanza displayed as continuous text. Tweak some of the words to change the mood from negative to positive.

Some suggestions have been made as an example.

They have watered the street, it shines in the ~~glare~~ light of lamps, ~~cold~~ bright, white lamps, and lies like a slow-moving river, barred with silver and black. Cabs go down it, one, and then another. Between them I hear the shuffling of feet. Tramps doze on the window-ledges, night-walkers pass along the sidewalks. The city is squalid and sinister, with the silver-barred street in the midst, slow-moving, a river leading nowhere.

1. Repetition is almost always significant. How many significant words are repeated – i.e. not including words such as ‘the’, ‘it’ and so on? Highlight all the ones you can find – you may be surprised at how many there are.
2. Which of the repetitions do you think are most important?   
   Choose three and explain why.



Inside the poem

1. **Imagery:** The two thematic images in the poem are ‘river’ and ‘moon’. How does the poet describe the river and the moon, and what differences are there in the way they are described?



1. **Shape:** Is there anything interesting about the shape of the poem you could comment on? How does the punctuation affect the way the poem is read?



1. **The ending:** What is the effect of the last two lines?



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. Is the poem more effective in creating a picture of the city or a portrait of the poet and her feelings?



1. Explain your judgement and go on to say what your personal response to the poem is.



Teaching notes – Frost Fair

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Frost Fair’ Rowyda Amin** |

First encounter

* Students may well be baffled by this poem, especially at first reading. Hence the reminder that poems can create imaginary worlds, with which they will be familiar from books, films and television. The writer appears to be melding past and present – hot dogs and dancing bears, taxis and booths on the frozen Thames. Some things could be from past or present, others are ambiguous. What are the screaming hens on the sleigh? Girls on a carousel?
* ‘You’ seems to be the voice of the protagonist rather than addressed to another person, but whether it is the voice of the poet or an imagined character, we are left to wonder.
* Most students dislike uncertainty but in discussing poetry they will have to get used to it! They need to become familiar with a vocabulary which will make them feel more comfortable with expressing uncertainty.

Getting closer to the poem

* ‘Alas my love, you do me wrong. / Thy girdle of gold so red. / And yet thou wouldst not love.’ These phrases stand out from the rest of the poem and some may recognise them as lines from (one version of) Greensleeves. Students would not be expected to know this in an exam; if the board thought it was sufficiently significant, it would be explained in a footnote. However, students should be able to see that these lines are different and have a stab at what part they play. Notice that the first example comes immediately after the mention of ballad singers. So here the writer is again mingling an old song with a contemporary setting and mood, which adds to the mysterious quality of the poem. (Interestingly, the Greensleeves lyric reads ‘And yet thou wouldst not love me’. Some students may find this intriguing if it is revealed after the activities have been completed.)
* The words provided to describe the mood can be added to. There is no right answer, of course, but choices require explanation which leads to discussion. A number of the terms are quite similar in meaning and teasing out differences and subtleties is useful.

Structure – the way the poem is built

* There are different ways of dividing the poem, as well. The lines from Greensleeves could form the final words of each stanza. The first two stanzas then paint pictures observed by the writer but the final one becomes more personal, expressing the desires of the writer.

The words on the page

* In terms of contrasts, there are many, but the interweaving of past and present, the real and the imaginary seems key. In some ways, it is all imaginary. After all, there has not been a frost fair on the Thames for more than two hundred years. This leads back to the terms used to describe the mood of the poem and then on to the choice of a significant word. Students could write their word on a post-it and these could be displayed for comparison and discussion. Anonymity is often helpful.

Inside the poem

* **Imagery.** There is some interesting figurative language, which students may or may not find effective. Why, for example, are taxis ‘black as death’s pyjamas’? It’s an arresting image but is it a good or appropriate one?
* **Sound.** There is a repetition of an ‘o’ sound in the first half to thirds of the poem. This adds a certain harmony to a reading but does it have any other purpose? It doesn’t have to – assonance and alliteration have been used over the centuries simply for the pleasing sound.
* **The ending.** The poem ends with a seriously indented line and the final song quotation. What are we to make of the former? (It’s always possible that it’s a typographical error – stranger things have happened!) It certainly slows the poem down with a jolt, ready for the final, rather blunt ‘And yet thou wouldst not love’. Is she merely using a line from Greensleeves as a nice finishing touch or does it have deeper significance? If the ‘you’ is the writer, is this recognition of an inability or unwillingness to love? Again, the reader can ponder and wonder but not know for sure.

Thoughts, response, conclusion

* Again, students’ responses could be written on separate pieces of paper and then circulated anonymously to start discussion. It’s a poem full of vivid images, intriguing and yet, like a dream, impossible to pin down.

Frost Fair

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Frost Fair’ Rowyda Amin** |

|  |
| --- |
| Slideshow faces flicker from the station.  You’re following the mood to London Bridge  where taxis cruise black as death’s pyjamas.  The Thames you find is glacier silk, shantied  with booths and carousels. Five screaming hens  speed by in a white horse sleigh. Ballad singers  busk their vagrant lines. *Alas my love, you do me wrong.*  Crowds scoff hotdogs and candyfloss,  cheer as Punch batters Judy with the baby.  Hog roasts spit fat on the ice, children watching  with faces pink and hot. *Thy girdle of gold so red.*  Falling snow feathers the whipped bear moonwalking in chains.  It looks at you with marshmallow eyes  and you want to take its arms and zip over the ice,  feel fur on your cheeks, skating against the wind to the estuary  where the ice breaks apart, but you smile, hands in pockets,  and turn to the skittles and acrobats,                                       sugared crepes and hot wine.  *And yet thou wouldst not love.*  **Glossary:** *Frost Fairs* – these *were held on the River Thames in London in the 17th-19th century when the winters were so cold that the river froze over.* |

First encounter

1. What’s going on? What are your first impressions of the scene described? Remember that poems, like stories can include every kind of imagined experience from fantasy to science fiction.



1. I think that what is happening is:



1. Who? Who is the ‘you’ in the poem? Is the writer referring to herself or someone else? Give your reasons.



Getting closer to the poem

1. Past or present? Pick out the references that could only be the present or very recent past, those that seem from the past and those which could be either.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Present** | **Either** | **Past** |
| Hot dogs | Punch and Judy | The frozen river |

1. There are three short sentences in italics which do not seem to fit with the rest of the poem. Why – apart from the italics - do they seem different?



1. Which one word would you use to describe the poem’s mood? Why?





Structure – the way the poem is built

1. If the poem were to be divided into three stanzas, where would you make the divisions?

Draw arrows where you would make the divisions. Next to them write a brief explanation of why you’ve made the division there.

The words on the page

1. Look at the instances of ‘you’. Where are they concentrated? How does this make this part of the poem stand out from the rest?
2. Find contrasts in the poem, for example ‘hot and cold’, ‘slow and fast’, ‘past and present’.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contrast | Examples |
| Hot and cold |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

1. Which five words strike you as the most important or unusual?



1. Pick one of them and explain why you chose it:



Inside the poem

1. **Imagery.** Select two examples where the poet has used figurative language and explain why it is effective – or not.



1. **Sound.** One vowel sound is more prevalent than others, especially in the first half of the poem. What effect does this have on your reading, if any?



1. **The ending.** What do you make of the ending? Does it affect how you understand the rest of the poem?



Thoughts, response, conclusion

1. Has your view of the poem changed since you first read it? Write a few lines about your first reaction to the poem and how you view it now. This is your personal response but still needs to be based on the words on the page.



Comparison resource

**‘Frost Fair’ and ‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am’:** Compare the poets’ feelings about being in the city. Add your thoughts/notes underneath the heading prompts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am’  They have watered the street,  It shines in the glare of lamps,  Cold, white lamps,  And lies  Like a slow-moving river,  Barred with silver and black.  Cabs go down it,  One,  And then another,  Between them I hear the shuffling of feet.  Tramps doze on the window-ledges,  Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.  The city is squalid and sinister,  With the silver-barred street in the midst,  Slow-moving,  A river leading nowhere.  Opposite my window,  The moon cuts,  Clear and round,  Through the plum-coloured night.  She cannot light the city;  It is too bright.  It has white lamps,  And glitters coldly.  I stand in the window and watch the moon.  She is thin and lustreless,  But I love her.  I know the moon,  And this is an alien city.  Amy Lowell | ‘Frost Fair’  Slideshow faces flicker from the station.  You’re following the mood to London Bridge  where taxis cruise black as death’s pyjamas.  The Thames you find is glacier silk, shantied  with booths and carousels. Five screaming hens  speed by in a white horse sleigh. Ballad singers  busk their vagrant lines. *Alas my love, you do me wrong*.  Crowds scoff hotdogs and candyfloss,  cheer as Punch batters Judy with the baby.  Hog roasts spit fat on the ice, children watching  with faces pink and hot. *Thy girdle of gold so red*.  Falling snow feathers the whipped bear moonwalking in chains.  It looks at you with marshmallow eyes  and you want to take its arms and zip over the ice,  feel fur on your cheeks, skating against the wind to the estuary  where the ice breaks apart, but you smile, hands in pockets,  and turn to the skittles and acrobats,  sugared crepes and hot wine.  *And yet thou wouldst not love*.  Rowyda Amin |
|
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|

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| monochrome/colour | | cold/warm | |
| listlessness/energy | | negative/positive | |
| one sense/many senses | one feeling/range of feelings | | isolated/engaged |

**‘Frost Fair’ and ‘London Thoroughfare 2 a.m.’: Compare the poets’ feelings about being in the city.**

Use the words and phrases from the word bank to fill in the cells under appropriate headings. Some may fit under more than one heading.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Monochrome / colour | | Cold / warm | | | listlessness / energy | |
| Negative / positive | | One sense / many senses | | | Isolation / company | |
| alien city | skating against the wind | | shuffling | too bright | | children watching |
| black as death’s pyjamas | you smile | | shuffling of feet | tramps doze | | falling snow feathers |
| cannot light | glitters coldly | | skittles and acrobats | white horse sleigh | | marshmallow eyes |
| clear and round | leading nowhere | | silver and black | crepes and hot wine | | zip over the ice |
| cold white lamps | pink and hot | | singers busk | you do me wrong | | feel fur |
| girdle of gold so red | plum-coloured night | | slow-moving | crowds | | thou wouldst not love |
| glacier silk | scoff hotdogs | | squalid and sinister | cheer | |  |
| glare of lamps | screaming hens speed by | | thin and lustreless | spit fat | |  |

To the teacher

There are three variations offered here. One simply provides the two poems with space between for students’ jottings.

For those who need support, there is a version with suggested headings which will help them to focus on the contrasts between the poems.

Finally, there is a version in table form. Students can either copy words and phrases from the word bank below into the appropriate cells or, if using a word processor, drag and drop or copy and paste.

All of the activities should give students enough material to write a well-evidenced commentary and conclusion. Lowell’s poem creates a monochrome picture, ‘plum-coloured’ being the only variation. Her poem could be considered cold. Amin’s, though mentioning ice and glacier, is much warmer. Lowell focuses on slow or no movement where Amin portrays vivacious movement and energy. ‘London Thoroughfare’ creates a feeling of isolation, ‘Frost Fair’ is full of people. In terms of senses, Lowell concentrates on sight – the only exception being ‘shuffling of feet’; Amin uses sight, sound, touch and taste. Overall, ‘London Thoroughfare’ could be interpreted as negative, dismal and almost antagonistic; ‘They’ have watered the street and the city is ‘Alien’. *‘Frost Fair*’, in spite of the words of the song and the curious reference to death’s pyjamas, is positive, brimming with energy and a *range* of feelings.

These are some of the qualities which one hopes students will be able to identify and then use in order to create an answer to the question:

***Compare the poets’ feelings about being in the city.***

Exam questions

AQA exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15** | **A London Thoroughfare. 2 am**  How they strut about, people in love,  how tall they grow, pleased with themselves,  their hair, glossy, their skin shining.  They don’t remember who they have been.    How filmic they are just for this time.  How important they’ve become – secret, above  the order of things, the dreary mundane.  Every church bell ringing, a fresh sign.    How dull the lot that are not in love.  Their clothes shabby, their skin lustreless;  how clueless they are, hair a mess; how they trudge  up and down streets in the rain,    remembering one kiss in a dark alley,  a touch in a changing-room, if lucky, a lovely wait  for the phone to ring, maybe, baby.  The past with its rush of velvet, its secret hush    already miles away, dimming now, in the late day.  *Amy Lowell* |

1. In ‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am, how does the poet present the speaker’s reaction to being in London?

**[24 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15** | **Frost Fair**  Slideshow faces flicker from the station.  You’re following the mood to London Bridge  where taxis cruise black as death’s pyjamas.  The Thames you find is glacier silk, shantied  with booths and carousels. Five screaming hens  speed by in a white horse sleigh. Ballad singers  busk their vagrant lines. *Alas my love, you do me wrong*.  Crowds scoff hotdogs and candyfloss,  cheer as Punch batters Judy with the baby.  Hog roasts spit fat on the ice, children watching  with faces pink and hot. *Thy girdle of gold so red*.  Falling snow feathers the whipped bear moonwalking in chains.  It looks at you with marshmallow eyes  and you want to take its arms and zip over the ice,  feel fur on your cheeks, skating against the wind to the estuary  where the ice breaks apart, but you smile, hands in pockets,  and turn to the skittles and acrobats,  sugared crepes and hot wine.  *And yet thou wouldst not love.*  *Rowyda Amin* |

1. In both ‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 am’ and ‘Frost Fair’ the speakers describe feelings about being in a city. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***A London Thoroughfare. 2 am***  They have watered the street,  It shines in the glare of lamps,  Cold, white lamps,  And lies  Like a slow-moving river, 5  Barred with silver and black.  Cabs go down it,  One,  And then another.  Between them I hear the shuffling of feet. 10  Tramps doze on the window-ledges,  Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.  The city is squalid and sinister,  With the silver-barred street in the midst,  Slow-moving, 15  A river leading nowhere.  Opposite my window,  The moon cuts,  Clear and round,  Through the plum-coloured night. 20  She cannot light the city;  It is too bright.  It has white lamps,  And glitters coldly.    I stand in the window and watch the moon. 25  She is thin and lustreless,  But I love her.  I know the moon,  And this is an alien city.  *Amy Lowell* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Frost Fair***  Slideshow faces flicker from the station.  You’re following the mood to London Bridge  where taxis cruise black as death’s pyjamas.  The Thames you find is glacier silk, shantied  with booths and carousels. Five screaming hens 5  speed by in a white horse sleigh. Ballad singers  busk their vagrant lines. *Alas my love, you do me wrong*.  Crowds scoff hotdogs and candyfloss,  cheer as Punch batters Judy with the baby.  Hog roasts spit fat on the ice, children watching 10  with faces pink and hot. *Thy girdle of gold so red*.  Falling snow feathers the whipped bear moonwalking in chains.  It looks at you with marshmallow eyes  and you want to take its arms and zip over the ice,  feel fur on your cheeks, skating against the wind to the estuary 15  where the ice breaks apart, but you smile, hands in pockets,  and turn to the skittles and acrobats,  sugared crepes and hot wine.  *And yet thou wouldst not love*.  *Rowyda Amin*   1. Compare the ways the writers present someone’s feeling towards the city in A London Thoroughfare. 2 am and Frost Fair.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas exam style question

**SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)**

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).*

1. Read the two poems, *A London Thoroughfare. 2 am* by Amy Lowell and *Frost Fair* by Rowyda Amin. In both of these poems the poets write about being in a city.
2. Write about the poem *A London Thoroughfare. 2 am* by Amy Lowell, and its effect on you.

[15]

*You may wish to consider:*

* *what the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *the ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
* *the poet’s choice if words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *how you respond to the poem.*

**A London Thoroughfare. 2 am**

They have watered the street,

It shines in the glare of lamps,

Cold, white lamps,

And lies

Like a slow-moving river, 5

Barred with silver and black.

Cabs go down it,

One,

And then another.

Between them I hear the shuffling of feet. 10

Tramps doze on the window-ledges,

Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.

The city is squalid and sinister,

With the silver-barred street in the midst,

Slow-moving, 15

A river leading nowhere.

Opposite my window,

The moon cuts,

Clear and round,

Through the plum-coloured night. 20

She cannot light the city;

It is too bright.

It has white lamps,

And glitters coldly.

I stand in the window and watch the moon. 25

She is thin and lustreless,

But I love her.

I know the moon,

And this is an alien city.

Amy Lowell

1. Now compare *A London Thoroughfare. 2 am* by Amy Lowell and *Frost Fair* by Rowyda Amin.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the poets’ choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
* how you respond to the poems.

**Frost Fair**

Slideshow faces flicker from the station.

You’re following the mood to London Bridge

where taxis cruise black as death’s pyjamas.

The Thames you find is glacier silk, shantied

with booths and carousels. Five screaming hens

speed by in a white horse sleigh. Ballad singers

busk their vagrant lines. *Alas my love, you do me wrong*.

Crowds scoff hotdogs and candyfloss,

cheer as Punch batters Judy with the baby.

Hog roasts spit fat on the ice, children watching

with faces pink and hot. *Thy girdle of gold so red*.

Falling snow feathers the whipped bear moonwalking in chains.

It looks at you with marshmallow eyes

and you want to take its arms and zip over the ice,

feel fur on your cheeks, skating against the wind to the estuary

where the ice breaks apart, but you smile, hands in pockets,

and turn to the skittles and acrobats,

sugared crepes and hot wine.

*And yet thou wouldst not love*.

*Rowyda Amin*

OCR exam style question

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express feelings of a power of place.  
   You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which expresses the relationship between man and place. **[20]**

*A London Thoroughfare. 2 am* by Amy Lowell

They have watered the street,

It shines in the glare of lamps,

Cold, white lamps,

And lies

Like a slow-moving river, 5

Barred with silver and black.

Cabs go down it,

One,

And then another.

Between them I hear the shuffling of feet. 10

Tramps doze on the window-ledges,

Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.

The city is squalid and sinister,

With the silver-barred street in the midst,

Slow-moving, 15

A river leading nowhere.

Opposite my window,

The moon cuts,

Clear and round,

Through the plum-coloured night. 20

She cannot light the city;

It is too bright.

It has white lamps,

And glitters coldly.

I stand in the window and watch the moon. 25

She is thin and lustreless,

But I love her.

I know the moon,

And this is an alien city.

Amy Lowell

*Boat Stealing (From 1799 Prelude)*

I went alone into a Shepherd’s boat,

A skiff, that to a willow-tree was tied

Within a rocky cave, its usual home.

The moon was up, the lake was shining clear

Among the hoary mountains; from the shore

I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again

In cadence, and my little boat moved on

Just like a man who walks with a stately step

Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth

And troubled pleasure. Not without the voice

Of mountain echoes did my boat move on,

Leaving behind her still on either side

Small circles glittering idly in the moon,

Until they melted all into one track

Of sparkling light. A rocky steep uprose

Above the cavern of the willow-tree,

And now, as suited one who proudly rowed

With his best skill, I fixed a steady view

Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,

The bound of the horizon — for behind

Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.

She was an elfin pinnace; twenty times

I dipped my oars into the silent lake,

And as I rose upon the stroke my boat

Went heaving through the water like a swan —

When from behind that rocky steep, till then

The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,

As if voluntary power instinct,

Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,

And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff

Rose up between me and the stars, and still,

With measured motion, like a living thing

Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned,

And through the silent water stole my way

Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.

There in her mooring place I left my bark,

And through the meadows homeward went with grave

And serious thoughts; and after I had seen

That spectacle, for many days my brain

Worked with a dim and undetermined sense

Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts

There was darkness — call it solitude,

Or blank desertion — no familiar shapes

Of hourly objects, images of trees,

Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,

But huge and mighty forms that do not live

Like living men moved slowly through my mind

By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.

William Wordsworth

Unit 6

Unit 6 Teaching notes – Frost Fair

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

This pair of poems, ‘Long Life’ and ‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’ are presented here in a different way to the previous units. This is part of a process of building student confidence and developing their independence. These poems are presented with some accompanying annotations but they are not displayed in a particular order.

The annotations are probably more clearly expressed and neater than actual ones would be, whether in an exam or a practice situation. The annotations to ‘Fish oil…’ are even less ordered, being presented as hand-written jottings.

Both are intended to give the student an idea of how notes can be really helpful in building up to a full response.

For both poems, ask students to:

* add their own observations about the poem, including their personal response
* use a system, such as numbering, to organize the notes into an appropriate order
* write a response to the poem in continuous prose, using well demarcated paragraphs.

‘Long Life’

For students who need some extra guidance:

* Draw their attention to the language choices which have been highlighted. Are there others which echo the general tone? ‘Calm’ and ‘reflective’ have been suggested as descriptions of the tone or mood. What other words might sum it up – ‘meditative’? ‘measured’?
* The run-on lines (enjambment) assist the reflective tone but are in sharp contrast to the first line of staccato nouns. What is the effect of this?
* Ask students to think about the effect of ‘a fortune beyond any deserving’ and ‘forgive us, we’d like to hold on’.

‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’

For students who need some extra guidance:

* Draw their attention to the tone of the poem – is it appropriate for someone who is, or has been, seriously ill? Think about the language of friendship in the poem.
* What is the effect of the use of rhyme? Again, is it appropriate?
* Explore the image of the fish from flopping in a bucket through to weaving upstream – and beyond.

The experience of writing poetry

The point has been made many times that students should experience writing some poetry. This is not a waste of precious preparation time but a crucial way of building a personal confidence in poetry as a medium and gaining an insight into the whole process that a writer of poems goes through. They could use ‘Long Life’ as a model:

Autumn. Rain outside. The street-lights.

I guess I am lucky to be here

With only my small problems

As I try to tackle my Shakespeare …

Or ‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’

My lifelong mate, old chap,

These days you’re letting things slip.

You’re up on the ramp,

Your exhaust full of holes

Rear suspension quite limp

And brake linings worn …

Long life

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Long Life’**  **Elaine Feinstein**  *(b.1930)* |

Late Summer. Sunshine. The eucalyptus tree.

It is a fortune beyond any deserving

to be still here, with no more than everyday worries,

placidly arranging lines of poetry.

I consider a stick of cinnamon

bound in raffia, finches

in the grass, and a stubby bush

which this year mothered a lemon.

These days I speak less of death

than the mysteries of survival. I am

no longer lonely, not yet frail, and

after surgery, recognise each breath

as a miracle. My generation may not be

nimble but, forgive us,

we’d like to hold on, stubbornly

content – even while ageing.

Use the annotations as a starting point for your response to the poem.   
Add your own points and a personal conclusion.

A wide view, gradually focusing down. Short, sharp observations. Nouns – no fussy adjectives.

A simple statement of feeling.

‘mothering’ – more interesting than ‘produced’

A return to feelings, simply expressed.

Moving to a more general statement. Addressing us all.

Everyday objects – at least to her. Focusing on things closer.

A definite verse form with simple rhyme scheme: ABCA

Rhymes ABAA(?) ageing is a near rhyme.

Language – calm, reflective – NB highlights

Late Summer. Sunshine. The eucalyptus tree.

It is a fortune beyond any deserving

to be still here, with no more than everyday worries,

placidly arranging lines of poetry.

I consider a stick of cinnamon

bound in raffia, finches

in the grass, and a stubby bush

which this year mothered a lemon.

These days I speak less of death

than the mysteries of survival. I am

no longer lonely, not yet frail, and

after surgery, recognise each breath

as a miracle. My generation may not be

nimble but, forgive us,

we’d like to hold on, stubbornly

content – even while ageing.

Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **‘Fish oil, exercise and  no wild parties’  Beatrice Garland** |

My lifelong friend, dear heart,

these days you’re losing the plot:

you’re a fish in a bucket,

open-mouthed, flopping about

in a panic, bereft of your sheen,

all confidence gone.

Examined in action

on a black and white screen,

every movement recorded,

you’re haplessly tethered,

chaotically jumping, locked

into a pulse of your own. Tracked

by the inks on that turning drum

we see what will come

if that spidery record persists

Slow down then, no coffee, resist

the enticement of alcohol,

not even a thimbleful

and I will net you, my flailing fish,

land you without a splash

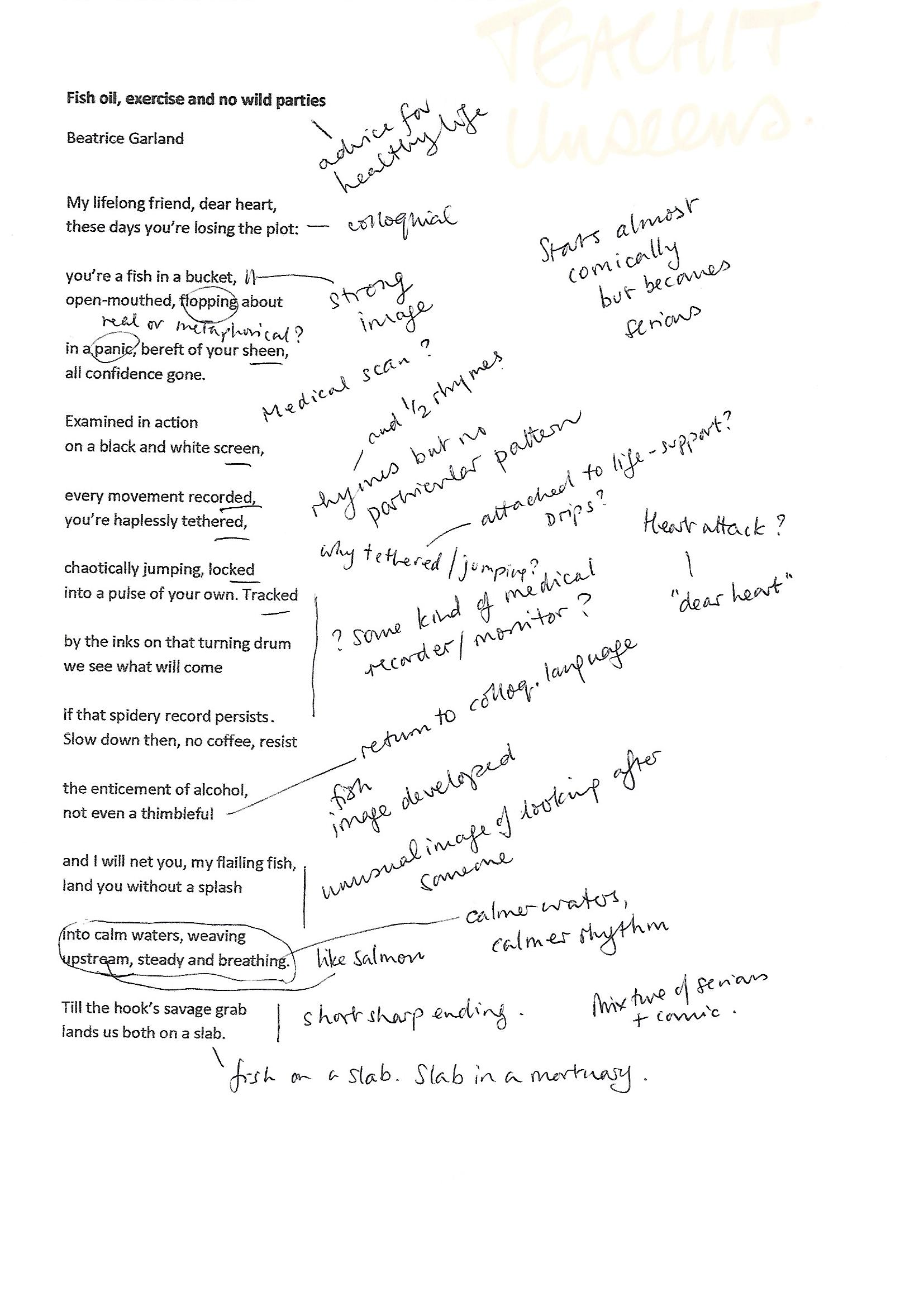
into calm waters, weaving

upstream, steady and breathing.

Till the hook’s savage grab

lands us both on a slab.

Use the annotations as a starting point for your response to the poem.   
Add your own points and a personal conclusion.



Comparison resource

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’**  My lifelong friend, dear heart,  these days you’re losing the plot:   you’re a fish in a bucket,  open-mouthed, flopping about    in a panic, bereft of your sheen,  all confidence gone.    Examined in action  on a black and white screen,    every movement recorded,  you’re haplessly tethered,    chaotically jumping, locked  into a pulse of your own. Tracked    by the inks on that turning drum  we see what will come    if that spidery record persists  Slow down then, no coffee, resist    the enticement of alcohol,  not even a thimbleful    and I will net you, my flailing fish,  land you without a splash    into calm waters, weaving  upstream, steady and breathing.    Till the hook’s savage grab  lands us both on a slab.  *by Beatrice Garland* | **‘Long Life’**  Late Summer. Sunshine. The eucalyptus tree.          It is a fortune beyond any deserving  to be still here, with no more than everyday worries,          placidly arranging lines of poetry.    I consider a stick of cinnamon          bound in raffia, finches  in the grass, and a stubby bush          which this year mothered a lemon.    These days I speak less of death          than the mysteries of survival. I am  no longer lonely, not yet frail, and          after surgery, recognise each breath    as a miracle. My generation may not be          nimble but, forgive us,  we’d like to hold on, stubbornly          content – even while ageing  *by Elaine Feinstein* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Question: ‘Compare the way the two poets tackle the issue of illness and death.’** |
| Think about the exam question’s use of ‘the way’. This can be taken to mean both the techniques the poets use and their attitudes. Make sure you cover both aspects and, if possible, link them together. |
| **Other points to consider:** |
| Who is the writer addressing? What difference does it make? |
| What is their tone? How can you tell? What effect do they want to have on their audience? |
| Explore the similarities and differences in use of verses, rhyme and rhythm. How do these affect the reader or listener? |
| Look at the nouns and verbs in each poem – how does the choice of specific words make a difference to the effect of the poems? |
| Overall, what impact does each poem have on you? |

Exam questions

AQA exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15**  **20** | **Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties**  My lifelong friend, dear heart,  these days you’re losing the plot:  you’re a fish in a bucket,  open-mouthed, flopping about  in a panic, bereft of your sheen,  all confidence gone.  Examined in action  on a black and white screen,  every movement recorded,  you’re haplessly tethered,  chaotically jumping, locked  into a pulse of your own. Tracked  by the inks on that turning drum  we see what will come  if that spidery record persists  Slow down then, no coffee, resist  the enticement of alcohol,  not even a thimbleful  and I will net you, my flailing fish,  land you without a splash  into calm waters, weaving  upstream, steady and breathing.  Till the hook’s savage grab  lands us both on a slab.  *Beatrice Garland* |

1. In ‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about getting old?

**[24 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15** | **Long Life**  Late Summer. Sunshine. The eucalyptus tree.  It is a fortune beyond any deserving  to be still here, with no more than everyday worries,  placidly arranging lines of poetry.  I consider a stick of cinnamon  bound in raffia, finches  in the grass, and a stubby bush  which this year mothered a lemon.  These days I speak less of death  than the mysteries of survival. I am  no longer lonely, not yet frail, and  after surgery, recognise each breath  as a miracle. My generation may not be  nimble but, forgive us,  we’d like to hold on, stubbornly  content – even while ageing.  *Elaine Feinstein* |

1. In both ‘Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties’ and ‘Long Life’ the speakers describe their feelings about illness and death. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel exam style question

|  |
| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties***  My lifelong friend, dear heart,  these days you’re losing the plot:  you’re a fish in a bucket,  open-mouthed, flopping about  in a panic, bereft of your sheen, 5  all confidence gone.  Examined in action  on a black and white screen,  every movement recorded,  you’re haplessly tethered, 10  chaotically jumping, locked  into a pulse of your own. Tracked  by the inks on that turning drum  we see what will come  if that spidery record persists 15  Slow down then, no coffee, resist  the enticement of alcohol,  not even a thimbleful  and I will net you, my flailing fish,  land you without a splash 20  into calm waters, weaving  upstream, steady and breathing.  Till the hook’s savage grab  lands us both on a slab.  *Beatrice Garland* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Long Life***  Late Summer. Sunshine. The eucalyptus tree.  It is a fortune beyond any deserving  to be still here, with no more than everyday worries,  placidly arranging lines of poetry.  I consider a stick of cinnamon 5  bound in raffia, finches  in the grass, and a stubby bush  which this year mothered a lemon.  These days I speak less of death  than the mysteries of survival. I am 10  no longer lonely, not yet frail, and  after surgery, recognise each breath  as a miracle. My generation may not be  nimble but, forgive us,  we’d like to hold on, stubbornly 15  content – even while ageing.  *Elaine Feinstein*   1. Compare the ways the writers present the issue of illness and death in Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties and Long Life.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas exam style question

**SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)**

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).*

1. Read the two poems, *Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties* by Beatrice Garland and *Long Life* by Elaine Feinstein. In both of these poems the poets write about the effects of illness and death.
2. Write about the poem Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties, and its effects on you.

[15]

*You may wish to consider:*

* *what the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *the ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
* *the poet’s choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *how you respond to the poem.*

**Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties**

My lifelong friend, dear heart,

these days you’re losing the plot:

you’re a fish in a bucket,

open-mouthed, flopping about

in a panic, bereft of your sheen,

all confidence gone.

Examined in action

on a black and white screen,

every movement recorded,

you’re haplessly tethered,

chaotically jumping, locked

into a pulse of your own. Tracked

by the inks on that turning drum

we see what will come

if that spidery record persists

Slow down then, no coffee, resist

the enticement of alcohol,

not even a thimbleful

and I will net you, my flailing fish,

land you without a splash

into calm waters, weaving

upstream, steady and breathing.

Till the hook’s savage grab

lands us both on a slab.

*Beatrice Garland*

1. Now compare *Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties* by Beatrice Garland and *Long Life* by Elaine Feinstein.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the poets’ choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
* how you respond to the poems.

**Long Life**

Late Summer. Sunshine. The eucalyptus tree.

It is a fortune beyond any deserving

to be still here, with no more than everyday worries,

placidly arranging lines of poetry.

I consider a stick of cinnamon

bound in raffia, finches

in the grass, and a stubby bush

which this year mothered a lemon.

These days I speak less of death

than the mysteries of survival. I am

no longer lonely, not yet frail, and

after surgery, recognise each breath

as a miracle. My generation may not be

nimble but, forgive us,

we’d like to hold on, stubbornly

content – even while ageing.

*Elaine Feinstein*

OCR exam style question

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read *Cold Knap Lake* by Gillian Clarke (can be found in the OCR poetry anthology) and *Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties* by Beatrice Garland.**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express the value of life.

You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which expresses feelings about growing old.

**[20]**

*Fish oil, exercise and no wild parties*

My lifelong friend, dear heart,  
these days you’re losing the plot:

you’re a fish in a bucket,  
open-mouthed, flopping about

in a panic, bereft of your sheen,  
all confidence gone.

Examined in action  
on a black and white screen,

every movement recorded,  
you’re haplessly tethered,

chaotically jumping, locked  
into a pulse of your own. Tracked

by the inks on that turning drum  
we see what will come

if that spidery record persists  
Slow down then, no coffee, resist

the enticement of alcohol,  
not even a thimbleful

and I will net you, my flailing fish,  
land you without a splash

into calm waters, weaving  
upstream, steady and breathing.

Till the hook’s savage grab  
lands us both on a slab.

Beatrice Garland

Extra exam questions

|  |
| --- |
| **Teaching notes** |

Please note that this final pair of poems are quite challenging and don’t come with accompanying resources – a true exam experience!

Depending on your class, you may like to provide them with some supporting notes*. ‘*An Aviary of Small Birds’ relates to a sensitive topic so your students might benefit from some contextual information. You can read more about the poem [**here**](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/23/an-aviary-of-small-birds-karen-mccarthy-woolf-review).

AQA

|  |
| --- |
| **Section C: Unseen poetry**  Answer **both** questions in this section |

Answer both questions in this section.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10**  **15**  **20**  **25** | **An Aviary of Small Birds**  My love is an aviary  of small birds  and I must learn  to leave the door ajar…  Are you the sparrow  who landed when I sat  at a slate table  sowing lettuces?  Webbs Wonder, Lollo  Rosso, English Cos…  Swift and deft  you flit and peck peck  quick as the light that  constitutes your spirit.  Yes, you were briefer  than Neruda’s octobrine.  So much rain that night.  Our room is an ocean  where swallows dive.  The bubble bursts  too soon, too late, too long:  all sorts of microscopia  swim upstream, float in  on summer’s storm.  The tenor of your heart  is true as a tuning fork struck  —and high! My love  is the bird who flies free.  Karen McCarthy Woolf |

1. In ‘An Aviary of Small Birds’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about her child?

**[24 marks]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5**  **10** | **Mother o’Mine**  If I were hanged on the highest hill,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  I know whose love would follow me still,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  If I were drowned in the deepest sea,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  I know whose tears would come down to me,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  If I were damned of body and soul,  I know whose prayers would make me whole,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  Rudyard Kipling |

1. In both ‘An Aviary of Small Birds’ and ‘Mother o’Mine’ the speakers describe feelings about a loved one. What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present those feelings?

**[8 marks]**

Edexcel

|  |
| --- |
| **SECTION B, Part 2 – Unseen Poetry**  **Read the two poems and answer the question.**  **You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.**  ***An Aviary of Small Birds***  My love is an aviary  of small birds  and I must learn  to leave the door ajar…  Are you the sparrow 5  who landed when I sat  at a slate table  sowing lettuces?  Webbs Wonder, Lollo  Rosso, English Cos… 10  Swift and deft  you flit and peck peck  quick as the light that  constitutes your spirit.  Yes, you were briefer 15  than Neruda’s octobrine.  So much rain that night.  Our room is an ocean  where swallows dive.  The bubble bursts 20  too soon, too late, too long:  all sorts of microscopia  swim upstream, float in  on summer’s storm.  The tenor of your heart 25  is true as a tuning fork struck  —and high! My love  is the bird who flies free.  *Karen McCarthy Woolf* |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Mother o’Mine***  If I were hanged on the highest hill,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  I know whose love would follow me still,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  If I were drowned in the deepest sea,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  I know whose tears would come down to me,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  If I were damned of body and soul,  I know whose prayers would make me whole,  *Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*  *Rudyard Kipling*   1. Compare the ways the writers present their feelings about a loved one in ‘An Aviary of Small Birds’ and ‘Mother o’Mine’.   In your answer you should compare:   * the ideas in the poems * the poets’ use of language * the poets’ use of form and structure.   Use **evidence** from the poems to support your **comparison**.  **(Total for question = 20 marks)** |

WJEC Eduqas

**SECTION C (Unseen Poetry)**

Answer **both** part (a) **and** part (b). *You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a) and about 40 minutes on part (b).*

1. Read the two poems *An Aviary of Small Birds* by Karen McCarthy Woolf and *Mother o’Mine* by Rudyard Kipling.
2. Write about the poem *An Aviary of Small Birds*, and its effect on you.

[15]

*You may wish to consider:*

* *what the poem is about and how it is organised;*
* *the ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about;*
* *the poet’s choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;*
* *how you respond to the poem.*

**An Aviary of Small Birds**

My love is an aviary

of small birds

and I must learn

to leave the door ajar…

Are you the sparrow

who landed when I sat

at a slate table

sowing lettuces?

Webbs Wonder, Lollo

Rosso, English Cos…

Swift and deft

you flit and peck peck

quick as the light that

constitutes your spirit.

Yes, you were briefer

than Neruda’s octobrine.

So much rain that night.

Our room is an ocean

where swallows dive.

The bubble bursts

too soon, too late, too long:

all sorts of microscopia

swim upstream, float in

on summer’s storm.

The tenor of your heart

is true as a tuning fork struck

—and high! My love

is the bird who flies free.

*Karen McCarthy Woolf*

1. Now compare An Aviary of Small Birds by Karen McCarthy Woolf with Mother o’Mine by Rudyard Kipling.

[25]

You should compare:

* what the poems are about and how they are organised;
* the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about;
* the poets’ choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create;
* how you respond to the poems.

**Mother o’Mine**

If I were hanged on the highest hill,

*Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*

I know whose love would follow me still,

*Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,

*Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*

I know whose tears would come down to me,

*Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*

If I were damned of body and soul,

I know whose prayers would make me whole,

*Mother o’ mine, O mother o’ mine!*

*Rudyard Kipling*

OCR

**Section A**

**Poetry across time**

**Read the two poems An Aviary of Small Birds (below) and Morning Song by Sylvia Plath (this can be found in the OCR poetry anthology) and then answer both part a) and part b).**

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

1. Compare how the speakers in these poems express feelings towards their child

You should consider:

* ideas and attitudes in each poem
* tone and atmosphere in each poem
* the effects of the language and structure used.

**[20]**

**AND**

1. Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which expresses a sense of freedom in relationships.

**[20]**

**An Aviary of Small Birds**

My love is an aviary

of small birds

and I must learn

to leave the door ajar…

Are you the sparrow

who landed when I sat

at a slate table

sowing lettuces?

Webbs Wonder, Lollo

Rosso, English Cos…

Swift and deft

you flit and peck peck

quick as the light that

constitutes your spirit.

Yes, you were briefer

than Neruda’s octobrine.

So much rain that night.

Our room is an ocean

where swallows dive.

The bubble bursts

too soon, too late, too long:

all sorts of microscopia

swim upstream, float in

on summer’s storm.

*Karen McCarthy Woolf*

Acknowledgements

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| **Acknowledgements** |

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