

Unseen Poetry GCSE Examination (Literature)

Example Questions

Q1: In 'The Eagle' how does Tennyson present the eagle? [24 marks AO1&Ao2]

Q2: In both 'The Eagle' and 'To a squirrel' by Yeats, the speakers describe the natural world. What are the similarities and differences in the methods they use? [8 marks AO2 ONLY]

Assessment Objectives

AO1 (Question one only)

Thoughtful response to task and text

Carefully selected use of precise references to support interpretation(s)

AO2 (Question 1 and only AO for Question 2)

Analysis of writer's methods with subject terminology used accurately

Explanation of effects of writer's methods on reader

THE EXAM

45 minutes in total – 2 tasks – no choice

HOW TO APPROACH THE UNSEEN POETRY QUESTIONS

Question one – 30 mins

Step one: read & highlight key words in the questions.

Step two: Read the first poem at least three times; check you understand the "story" of the poem:

Who is speaking? About what? Does anything 'happen' or is it just described? What is the overall mood or tone? Are there any obvious shifts in tone? What is the Big Idea or main THEME of the poem, in your opinion?

Step three: select at least THREE quotes to explore & analyse:

- Choose **IMAGERY** if there is any
- Look at how the poem **BEGINS** and **ENDS** - look out for tone and patterns (structure);
- Choose ONE other quote - something fruitful like repetition or a word with **ASSOCIATIONS** you could write about.
- If you are stuck for ideas look also at the **TITLE** and whose **VOICE** it is written in.
- You could choose a quote that communicates a specific **TONE** or **MOOD**.

Step four: write at least 3 paragraphs. Remember to include WHAT -HOW -WHY. Include at least one QUOTE in each paragraph! Don't forget to link analysis to the Big Picture or main THEME of the poem: getting to the "deeper" ideas will gain many more marks!

Question 2 - 15 mins

Step one: read the second poem at least twice & highlight at least TWO methods used which were ALSO used in Poem 1 (or highlight methods which are very different e.g. end-stopped lines instead of enjambed lines)

Step two: write 2 paragraphs about EACH of the METHODS you have chosen, comparing them to the methods used in Poem 1:

In each paragraph, explain:

- What the method is. Quote! Then ANALYSE the effects.
- Then COMPARE to the same or different METHOD used in the first poem
- Use suitable connectives: Similarly/Likewise or However/On the other hand

TOP TIP: DON'T write about the ideas only - this 8 mark question is only marked for AO2 so write about METHODS first (as part of the analysis you will naturally write about what ideas are conveyed by the quotes, but START comparative sentences referring to METHODS)

Tones

Happy, Joyful, Celebratory

Sad, melancholy, sombre

Angry, bitter, indignant

Funny, humorous, ironic

Wishful, longing, wistful

Nostalgic, sentimental, idealised

Calm, peaceful, tranquil

Accepting, stoical, resigned

Playful, light-hearted, flippant

Serious, grave, contemplative

Subject terms

Big Picture Themes



Responsibility



Morality



Injustice



Hierarchy/Power



Nature & Man Love & Relationships Growth & Change

Methods (Poetic Techniques)

FORM & STRUCTURE

VOICE: the SPEAKER in the poem (the poet or a PERSONA)

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE: a poem in which a character speaks to an imaginary listener

STANZA: verse or paragraph of poetry

SONNET: a 14 line poem which involves a turning point or "volta"

REPETITION: anything that is repeated e.g. *repetition of the word "cry" in "to cry again and cry no more"*

MOTIF: an idea or more often an image which is repeated twice or more in a poem

IMAGERY

Personification: inanimate things given life-like qualities e.g. *the flowers dance*

Simile: uses like / as e.g. *a heart as warm as a summer's day*

Metaphor: no "like" or "as" e.g. *a heart of gold*

Symbolism: when an object is used metaphorically e.g. *a knife may symbolise violence*

Extended metaphor: A series of metaphors all relating to each other e.g. *the army of wasps invaded the garden and marched through the air over the no man's land of nettles before conquering the lavender bush, victorious at last. The enemy gardener shot them with pesticide gaining a pyrrhic victory.*

WORD CHOICE

Associations & Connotations: ideas we link with a word or image

Semantic field: words related by topic e.g. the semantic field of war above (*army, march, no man's land, shot, victory*)

Verbs/ Adjectives/ Nouns

Pronouns e.g. *we, you, I*

SOUNDS

Alliteration: Repeated consonant sounds (sibilance "s" "sh" / Plosive "b" "p" / fricative "f" "v")

Assonance: Repeated vowel sounds (a or e or i or o or u)

Onomatopoeia: e.g. *pop whizz clang boom*

RHYTHM

Number of syllables per line or beats per line e.g. 10 syllables, 5 beats "pentameter"

Regular rhythm (same number of syllables in each line or repeated pattern)

RHYME

e.g. "cat" and "mat"

Regular rhyme: same rhyming pattern throughout e.g. *rhymed rhyme a,b,a,b or couplets a,a, b,b,*

HYPERBOLE: exaggeration especially through imagery e.g. *a flood of tears or a mountain of lies*

COLLOQUIAL: slang; the ordinary language of casual speech (may involve phonetic spelling e.g. "gonna" "dem")