



Year 11 Unseen Poetry Booklet

How to use this booklet

Within this booklet you will find practice questions for the unseen poetry section of your Paper 2 English Literature exam. Each question pair consists of two poems and two questions:

- One 24 mark question on an unseen poem
- One 8 mark question, comparing the second unseen poem to the first

The first example question pair also includes exemplar paragraphs for each question.

1. Read the exemplar paragraphs. Look closely at the skills in the exemplar paragraphs and think about how you can demonstrate the same skills.
2. Continue the exemplar answers exploring your own ideas
3. Use the other unseen poetry questions to complete practice answers

What skills do I need to demonstrate in Section C of GCSE English Literature Paper 2?

- Confidence in interpreting the poem and working out its meaning (both questions)
- Accurate identification of a range of poetic techniques and use of quotations (both questions)
- Detailed exploration of the effects of these poetic techniques, linking back to the question (both questions)
- Ability to clearly compare two poems, explaining similarities and/or differences (8 mark question only)

What poetic techniques could I identify and explore in my answers?

Below are some common poetic techniques. Make sure that you understand what these techniques are so you can practise identifying and analysing them.

Language techniques	Structural techniques
Simile	Enjambment
Metaphor	Rhyme
Personification	Rhythm
Noun	Stanza length
Verb	Punctuation
Adjective	Caesura
Adverb	Juxtaposition
Alliteration	
Imagery	

How long should my responses be?

Your response to the 24 mark question should be 4-5 paragraphs. Aim to analyse one method/quotation per paragraph, exploring meaning and linking back to the question.

Your response to the 8 mark question should be a maximum of 2 paragraphs. Use connectives throughout this short answer to make it clear you are comparing. You must also name and explore methods in this question, making sure you name methods in both poems.

How do I approach the poems?

1. Read the poem *and* question **closely**. Make sure you understand the basic meaning of the poem. **Use the question to help you work out what the poem is about.**
2. Reread the poem identifying methods and quotations that link to what the question is about.
3. Spend a short amount of time (maximum 5 minutes) annotating the poem, exploring methods in detail and how they link to the question. This will act as your plan. Remember, a title is a method!

A)

Lichen Circles by Norman Bissell

Alone in this bay near Port Mary
only the waves creeping in
and the squeal of a buzzard*
high on a cliff top for company

even hotter than yesterday
less wind, sea less frantic

I lie here on this shingle beach
in the early evening sun
until the sea laps my ankles
and the sun's shadows grow long

around me sea pinks on wizened rock
terns diving out by the reef

three hours I've lain here now
among the glistening wet pebbles
and the lime green lichen** circles

sky blue all blue
and a heat haze
right along the coast of Mull

drifting with the haze taking it all in
becoming those lichen circles.

**bird of prey*

***green algae that grows over a long period of time*

In 'Lichen Circles' how does the poet present feelings of peace and calmness?

(24 marks)

In Lichen Circles Bissell presents feelings of peace and calmness through a serene and quiet setting. His first person depiction of a beautiful beach imbues a sense of tranquillity as it seems as if the speaker is becoming like nature itself. He uses the final line of the poem to reach the conclusion that he is "becoming those lichen circles", using this as a metaphor for how still he is. These circles have formed over long periods of time, just like he has spent a long time at this beach and has become enveloped in the feelings of calm he has experienced. The verb "becoming" presents this place as transformative showing that it is having a profound effect on the speaker, filling him with a sense of peace. This sense of peace is echoed in...

Now you finish!

A)
Spellbound by Emily Bronte

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant* spell has bound me
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow.
And the storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear** can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

**Tyrant – word for someone who misuses their power, a bully*

***Drear – depressingly dull and repetitive*

In ‘Lichen Circles’ and ‘Spellbound’ the poets describe how it feels to be in nature.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

(8 marks)

Both poets present very different experiences of nature. In Lichen Circles, Bissell describes feelings of absolute happiness and peace through the repetition of “less wind, sea less frantic”. Everything here seems calm and still and his measured description, as emphasised by the comma, demonstrates how content and safe he feels within nature. There is a sense of slowness and quiet contemplation which is the complete opposite to ‘Spellbound’ as emphasised through the adjective “fast descending”. This evokes a sense of panic and entrapment from the speaker. It is as if she knows how dangerous the storm is yet she cannot escape. It presents her experience in nature as perilous which is entirely different to Bissell...

Now you finish!

B)

When we were gymnasts by Emily Ballou

Remember when you turned cartwheels
in the schoolyard.
And danced down the length
of the fallen tree, four inches wide
that crossed the creek
one foot in front of the other
and pivoted into the leaves?
And somersaulted down the long green hill.
And bent over backwards to see the world inverted.
And bounced on the bed.
And twisted yourself into pretzels with supple ease.
And hung from your knees on the climbing frame
until your hair stood on end?

Do you remember how it felt, then
to tread the thin line of things
to spring into the air with nobody looking
to dangle from the branches of trees
to balance on one leg, in arabesque
to be without gravity?
To tumble and get up again. It never hurts. And do it all again.
And as you leapt off the swings
thudding down two feet in the dirt
the birds gave you perfect tens.

In 'When we were gymnasts' how does the poetry present memories of a fun and carefree childhood?

(24 marks)

B)

Learning to stand by Gillian K Ferguson

On the earth a stretched second
you stood, balanced. Gravity

glued dolly shoes. You wore
the sky on your head, jauntily,

light blue paper hat plumed
with feather clouds, as air's

transparent gloves cuddled
you upright. Padding paws

forgot themselves in hands.
You learn the trick of standing

as the world spins, hurtles,
turns you upside down

in darkness. Already
you'll lean less on me.

In 'When we were gymnasts' and 'Learning to stand' both poets describe children becoming more independent.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

(8 marks)

c)

Valentine by Carol Ann Duffy

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring,
if you like.
Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

In 'Valentine' by Carol Ann Duffy how does the poet present ideas about love and being faithful?

(24 marks)

C)

Carpe Diem by Stewart Conn

From my study window
I see you
below in the garden, a hand
here pruning
or leaning across to snip
a wayward shoot;

a daub of powder-blue in a
profusion of green,
then next moment, you are
no longer there –
only to reappear, this time
perfectly framed

in dappling sunlight, with
an armful of ivy
you've trimmed, topped by
hyacinth* blooms,
fragrant survivors of last
night's frost.

And my heart misses a beat
at love for you,
knowing a time will come
when you are
no longer there, nor I here
to watch you

on a day of such simplicity.
Meantime let us
make sure we clasp each
shared moment
in cupped hands, like water
we dare not spill.

*a *flower*

In both 'Valentine' and 'Carpe Diem' both poets describe a romantic relationship.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these relationships?

(8 marks)

D)

Be the first to like this by Theresa Munoz

kicking pine cones down the street
climbing the backyard cherry tree
lying in new sheets
waking in darkness waking to snow
how your chest thickens when you're scared
how your voice bubbles when you're pleased
be the first to like
view of wind turbines from the train
golden tint on a glass of wine
gliding on rollerblades by the sea
waking so warm waking on the beach
how your eyes flood when you're tired
how you laugh when you're relieved
like bridges creeks Frisbees
silly cat videos and Instagram photos
like strolling with a friend
between folds of trees
and your heart rolls out a big pink wave
and your lips recall something sweet
like skiing and ice-skating
zip-lining above trees at seventy clicks
blood thudding in your ears
like every new experience because it was new
to you pocketed in your memory
like the first time you fed the ducks
at Stanley Park
and they stormed like villagers
to your feet

In 'Be the first to like this' how does the poet present the way social media is changing our lives?

(24 marks)

D)

Caracas is the capital of Venezuela

Caracas by Eugenio Montejo

The buildings are so high
nothing can be seen now of my childhood.
I've lost my patio with its lazy clouds
where the light dropped ibis feathers,
soft Egyptian clarities.
I've lost my name and the dream of my house.
Rigid frames of buildings, tower on tower,
now hide the mountain from us.
The racket grows with a thousand motorcars for each ear,
a thousand sets of wheels for each foot, all of them deadly.
Men race after their voices
but their voices have wandered off
chasing the taxis.
More distant than Thebes, Troy, Nineveh*
or the fragments of their dreams,
Caracas, where are you?
I've lost my own shadow and the feel of its stones.
Nothing can be seen any more of my childhood.
I stroll through its streets now
like a blind man, each day more solitary.
Its space is real, fearless, solid concrete.
Only my history is false.

**all ancient cities*

In both 'Be the first to like this' and 'Caracas' the poets describe the ways modern life is changing things

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

(8 marks)

E)

Grandpa's soup by Jackie Kay

No one makes soup like my Grandpa's,
with its diced carrots the perfect size

and its diced potatoes the perfect size
and its wee soft bits –
what are their names?
and its big bit of hough*,
which rhymes with loch, floating
like a rich island in the middle of the soup sea.

I say, Grandpa, Grandpa your soup is the best soup in the whole world.
And Grandpa says, Och,
which rhymes with hough and loch,
Och, Don't be daft,
because he's shy about his soup, my Grandpa.
He knows I will grow up and pine for it.
I will fall ill and desperately need it.
I will long for it my whole life after he is gone.
Every soup will become sad and wrong after he is gone.
He knows when I'm older I will avoid soup altogether.
Oh Grandpa, Grandpa, why is your soup so glorious? I say
tucking into my fourth bowl in a day.

Barley! That's the name of the wee soft bits. Barley.

**meat from the shin of an animal*

In 'Grandpa's soup' by Jackie Kay how does the poet present feelings of love for her grandfather?

(24 marks)

E)

Sisters by Diana Hendry

Early autumn the school trunk would re-appear
as if to say summer was over, time for my sister to disappear.

She was the homely one my mother loved too much.
A North Wales boarding school, my father's mute reproach.

Me – an avid reader of all Blyton's stories of St. Clare's –
they kept at home, unaware I longed to go and envied her.

The trunk seemed huge, as deep as sorrow and in it
every vest and sock was named – only love went missing.

I remember most the heavy winter coat she had to wear –
grey as the railway station full of girls, grief in the parting air.

* * * * *

And now she's gone, the sister I didn't see
for more than twenty years. O there were letters

now and then and phone calls, but mostly
between us nothing but distance and neglect.

So now I find a deadness in my heart
and numbness where the pain should be.

To friends I say 'we grew apart,
'had nothing in common', though what can compare

with those early years of childhood shared?

In 'Grandpa's soup' and 'Sisters' both poets describe how they feel about a member of their family.

What are the similarities and/or differences between the methods the poets use to present these ideas?

(8 marks)