

READ • ANNOTATE • COMPARE

- ❑ Q1 = 24 marks: analyse ONE unseen poem
- ❑ Q2 = 8 marks: compare the SECOND poem with the first
- ❑ AO1 = ideas + quotes + personal response
- ❑ AO2 = language, form and structure effects

Student Mission

Every poem is a puzzle. Find the speaker, the feeling, the change, the methods and the message.

Teacher Tip

Print as a booklet, then ask students to fill the mini tasks before writing a paragraph.

How to use this pack

1) Read the poem twice. 2) Circle mood words. 3) Box methods. 4) Track the shift. 5) Write a thesis before paragraphs.

1. Exam Game Plan

What examiners reward in Q1 and Q2

Q1: 24 mark analysis

Focus on the named poem. Explain how the poet presents feelings/ideas. Use: thesis + short quotes + methods + effects + shifts.

Q2: 8 mark comparison

Compare the second poem with the first. You do not need deep context. Focus on similarities/differences in feelings, images and methods.

A01

- Informed response
- Clear ideas
- Personal interpretation
- Relevant quotations
- Comparison for Q2

A02

- Language
- Form
- Structure
- Terminology
- Effects on reader
- Why the poet chose it

Top Band Words

critical, exploratory, conceptualised, judicious, precise, thoughtful, developed, apt, integrated

24-mark paragraph recipe

Point: what feeling/idea is shown? Evidence: choose a tiny quotation. Method: name the technique if useful. Zoom: analyse one key word. Effect: reader reaction. Link: connect to the whole poem and question.

Quick self-check before moving on:

- Have I answered the exact question?
- Have I used more than one quotation?
- Have I analysed words, not just spotted techniques?
- Have I mentioned a shift/change in the poem?

2. First 5 Minutes: Annotation Routine

p.3

A simple repeatable process for any unseen poem

1. Speaker

Who is talking? Are they reliable? First person, third person, child, adult, outsider?

2. Situation

What has happened? Is it memory, confession, argument, observation or reflection?

3. Feeling

Pick 3 precise emotions: grief, awe, guilt, anger, affection, fear, regret.

4. Shift

Does the mood change from beginning to end? Why?

5. Methods

Circle language. Box structure. Star form. Label effects, not just names.

6. Message

What bigger idea about life, love, identity, power or society is suggested?

Golden sentence starter

At first, the speaker appears _____; however, by the end, the poem shifts towards _____, suggesting that _____.

3. Language Toolkit

Move from spotting to explaining

Imagery

What picture is created? Does it make the subject seem beautiful, threatening, fragile or trapped?

Metaphor / simile

What is being compared? What extra meaning does the comparison add?

Sound

Alliteration, plosives, sibilance, assonance - does it sound harsh, soft, flowing, broken?

Repetition

What idea is repeated? Does it show obsession, certainty, panic, memory or routine?

Tone words

Avoid vague words. Use precise mood: bitter, nostalgic, conflicted, tender, resentful.

Semantic field

Find groups of words linked to war, nature, school, religion, death, violence, family, etc.

Voice / dialect

Accent, grammar and non-standard spelling can reveal identity, power and resistance.

Figurative meaning

Ask: what deeper idea does the image unlock?

Upgrade your analysis

Do not write: "This makes the reader want to read on." Instead write: "This makes the reader sense the speaker's growing fear because..."

4. Structure + Form Toolkit

The poem's shape is part of the meaning

Opening + ending

Compare the first and last lines. Has the speaker changed? Has the problem been resolved?

Stanzas

Are they regular or irregular? Neat stanzas can suggest control; messy stanzas can suggest chaos.

Sentence length

Short sentences can feel blunt, shocked or certain. Long sentences can feel flowing, emotional or overwhelming.

Punctuation

Dashes, ellipses, questions, colons and exclamation marks can show hesitation, pressure or interruption.

Enjambment

A line running on can suggest movement, freedom, panic, memory or lack of control.

Rhythm / rhyme

Regular rhyme can feel song-like, childish or controlled. Broken rhyme can mirror confusion.

Time frame

Is it past, present, memory, flashback, ongoing event or sudden moment?

Motifs / symbols

Repeated images build a pattern: frost, names, school, guns, phones, clothing, etc.

Structure sentence

The shift from _____ to _____ mirrors the speaker's movement from _____ to _____.

5. Theme Bank + Feeling Words

Use these when stuck

Identity

names, roles, class, accent, age, gender, work, belonging

Relationships

love, family, friendship, care, betrayal, expectations

Power

institutions, war, language, age, authority, social rules

Conflict

inner conflict, violence, guilt, riots, public vs private pain

Nature

weather, animals, seasons, stars, life/death cycles

Childhood

school, innocence, growth, embarrassment, pressure

Communication

speech, texting, news, silence, misunderstanding

Ageing / Death

memory, regret, dignity, care, absence, mortality

Emotion ladder

basic: sad / happy / angry

stronger: isolated, nostalgic, resentful, ashamed, conflicted, affectionate, disillusioned, anxious

Grade 9: ambivalent, dehumanised, powerless, reverential, morally uneasy, quietly devastated

6. Grade 9 Paragraph Builder

Turn notes into analysis

Thesis first

In the poem, the speaker initially seems _____, but the poet gradually reveals _____. This makes the poem less about _____ and more about _____.

Zoom-in paragraph

The poet's use of "___" suggests ___. The word "___" implies ___. This could make the reader feel ___ because ___.

Structure paragraph

The poem begins with ___ but ends with _____. This shift is important because it mirrors _____.

Comparison paragraph for Q2

Both poems present _____; however, Poem A focuses on _____, whereas Poem B suggests _____. This difference is shown through _____.

Avoid these empty phrases:

- makes the reader want to read on
- creates an image in the reader's mind
- uses a technique to interest the reader
- has a good effect

Replace with

creates a sense of...
implies the speaker feels...
mirrors the conflict between...
amplifies the tragedy of...

7. Weather + Hurt: First Frost / Hard Frost p.8

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore feelings towards love and hurt using frost as emotional image.

Q2 comparison

Compare how both poems use weather to show damage, coldness or force.

Themes

- love and pain
- nature/weather
- isolation
- vulnerability

Language

- frost imagery
- cold semantic field
- personification
- fragile details

Structure

- movement through time
- opening/ending weather
- contrast between human emotion and nature

Handmade student task

Highlight all cold/weather words. Next to each one, write the emotion it could represent. Then write: "Frost symbolises..."

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

8. School: Last Lesson / Mrs Tilscher's Class^{p.9}

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore feelings towards school, teaching and childhood memory.

Q2 comparison

Compare positive and negative experiences of school.

Themes

- education
- childhood
- frustration
- growing up

Language

- animal imagery
- sensory details
- rhetorical questions
- nostalgic images

Structure

- shift from safety to change
- regular vs restless voice
- endings with release

Handmade student task

Draw two mood lines: one for the teacher's exhaustion, one for the child's wonder/change.

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

9. Identity: Ex-miner / Abandoned Farmhouse ^{p.10}

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore feelings towards identity after work, illness or loss.

Q2 comparison

Compare how unknown people are presented through observation and objects.

Themes

- identity
- work
- poverty
- dignity
- absence

Language

- object clues
- metaphor
- personification
- domestic imagery

Structure

- list-like evidence
- gradual discovery
- final impression of loss

Handmade student task

Pick 5 objects/details and write what each reveals about the person's life.

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

10. Explosions: Belfast Confetti / The Explosion ^{p.11}

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore shock, confusion and community impact after an explosion.

Q2 comparison

Compare the impact of violence/disaster on communities.

Themes

- conflict
- fear
- community
- memory
- religion

Language

- punctuation imagery
- war language
- light/gold imagery
- sound

Structure

- fragmented lines
- sudden shift
- public vs private moment

Handmade student task

Circle punctuation references. Explain how punctuation becomes a metaphor for chaos.

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

11. Love: Love Is a Losing Game / A Vow p.12

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore conflicted feelings about love.

Q2 comparison

Compare love as risk/pain with love as commitment/honesty.

Themes

- love
- risk
- promise
- disappointment
- hope

Language

- gambling imagery
- direct address
- repetition
- honest negatives

Structure

- repeated refrain
- stanza progression
- final promise/resignation

Handmade student task

Make a two-column list: love as danger vs love as choice. Add one method beside each.

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

12. Expectations: Kid / Stanley

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore being let down by father figures or imagined relationships.

Q2 comparison

Compare how expectations fail in reality.

Themes

- disappointment
- independence
- fantasy vs reality
- growing up

Language

- comic voice
- superhero allusion
- listing
- bathos

Structure

- dramatic monologue
- twist/reveal
- conversational endings

Handmade student task

Find where humour hides pain. Write: "The comic tone actually reveals..."

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

13. Ageing: Names / What I Regret

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore feelings towards ageing, names, memory and regret.

Q2 comparison

Compare how growing old is presented through identity and missed chances.

Themes

- ageing
- identity
- regret
- dignity
- memory

Language

- names as symbols
- listing
- understatement
- repetition

Structure

- circular narrative
- life stages
- final return/realisation

Handmade student task

Track each name/stage. What does each name show about identity and control?

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

14. Voice + Accent: Six O'Clock News / Oxford Don^{p.15}

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore language, accent, power and who gets believed.

Q2 comparison

Compare how speakers challenge standard English and social judgement.

Themes

- communication
- class
- power
- identity
- resistance

Language

- dialect spelling
- direct address
- humour
- violent language as metaphor

Structure

- voice-led form
- performance style
- repeated challenge

Handmade student task

Underline non-standard spelling/grammar. Explain how it becomes a form of power.

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

15. Clothes + Judgement: Dress Sense / Shirt^{p.16}

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Explore clothing as identity, memory and control.

Q2 comparison

Compare attitudes towards clothing and what it reveals about people.

Themes

- appearance
- control
- memory
- family
- embarrassment

Language

- conversational voice
- hyperbole
- repetition
- comic detail

Structure

- monologue
- repeated refrain
- changing attitude

Handmade student task

Write one note on what clothes symbolise in each poem: control, comfort, memory, rebellion?

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

16. Nature, Death + Wonder

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

The Learn'd Astronomer shows wonder beyond facts;
The Mower moves from accident to moral reflection.

Q2 comparison

Compare how nature creates awe, guilt or kindness.

Themes

- nature
- knowledge
- death
- kindness
- silence

Language

- sensory image
- simple diction
- contrast
- moral statement

Structure

- movement indoors/outdoors
- short final lines
- reflective ending

Handmade student task

Draw a turning point arrow. Where does each poem move from observation to message?

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

17. Tech, War + Reading Difficulty

Practice pair - key things to annotate and compare

Q1 focus

Text/Hygge: technology and communication.
Hardy/Bilston: war and national identity. Slow
Reader: pressure and self-image.

Q2 comparison

Use these as extra comparison practice for
communication, conflict and education.

Themes

- technology
- war
- identity
- reading
- pressure

Language

- metaphor
- irony
- repetition
- broken spelling/spacing

Structure

- interruption
- refrain
- fragmented voice
- final emotional punch

Handmade student task

Choose one pair. Write the shared theme in the middle, then list 3 methods for each poem.

Main feeling		
Best method		
Shift/message		

18. Final Comparison Toolkit

For the 8-mark question

Compare feelings, not just content

Ask: do both speakers feel the same? Does one feel more angry, guilty, amused, nostalgic or critical? Are the poets using similar images for different effects?

Similarity words

Similarly, Likewise, Both poets, In each poem, Both speakers appear, Both present the idea that...

Difference words

However, Whereas, In contrast, Unlike, The first poem suggests..., while the second...

Fast 8-mark plan

1) One sentence on the shared idea. 2) Evidence/method from poem A. 3) Evidence/method from poem B. 4) Explain the difference in tone/message.

- One clear similarity
- One clear difference
- Two tiny references
- At least one method
- A final comment on overall message

19. Power Up Your Analysis

Questions that push answers higher

Sympathy

Who do we feel sorry for? Does that change?

Reliability

Can we fully trust the speaker? Why / why not?

Motive

Why is the speaker telling us this now?

Context inside poem

What social, historical or personal pressure is visible?

Bigger issue

Does a small event represent society, ageing, war, class or identity?

Pattern

Is there a repeated image, sound or idea?

Shock

What surprises or unsettles us?

Beauty

Where is the language especially clever, moving or precise?

Challenge task

After every paragraph, add one sentence beginning: "On a deeper level, this could suggest..."

20. Printable Student Checklist

Use before handing in an answer

Before writing

- I know who the speaker is
- I can name the main feeling
- I have found the shift
- I have 3 tiny quotations

During writing

- I start with an argument
- I zoom into key words
- I discuss structure/form
- I avoid empty phrases

For comparison

- I use both poems
- I compare feelings
- I mention similarity and difference
- I link back to the question

Final polish

- I use precise emotion words
- I use terminology only when useful
- I explain why methods matter
- I end with the poet's message

One-page revision challenge

Pick any poem pair. Fill this checklist, then write one Q1 paragraph and one Q2 comparison paragraph in 15 minutes.