



THE CITY EDUCATORS
Striving for Excellence

GCSE Unseen Poetry

Mindmap Revision Pack

— AQA | Grade 9 Essay Support —



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Poem Focus: 'Autumn' by Alan Bold

How does the poet present the effects of autumn?

1

Overall View

Autumn is presented as powerful, disruptive, sly, and slightly threatening.

2

Key Quote

'Like an experienced robber'
Simile suggests autumn is sneaky, skilled, and disruptive.

3

Changing the Sky

The 'placid sky' becomes 'red with a quiet rage'. Personification and colour imagery show tension and disturbance.

4

Methods

Simile | Personification | Oxymoron | Colour imagery | Semantic field of crime

Autumn

5

Structure

One continuous stanza and little pause create speed, chaos, and a sense that autumn arrives suddenly.

6

Big Interpretation

Bold contrasts the beauty of autumn with danger and chaos, making the season feel both striking and unsettling.



Grade 9 Tip

Always link the method to the effect on the reader and to the poet's overall message.





Comparing Attitudes to the Seasons

'Today' by Billy Collins and 'Autumn' by Alan Bold



Main idea: Collins presents a calm, joyful spring day, while Bold presents autumn as chaotic and unsettling.

'Autumn'

- Wind is an 'accomplice' – linked to crime and chaos.
- Fast, continuous structure creates tension and lack of control.
- Atmosphere feels dramatic, mysterious, and threatening.
- People are 'inquisitive strangers' watching the chaos.



Similarities & Differences

- Both poets show strong attitudes towards the season.
- Both use natural imagery to shape mood.
- The biggest difference is tone: joy in 'Today' versus danger in 'Autumn'.
- Structure also supports meaning: calm order in Collins, rush and chaos in Bold.

'Today'

- Wind is a 'warm intermittent breeze' – calm and gentle.
- Nine couplets and pauses create a relaxed pace.
- Atmosphere feels peaceful, bright, and uplifting.
- People are 'holding hands' and enjoying the day.



Comparison Sentence Starter

Both poets explore the power of the season, but while Collins presents it as comforting and life-affirming, Bold presents it as disruptive and intense.





How to Write a Grade 9 Unseen Poetry Response

1



Read the question

Underline the focus: mood, theme, methods, or effects.

2



Build a clear thesis

Give your overall view of how the poet presents the idea.

3



Choose short evidence

Select precise quotes, even just one or two words.

4



Zoom in on methods

Analyse language, structure, and imagery. Explain why they matter.

5



Explain the effect

Show how the reader responds and what the poet may want us to feel or think.

6



Finish with a sharp conclusion

Return to the question and sum up the poet's message in one strong sentence.

Useful Vocabulary

- ☛ tone
- ☛ contrast
- ☛ imagery
- ☛ personification
- ☛ connotations
- ☛ atmosphere
- ☛ structure
- ☛ symbolism
- ☛ tension
- ☛ viewpoint

Mini Paragraph Model

“ The poet presents autumn as threatening through the simile ‘like an experienced robber’, which suggests the season arrives slyly and disrupts the natural world. ”