

UNSEEN POETRY

A clear handmade revision booklet - AQA Literature Paper 2 Section C

1

What students need to master

☒ 24-mark single poem response

☒ 8-mark comparison response

☒ AO1: personal response + quotes

☒ AO2: language, form and structure

☒ Fast annotation method

☒ Grade 7-9 paragraph formula

☒ Practice pair checklist

Use this as a printable class handout or revision pack.

PAGE 1: EXAM SNAPSHOT

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What the questions and assessment objectives are asking for

Q1 - 24 marks

- Focus on one unseen poem.
- Explain the poet's ideas and feelings.
- Use short quotations.
- Analyse language, form and

Q2 - 8 marks

- Compare the named poem with another poem.
- Focus on similarities and differences.
- Use quick evidence from both.

A01

- ☒ Clear personal response.
- ☒ Relevant quotes.
- ☒ Thoughtful interpretation.
- ☒ Comparison for Q2.
- ☒ Critical style: avoid story retelling.

A02

- ☒ Name methods only when useful.
- ☒ Explain effects on reader.
- ☒ Zoom in on words.
- ☒ Discuss structure shifts.
- ☒ Connect method to meaning.

PAGE 2: MARK LADDER

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How to move from simple to top-band answers

Band 1-2 Simple/relevant

Upgrade move: Say what is happening + one quote.

Band 3 Some explanation

Upgrade move: Explain feelings and identify methods.

Band 4 Clear/explained

Upgrade move: Use quotes to support a clear interpretation.

Band 5 Thoughtful/developed

Upgrade move: Explore word choices and structural shifts.

Band 6 Critical/conceptual

Upgrade move: Offer precise, layered meanings and confident judgements.

PAGE 3: 5-MINUTE FIRST READ

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Before writing, students should mark these quickly

Step 1 - Big idea

- What is the poem mainly about? Write one word: love, grief, school, war, identity, age, nature, communication.

Step 2 - Speaker feelings

- At the start the speaker feels... At the end the speaker feels... The change happens because...

Step 3 - Evidence hunt

- ☒ Circle 3 powerful words. Box 1 image or metaphor. Underline 1 structural choice. Star the ending.

PAGE 4: LANGUAGE TOOLKIT

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Clear prompts for analysing words and methods

Word zoom

- Pick verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs.
- Ask: why this exact word?
- What emotion does it create?

Imagery

- Simile, metaphor, personification.
- What picture is created?
- What deeper idea is suggested?

Sound

- Alliteration, plosives, sibilance, assonance.
- Does it sound harsh, soft, calm, violent?

Tone

- Is the voice angry, nostalgic, bitter, amused, detached, fearful, loving?
- Prove it with words.

Sentence starter

- The writer uses the word "... " to suggest... This makes the reader

PAGE 5: STRUCTURE TOOLKIT

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What to notice beyond individual words

Opening / ending

Do they connect? Does the feeling change?

Stanzas

Regular or irregular? Controlled or chaotic?

Rhythm / rhyme

Smooth, broken, song-like, conversational?

Punctuation

Stops, pauses, questions, dashes, enjambment?

Viewpoint

Who speaks? Why do we hear this voice?

Motifs / symbols

Any repeated image, object or idea?

PAGE 6: THEME BANK

Use themes to create deeper comments

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Death

Nature

Childhood

Religion

New life

Existentialism

Relationships

Communication

Identity

Education

War / conflict

Ageing

Theme sentence

- The poem is not just about ____; it also explores ____ because...

PAGE 7: ANNOTATION CHECKLIST

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Turn any unseen poem into exam notes

On the poem

- Circle 3 key words.
- Underline the strongest image.
- Put a box around repeated ideas.
- Label one structural feature.
- Star the final line.
- Write the speaker's emotion in the margin.

In the margin

- Start: speaker feels...
- End: speaker feels...
- Tone is...
- Main theme is...
- Writer wants reader to...
- Best quote is...

PAGE 8: Q1 PARAGRAPH BUILDER

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A clear paragraph shape for 24-mark analysis

1. Point

The poet presents the speaker as...

2. Evidence

Use a short quote, not a huge line.

3. Method

Name a method only if it helps.

4. Zoom

Explain one or two important words.

5. Effect

What does the reader understand or feel?

6. Link

Connect back to the question/theme.

PAGE 9: Q2 COMPARISON METHOD

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The 8-mark question needs fast, focused comparison

One clear comparison sentence

- Both poems present ____, but poem A feels more ____ whereas poem B feels more ____.

Similarities

- ☒ Same theme?
- ☒ Same emotion?
- ☒ Same type of image?
- ☒ Both use repetition?
- ☒ Both shift at the end?

Differences

- ☒ Different tone?
- ☒ Different speaker?
- ☒ Different structure?
- ☒ Different ending?
- ☒ Different message about life?

Avoid empty phrases

- Do not stop at: "This creates an image" or "This makes the reader want to read on." Explain the exact feeling or idea.

Use precise verbs

- suggests, reveals, emphasises, mirrors, contrasts, exposes, criticises, challenges, intensifies, foreshadows

Power sentence

- This could suggest... However, it may also imply... Therefore, the poet presents... as more complex than it first appears.

PRACTICE: First Frost + Hard Frost

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Weather, hurt and emotional coldness

Key things to cover

- First Frost: personal heartbreak and first emotional pain.
- Hard Frost: nature is powerful but temporary.
- Compare: private hurt vs public/natural landscape.
- Look for frost as symbol, personification, ending shift.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Last Lesson + Mrs Tilscher's Class

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School, memory and growing up

Key things to cover

- Last Lesson: exhaustion, frustration, loss of purpose.
- Mrs Tilscher: childhood wonder turns into adult awareness.
- Compare: negative teaching vs nostalgic learning.
- Look for animal imagery, sensory imagery, tone shift.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Ex-miner + Abandoned Farmhouse

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Identity, loss and unknown lives

Key things to cover

- Ex-miner: illness changes a worker's identity.
- Farmhouse: objects tell a family story.
- Compare: direct observation vs clues from setting.
- Look for symbolism, loneliness, absence and dignity.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Belfast Confetti + The Explosion

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Explosion, community and trauma

Key things to cover

- Belfast Confetti: confusion, fear, broken language.
- The Explosion: grief, faith, collective memory.
- Compare: chaos of conflict vs solemn remembrance.
- Look for punctuation imagery, religious allusion, sensory shift.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Love is a Losing Game + A Vow

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Love, risk and commitment

Key things to cover

- Losing Game: love as gambling, fate and defeat.
- A Vow: honest love accepts imperfection.
- Compare: tragic resignation vs realistic promise.
- Look for repetition, metaphor, direct address, tone.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Kid + Stanley

Expectation, disappointment and independence

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Key things to cover

- Kid: speaker rejects Batman/father figure and gains power.
- Stanley: imaginary boyfriend fails because he is too predictable.
- Compare: failed expectations in comic voices.
- Look for humour, persona, irony, reversal of power.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Names + What I Regret

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Ageing, identity and memory

Key things to cover

- Names: identity changes through names and life stages.
- What I Regret: ageing brings a list of missed chances.
- Compare: loss of dignity vs reflection on missed life.
- Look for lists, circular structure, tone and final impact.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Language poems

Accent, grammar and power

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Key things to cover

- Six O'Clock News: accent judged as less truthful.
- Mr Oxford Don: non-standard English becomes rebellion.
- Compare: language as identity and resistance.
- Look for phonetic spelling, direct address and voice.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Clothes poems

Appearance, memory and conflict

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Key things to cover

- Dress Sense: parent criticises clothing and control.
- I've Had This Shirt: old shirt becomes comic attachment.
- Compare: clothing as judgement vs comfort/memory.
- Look for dialogue, humour, repetition and tone.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Nature + Technology poems

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Wonder, harm and distraction

Key things to cover

- Learn'd Astronomer: facts cannot replace direct wonder.
- The Mower: small death creates moral reflection.
- Text/Hygge: technology disrupts intimacy and peace.
- Look for contrast, interruption, sensory detail.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: War + Violence poems

Conflict and moral unease

22

Key things to cover

- The Man He Killed: enemy could have been a friend.
- America is a Gun: repeated metaphor criticises violence.
- Compare: individual guilt vs national identity.
- Look for conversational voice, repetition and irony.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

PRACTICE: Slow Reader pair

Learning, labels and freedom

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Key things to cover

- Slow Reader: child is imaginative but trapped by reading.
- Second poem: slow reading label becomes identity.
- Compare: adult sympathy vs child frustration.
- Look for animal imagery, broken form, voice.

Student task

- ☒ Choose 2 quotes.
- ☒ Label 2 methods.
- ☒ Write the speaker's feeling.
- ☒ Write one theme.

Mini comparison

- ☒ Both poems show...
- ☒ However, poem 1...
- ☒ Whereas poem 2...
- ☒ This makes the reader...

FINAL PAGE: POWER UP ANALYSIS

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When students are stuck, ask better questions

Who do I sympathise with and why?

Is the speaker reliable?

What has changed from start to end?

What wider issue does the poem suggest?

What is clever, strange or beautiful about the language?

How does structure mirror the emotion?

What historical or social context may matter?

What does the ending leave us thinking?