



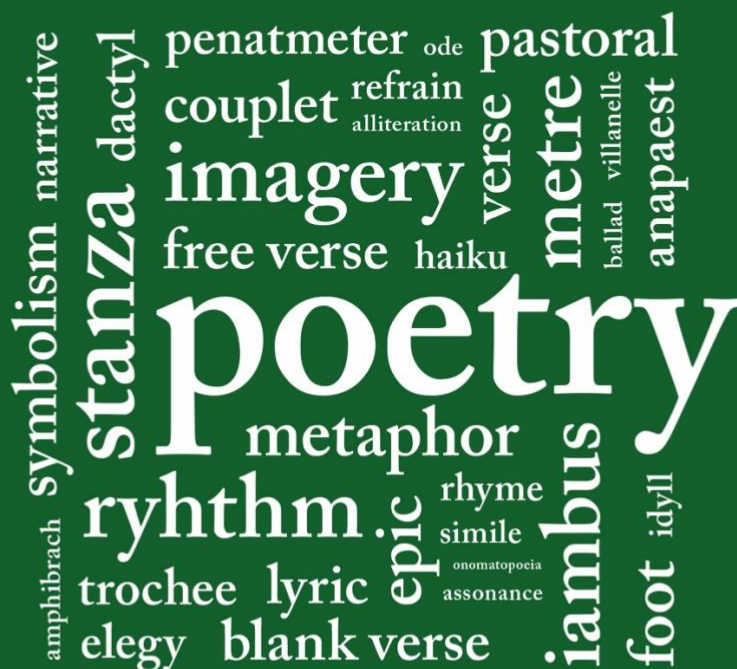
ACHIEVING MORE TOGETHER

English curriculum

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## Key Stage 4: Unseen poetry

Student anthology



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*Learn some of the miracles. Survive. Weave your transformations in your life as well as in your work. Live. Stay alive. Don't go under, don't go mad, don't let them define you, or confine you, or buy your silence. If they do confine you, burst out of their prisons with wilder fanatical songs. Be a counter-antagonist, break their anti-myths. Where the enemies breed destructions, sow seeds of startling lights. Keep sowing. Time will reap. Weave your songs by whatever means you can.*

Ben Okri

## Approaches to unseen poetry

The following approaches should be taken as different suggestions for helping students open up meaning from their encounters with unfamiliar poems. None of these should be considered the 'right' approach; different strategies may suit different teachers and students.

### Emotional connections

- What does the poem make you feel?
- Which bits of the poem do you like?
- Which bits of the poem do you not like?
- Where do your emotions change in the poem?
- Why do your emotions change in the poem?
- Have you felt this emotion before?
- What does the poet want you to feel at the start of the poem?
- What does the poet want you to feel by the end of the poem?

### Scaffolded approach (exam focus)

- Look at the question, there will be a focus to it which will give you an idea about the content of the poem.
- Look at the title. Mindmap the connotations of each word.
- Just read the poem
- Re-read: what's the writer want you to think at the start of the poem? Are there any interesting methods used?
- Where does the tone change? Why? Are there any interesting methods used?
- What does the writer want you to think at the end of the poem? Does this create a contrast to the opening? Or is it cyclical? Are there any interesting methods used?
- Start your response.

Methodical reading

SPOT THE THINGS WE DON'T UNDERSTAND (WORDS, LINES, PHRASES).	SUMMARISE WHAT THE TEXT IS ABOUT.	WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF THE POEM?	WHAT IS THE READER SUPPOSED TO THINK AND FEEL?	WHAT IS INTERESTING ABOUT THE LANGUAGE CHOICES MADE BY THE WRITER?	WHAT CONNECTIONS ARE THERE BETWEEN PARTS OF THE TEXT? WHAT ELSE DOES THIS CONNECT TO OUTSIDE THE LESSON?

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Layering

- Layer 1: looking at how the poem is written**  
 What do you notice about how it is written? What is the most effective word? What patterns do you notice? How is it presented on the page?
- Layer 2: reacting to the poem**  
 What feelings do you have when you read the poem? Where do these change? What questions does the poem raise?
- Layer 3: surface meaning**  
 What is the poem about? Who is speaking? What different ideas does the voice have?
- Layer 4: deeper meanings**  
 What is the poem teaching us? What is the writer trying to get us to understand or realise?



The forensic approach. Effect not meaning through connotations

What does this suggest about her age?

Why might she be here?

What does 'Huddled' suggest?

A girl is freezing in a telephone booth,  
 Huddled in her flimsy coat,  
 Her face stained with tears  
 And smeared with lipstick.

Why has the poet chosen 'stained'?

What does 'smeared' suggest?

What can we infer about this stanza?

Starting with WHY:

This provides students with a series of safe options that they can utilise when discussing the purpose of poetry. Claiming a purpose for the poem can form a strong overview for students, before moving on to consider how the writer intends for the reader to respond to their ideas.

To highlight a social issue?	To document a cherished memory?	To celebrate or condemn?
	<b>Why might this poem exist?</b>	

### Questions to ask when reading poetry

1. What is the poem about? Summarise in one sentence.
2. What does the poem make you feel?
3. Which bits of the poem do you like?
4. Where do your emotions change in the poem?
5. Why do your emotions change in the poem?
6. Have you felt this emotion before?
7. What does the poet want you to feel at the start of the poem?
8. What does the poet want you to feel by the end of the poem?

### The art of noticing

Students should be encouraged to focus on effect spotting rather than technique spotting: what effects/meanings do you notice?

- striking phrases, arresting metaphors, unusual wordings;
- significant events or changes in the direction of the narrative;
- the recurrence of a motif, topic or figures that intrigue you
- moments of self-reflexivity
- alterations in perspective, time or place

### The structure strip

The idea behind this tool is for students to get used to focussing on different aspects of a poem to help open up meaning and to make a personal response possible.

It also provides guidance on suggestions on how to shape a written response to an exam question. See the model answers later in the anthology for examples of what these responses might look like.

*The poem is about grief.*

*How does the writer convey his feelings about the person who has died?*

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### Funeral blues

W.H Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,  
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public  
doves,  
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;  
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

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*This poem is about being parted from loved ones.*

*How does the poet convey ideas about separation and loss?*

**Remember**

*Christina Rossetti*

Remember me when I am gone away,  
 Gone far away into the silent land;  
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
 Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
 Remember me when no more day by day  
 You tell me of our future that you plann'd:  
 Only remember me; you understand  
 It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
 Yet if you should forget me for a while  
 And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
 For if the darkness and corruption leave  
 A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
 Better by far you should forget and smile  
 Than that you should remember and be sad.

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*This poem is written from the perspective of someone suffering from mental illness.*

*How does the poet convey ideas about violence and alienation?*

**Education for Leisure**

*Carol Ann Duffy*

Today I am going to kill something. Anything.  
I have had enough of being ignored and today  
I am going to play God. It is an ordinary day,  
a sort of grey with boredom stirring in the streets.

I squash a fly against the window with my thumb.  
We did that at school. Shakespeare. It was in  
another language and now the fly is in another  
language.  
I breathe out talent on the glass to write my name.

I am a genius. I could be anything at all, with half  
the chance. But today I am going to change the world.  
Something's world. The cat avoids me. The cat  
knows I am a genius, and has hidden itself.

I pour the goldfish down the bog. I pull the chain.  
I see that it is good. The budgie is panicking.  
Once a fortnight, I walk the two miles into town  
for signing on. They don't appreciate my autograph.

There is nothing left to kill. I dial the radio  
and tell the man he's talking to a superstar.  
He cuts me off. I get our bread-knife and go out.  
The pavements glitter suddenly. I touch your arm.

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This poem is written from the perspective of someone suffering from mental illness.

How does the poet convey ideas about violence and responsibility?

**Hitcher**

Simon Armitage

I'd been tired, under  
the weather, but the ansaphone kept screaming.  
*One more sick-note. mister, and you're finished. Fired.*  
I thumbed a lift to where the car was parked.  
A Vauxhall Astra. It was hired.

I picked him up in Leeds.  
He was following the sun to west from east  
with just a toothbrush and the good earth for a bed.  
The truth,  
he said, was blowin' in the wind,  
or round the next bend.

I let him have it  
on the top road out of Harrogate -once  
with the head, then six times with the krooklok  
in the face -and didn't even swerve.  
I dropped it into third

and leant across  
to let him out, and saw him in the mirror  
bouncing off the kerb, then disappearing down the  
verge.  
We were the same age, give or take a week.  
He'd said he liked the breeze

to run its fingers  
through his hair. It was twelve noon.  
The outlook for the day was moderate to fair.  
Stitch that, I remember thinking,  
you can walk from there.

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*This poem is about the fragility of life.*

*How does the poet convey ideas about death?*

**Because I could not stop for Death**

Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death –  
 He kindly stopped for me –  
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves –  
 And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste  
 And I had put away  
 My labour and my leisure too,  
 For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove  
 At Recess – in the Ring –  
 We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –  
 We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –  
 The Dews drew quivering and Chill –  
 For only Gossamer, my Gown –  
 My Tippet\* – only Tulle\* –

We paused before a House that seemed  
 A Swelling of the Ground –  
 The Roof was scarcely visible –  
 The Cornice\* – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet  
 Feels shorter than the Day  
 I first surmised the Horses' Heads  
 Were toward Eternity –

Tippet = long scarf  
 Tulle = lightweight netting used in wedding dresses  
 Cornice = decorative moulding between the top of a wall and the ceiling

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*This poem is about death.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about wasted lives?*

**The Unreturning**

*Wilfred Owen*

Suddenly night crushed out the day and hurled  
Her remnants over cloud-peaks, thunder-walled.  
Then fell a stillness such as harks appalled  
When far-gone dead return upon the world.

There watched I for the Dead; but no ghost woke.  
Each one whom Life exiled I named and called.  
But they were all too far, or dumbled, or thralled\*;  
And never one fared back to me or spoke.

Then peered the indefinite unshapen dawn  
With vacant gloaming, sad as half-lit minds,  
The weak-limned\* hour when sick men's sighs are  
drained.  
And while I wondered on their being withdrawn,  
Gagged by the smothering wing which none unbinds,  
I dreaded even a heaven with doors so chained.

thralled = enslaved  
limned = outlined

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*This poem is about death.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about his own life and the lives of others?*

**Rain**

*Edward Thomas*

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain  
 On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me  
 Remembering again that I shall die  
 And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks  
 For washing me cleaner than I have been  
 Since I was born into this solitude.  
 Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:  
 But here I pray that none whom once I loved  
 Is dying tonight or lying still awake  
 Solitary, listening to the rain,  
 Either in pain or thus in sympathy  
 Helpless among the living and the dead,  
 Like a cold water among broken reeds,  
 Myriads\* of broken reeds all still and stiff,  
 Like me who have no love which this wild rain  
 Has not dissolved except the love of death,  
 If love it be towards what is perfect and  
 Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Myriads = many, multitudes

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*This poem is about the effects of war.*

*How does the poet convey ideas about wasted lives?*

**Autumn Rain**

*D. H. Lawrence*

The plane leaves  
 fall black and wet  
 on the lawn;  
 the cloud sheaves  
 in heaven's fields set  
 droop and are drawn  
 in falling seeds of rain;  
 the seed of heaven  
 on my face  
 falling — I hear again  
 like echoes even  
 that softly pace  
 heaven's muffled floor,  
 the winds that tread  
 out all the grain  
 of tears, the store  
 harvested  
 in the sheaves of pain  
 caught up aloft:  
 the sheaves of dead  
 men that are slain  
 now winnowed soft  
 on the floor of heaven;  
 manna invisible  
 of all the pain  
 here to us given;  
 finely divisible  
 falling as rain.

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*This poem is about Iraq war.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about the military occupation of a foreign country?*

### What Every Soldier Should Know

By Brian Turner

*To yield force to is an act of necessity, not of will; it is at best an act of prudence.*

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

If you hear gunfire on a Thursday afternoon, it could be for a wedding, or it could be for you.

Always enter a home with your right foot; the left is for cemeteries and unclean places.

*O-guf! Tera armeek* is rarely useful. It means *Stop! Or I'll shoot.*

*Sabah el khair* is effective. It means *Good morning.*

*Inshallah* means *Allah be willing.* Listen well when it is spoken.

You will hear the RPG coming for you. Not so the roadside bomb.

There are bombs under the overpasses, in trashpiles, in bricks, in cars.

There are shopping carts with clothes soaked in foogas, a sticky gel of homemade napalm.

Parachute bombs and artillery shells sewn into the carcasses of dead farm animals.

Graffiti sprayed onto the overpasses: *I will kill you, American.*

Men wearing vests rigged with explosives walk up, raise their arms and say *Inshallah.*

There are men who earn eighty dollars to attack you, five thousand to kill.

small children who will play with you, old men with their talk, women who offer chai—

and any one of them may dance over your body tomorrow.

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*This poem is about loss.*

*How does the poet convey her feelings about the effects of time?*

**Atlantis—A Lost Sonnet**

*Eavan Boland*

How on earth did it happen, I used to wonder  
that a whole city—arches, pillars, colonnades,  
not to mention vehicles and animals—had all  
one fine day gone under?

I mean, I said to myself, the world was small then.  
Surely a great city must have been missed?  
I miss our old city —

white pepper, white pudding, you and I meeting  
under fanlights and low skies to go home in it. Maybe  
what really happened is

this: the old fable-makers searched hard for a word  
to convey that what is gone is gone forever and  
never found it. And so, in the best traditions of

where we come from, they gave their sorrow a name  
and drowned it.

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*The poem is about how we craft our existence.  
How does the writer convey feelings about patience  
and effort?*

**The Builders** – Henry Longfellow

All are architects of Fate,  
Working in these walls of Time;  
Some with massive deeds and great,  
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

Nothing useless is, or low;  
Each thing in its place is best;  
And what seems but idle show  
Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,  
Time is with materials filled;  
Our to-days and yesterdays  
Are the blocks with which we build.

Truly shape and fashion these;  
Leave no yawning gaps between;  
Think not, because no man sees,  
Such things will remain unseen.

In the elder days of Art,  
Builders wrought with greatest care  
Each minute and unseen part;  
For the Gods see everywhere.

Let us do our work as well,  
Both the unseen and the seen;  
Make the house, where Gods may dwell,  
Beautiful, entire, and clean.

Else our lives are incomplete,  
Standing in these walls of Time,  
Broken stairways, where the feet  
Stumble as they seek to climb.

Build to-day, then, strong and sure,  
With a firm and ample base;  
And ascending and secure  
Shall to-morrow find its place.

Thus alone can we attain  
To those turrets, where the eye  
Sees the world as one vast plain,  
And one boundless reach of sky.

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**How does the writer convey feelings about patience and effort?**

*The poem, ‘The Builders’ uses an extended metaphor of life as a building and argues that if we are patient and work hard we can make our lives a success. The title suggests that we are all responsible for our own fates; we build the lives we deserve. If we fail to make our lives as “beautiful, entire, and clean” as possible, then we will end up stumbling on “broken stairways” and life will get harder.*

*Just as life is imagined as a building, Longfellow also suggests that the poem itself is constructed like a building with “ornaments of rhyme”. This might suggest that just as a poem can be made more beautiful by crafting a careful rhyme scheme, so a life can be made beautiful by what we put into it. Longfellow suggests that the events of our lives are like bricks which when fixed together “strengthen and support the rest”. The alliteration here evokes the sound of stones sliding smoothly together to create a stronger whole.*

*The structure of the poem also conveys this sense of orderliness and care. The regular metre has the feel of careful, measured tread and each line ending on a single beat makes it sound like another brick is slotted into place. This is reinforced further by the regular rhyme scheme with each stanza following a strict ABAB pattern with the rhymes suggesting that each stone (or word) has been carefully shaped and selected. This adds to the sense that the poem is the product of effort and care, just like its message.*

*The poem ends with the exciting possibility of a wonderful afterlife under the “boundless reach of sky” beyond the limits of such a rigid, tightly structured life. The adjective ‘boundless’ suggests infinite possibilities and the reader left feeling that the reward for hard work and patience during this life will be rewarded in the next. This ends the poem as neatly and as smoothly as it began.*

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*This poem is about the power of words.*

*How does the poet convey her feelings about the way she is treated and how she feels about herself?*

**Coal**

Audre Lorde

I  
 Is the total black, being spoken  
 From the earth's inside.  
 There are many kinds of open.  
 How a diamond comes into a knot of flame  
 How a sound comes into a word, coloured  
 By who pays what for speaking.

Some words are open  
 Like a diamond on glass windows  
 Singing out within the crash of passing sun  
 Then there are words like stapled wagers  
 In a perforated book—buy and sign and tear apart—  
 And come whatever wills all chances  
 The stub remains  
 An ill-pulled tooth with a ragged edge.  
 Some words live in my throat  
 Breeding like adders. Others know sun  
 Seeking like gypsies over my tongue  
 To explode through my lips  
 Like young sparrows bursting from shell.  
 Some words  
 Bedevil me.

Love is a word another kind of open—  
 As a diamond comes into a knot of flame  
 I am black because I come from the earth's inside  
 Take my word for jewel in your open light.

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*The poem is about being labelled and trapped.*

*How does the poet convey her feelings about identity?*

**Woman Work**

*Maya Angelou*

I've got the children to tend  
 The clothes to mend  
 The floor to mop  
 The food to shop  
 Then the chicken to fry  
 The baby to dry  
 I got company to feed  
 The garden to weed  
 I've got shirts to press  
 The tots to dress  
 The can to be cut  
 I gotta clean up this hut  
 Then see about the sick  
 And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine  
 Rain on me, rain  
 Fall softly, dewdrops  
 And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here  
 With your fiercest wind  
 Let me float across the sky  
 'Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes  
 Cover me with white  
 Cold icy kisses and  
 Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky  
 Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone  
 Star shine, moon glow  
 You're all that I can call my own.

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*This poem is about the power of childhood experiences.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about the effects of nature?*

**Death of a Naturalist**

*Seamus Heaney*

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart  
 Of the townland; green and heavy headed  
 Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.  
 Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.  
 Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles  
 Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.  
 There were dragonflies, spotted butterflies,  
 But best of all was the warm thick slobber  
 Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water  
 In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring  
 I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied  
 Specks to range on window sills at home,  
 On shelves at school, and wait and watch until  
 The fattening dots burst, into nimble  
 Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how  
 The daddy frog was called a bullfrog  
 And how he croaked and how the mammy frog  
 Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was  
 Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too  
 For they were yellow in the sun and brown  
 In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank  
 With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs  
 Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges  
 To a coarse croaking that I had not heard  
 Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.  
 Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked  
 On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:  
 The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat  
 Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.  
 I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings  
 Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew  
 That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

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*This poem is about injustice.*

*How does the poet convey ideas about government and law?*

**England in 1819**

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King;  
 Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow  
 Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring;  
 Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know,  
 But leechlike to their fainting country cling  
 Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow.  
 A people starved and stabbed in th' untilled field;  
 An army, whom liberticide and prey  
 Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;  
 Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;  
 Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;  
 A senate, Time's worst statute, unrepealed—  
 Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may  
 Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

Vocabulary

- Liberticide – destroyer of freedom
- Sanguine – optimistic or positive
- Senate – political council
- Statute - law
- Unrepealed – remaining in force

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*The poem is about homelessness.  
How does the writer convey feelings about charity  
and kindness?*

**Give**

*Simon Armitage*

Of all the public places, dear  
to make a scene, I've chosen here.

Of all the doorways in the world  
to choose to sleep, I've chosen yours.  
I'm on the street, under the stars.

For coppers I can dance or sing.  
For silver-swallow swords, eat fire.  
For gold-escape from locks and chains.

It's not as if I'm holding out  
for frankincense or myrrh, just change.

You give me tea. That's big of you.  
I'm on my knees. I beg of you.

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*The poem is about a woman who has been rejected.  
How does the poet convey feelings about jealousy?*

**Medusa**

*Carol Ann Duffy*

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy  
grew in my mind,  
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes  
as though my thoughts  
hissed and spat on my scalp.

My bride’s breath soured, stank  
in the grey bags of my lungs.  
I’m foul mouthed now, foul tongued,  
yellow fanged.  
There are bullet tears in my eyes.  
Are you terrified?

Be terrified.  
It’s you I love,  
perfect man, Greek God, my own;  
but I know you’ll go, betray me, stray  
from home.  
So better be for me if you were stone.

I glanced at a buzzing bee,  
a dull grey pebble fell  
to the ground.  
I glanced at a singing bird,  
a handful of dusty gravel  
spattered down.

I looked at a ginger cat,  
a housebrick  
shattered a bowl of milk.  
I looked at a snuffling pig,  
a boulder rolled  
in a heap of shit.

I stared in the mirror.  
Love gone bad  
showed me a Gorgon.  
I stared at a dragon.  
Fire spewed  
from the mouth of a mountain.

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And here you come  
with a shield for a heart  
and a sword for a tongue  
and your girls, your girls.  
Wasn’t I beautiful  
Wasn’t I fragrant and young?

Look at me now.



## A model answer

### How does the poet convey feelings about jealousy?

*Duffy's poem Medusa uses the monster from Greek mythology to show the effects jealousy can have when love turns sour. Just like the mythical monster, her hair becomes "filthy snakes" which "hissed and spat" as the narrator thinks how she has been betrayed. The transformation from woman to monster turns everything about her ugly; her breath "soured, stank" and she is "foul mouthed, foul tongued, yellow fanged". This language makes her sound threatening, as if she might physically attack the man who has wronged her.*

*Hissing and spitting also make us think of bitter arguments and the idea of being "foul mouthed" makes us think she is shouting and swearing. Her question, "Are you terrified?" sounds at once intimidating and a little bit pathetic and makes us compare the metaphorical monster she is imagining herself to be with the pathetic figure she has become.*

*The idea that she is not as threatening or terrifying as she would like to be is highlighted by the list of everyday object she turns to stone with a glance. Her desire to lash out and destroy is turned against innocent creatures as she turns a bird to "a handful of gravel" and a pig to "a boulder rolled in shit". Whatever she looks at becomes as ugly as her thoughts.*

*This is contrasted with her lover, a "perfect man" and a "Greek god" who she knows will "betray" her and "stray from home". The internal rhyme here creates an ominous, sing-song quality which adds to the sense of menace and threat as she decides he should be made "stone". Later he is made to sound like a heroic warrior but the metaphors "shield for a heart" and "sword for a tongue" make it sound like he seeks to protect himself from love and uses words as weapons to trick women.*

*Although the narrator is hurt and angry she is also confused and wonders, "Wasn't I beautiful/ Wasn't I fragrant and young?" She doesn't understand what she has done to deserve rejection. The final, single line stanza underlines the contrast between who she used to be and what she has become. The poem is suggesting that rejection and jealousy can make us all monstrous.*

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*The poem is a son's memory of his father.*

*How does the writer convey his feelings towards his father?*

### Those Winter Sundays

Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.  
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,  
Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.

What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere\* and lonely offices?

\*austere = no comfort or luxury

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A model answer

**How does the writer convey his feelings towards his father?**

*The first line of this sonnet suggests that the speaker’s father got up early every morning to heat up the cold house for his family. The alliteration of the phrase “blueblack cold” shows just how freezing the house is in the morning; the b sounds suggest shivering whereas the k sounds remind us of ice cracking. As the fire heats the houses, the sound of “banked fires blaze” reflects the crack of the logs on the fire and the long vowels of ‘fires blaze’ feels like we are able to stop hunching with the cold and begin to relax.*

*He is a man who works very hard all week – his “cracked hands” ache from his outdoor job – but still he gets up early on a Sunday which suggests he is a loving and responsible father. The caesura in the final line of the first stanza is a stark reminder of how ungrateful we can be for our parents’ unconditional love.*

*The second stanza shifts perspective to the son who lies in bed until the house has warmed up. The fact that he “fears the chronic angers of that house” could indicate that he has a difficult, perhaps even violent, relationship with his father but it could also be that ‘angers’ is used metaphorically for the extreme cold of the house.*

*The enjambment between the second and final stanzas echoes the carelessness and thoughtlessness of the way the speaker treats his father. He speaks “indifferently” as if he doesn’t care even though his dad has polished his shoes for him. The phrase “what did I know” marks a shift in time. The past tense shows he is looking back on his childhood and by repeating himself he seems astonished and guilty at the way he behaved. The final line, “love’s austere and lonely offices” shows that he now appreciates that being a parent is a thankless, unappreciated job but despite that, love means a good parent will always want to care for their children.*

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*This poem is about pregnancy.*

*How does the poet present her feelings about becoming a mother?*

**Morning Song**

*Sylvia Plath*

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.  
The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry  
Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.  
In a drafty museum, your nakedness  
Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother  
Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own  
slow  
Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath  
Flickers among the at pink roses. I wake to listen:  
A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and  
floral  
In my Victorian nightgown.  
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window  
square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try  
Your handful of notes;  
The clear vowels rise like balloons.

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*The poem is about a young girl's first relationship break up.*

*How does the poet convey feelings of loss and pain in this poem?*

**First Frost**

*Andrei Voznesensky*

A girl is freezing in a telephone booth,  
Huddled in her flimsy coat,  
Her face stained with tears  
And smeared with lipstick.

She breaths on her thin little fingers,  
Fingers like ice, Glass beads in her ears,  
She has to beat way back alone,  
Down the icy street.

First frost, A beginning of loses,  
The first frost of telephone phrases,  
It is the start of winter glittering on,  
The first frost of being hurt.

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*The poem about the break up of a relationship*

*How does the poet present ideas about becoming whole again?*

**Love After Love**

*Derek Walcott*

The time will come  
 when, with elation  
 you will greet yourself arriving  
 at your own door, in your own mirror  
 and each will smile at the other's welcome,  
  
 and say, sit here. Eat.  
 You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
 Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
 to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
  
 all your life, whom you ignored  
 for another, who knows you by heart.  
 Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
  
 the photographs, the desperate notes,  
 peel your own image from the mirror.  
 Sit. Feast on your life.

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*This poem is about romantic love.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about the woman he loves?*

**She Walks in Beauty**

*Lord Byron*

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

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*This poem is about physical desire.*

*How does the poet express ideas about romantic love?*

**The Flea**

John Donne

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,  
 How little that which thou deniest me is;  
 It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,  
 And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;  
 Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
 A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,  
 Yet this enjoys before it woo,  
 And pampered swells with one blood made of two,  
 And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
 Where we almost, nay more than married are.  
 This flea is you and I, and this  
 Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;  
 Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,  
 And cloistered in these living walls of jet.  
 Though use make you apt to kill me,  
 Let not to that, self-murder added be,  
 And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since  
 Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?  
 Wherein could this flea guilty be,  
 Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?  
 Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou  
 Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;  
 'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:  
 Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,  
 Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

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*This poem is about the pain of being in love.*

*How does the poet convey her feelings about love?*

**Ode to Aphrodite**

Sappho

Deathless Aphrodite, throned in flowers,  
Daughter of Zeus, O terrible enchantress,  
With this sorrow, with this anguish, break my spirit  
Lady, not longer!

Hear anew the voice! O hear and listen!  
Come, as in that island dawn thou camest,  
Billowing in thy yoked car to Sappho  
Forth from thy father's

Golden house in pity! ... I remember:  
Fleet and fair thy sparrows drew thee, beating  
Fast their wings above the dusky harvests,  
Down the pale heavens,

Lightning anon! And thou, O blest and brightest,  
Smiling with immortal eyelids, asked me:  
'Maiden, what betideth thee? Or wherefore  
Callest upon me?

'What is here the longing more than other,  
Here in this mad heart? And who the lovely  
One beloved that wouldst lure to loving?  
Sappho, who wrongs thee?

'See, if now she flies, she soon must follow;  
Yes, if spurning gifts, she soon must offer;  
Yes, if loving not, she soon must love thee,  
Howso unwilling...'

Come again to me! O now! Release me!  
End the great pang! And all my heart desireth  
Now of fulfillment, fulfill! O Aphrodite,  
Fight by my shoulder!

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*The poem imagines life in the north Atlantic*

*How does the writer convey his feelings about loneliness?*

**North**

*Seamus Heaney*

I returned to a long strand,  
the hammered curve of a bay,  
and found only the secular  
powers of the Atlantic thundering.

I faced the unmagical  
invitations of Iceland,  
the pathetic colonies  
of Greenland, and suddenly

those fabulous raiders,  
those lying in Orkney and Dublin  
measured against  
their long swords rusting,

those in the solid  
belly of stone ships,  
those hacked and glinting  
in the gravel of thawed streams

were ocean-deafened voices  
warning me, lifted again  
in violence and epiphany.  
The longship's swimming tongue

was buoyant with hindsight—  
it said Thor's hammer swung  
to geography and trade,  
thick-witted couplings and revenges,

the hatreds and behind-backs  
of the althing, lies and women,  
exhaustions nominated peace,  
memory incubating the spilled blood.

It said, 'Lie down  
in the word-hoard, burrow  
the coil and gleam  
of your furrowed brain.

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Compose in darkness.  
Expect aurora borealis  
in the long foray  
but no cascade of light.

Keep your eye clear  
as the bleb of the icicle,  
trust the feel of what nubbed treasure  
your hands have known.'

*This poem is about what children learn in school.*

*How does the poet convey her anger about her experiences of school?*

**School**

*Kae Tempest*

We wander into school, happy children:  
Kind and bright and interested in things.  
We don't know yet the horrors of the building.  
The hatred it will teach. The boredom it will bring.

Soon we'll learn to disappear in public.  
We'll learn that getting by is good enough.  
We'll learn the way it feels to see injustice,  
And shut our mouths in case it comes for us.

We'll learn to never think but copy blindly.  
To ally with the mean and keep them near.  
We'll learn to not be talented or clever,  
And the most important lessons  
For success is a career:

How to follow orders when you're bordering  
On nausea and you're bored and  
Insecure and dwarfed by fear.

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*The poem deals with how the experience of school for young children.*

*How does the poet present the schoolboy's feelings about school?*

### The Schoolboy

William Blake

I love to rise in a summer morn,  
 When the birds sing on every tree;  
 The distant huntsman winds his horn,  
 And the skylark sings with me:  
 O what sweet company!  
 But to go to school in a summer morn, -  
 O it drives all joy away!  
 Under a cruel eye outworn,  
 The little ones spend the day  
 In sighing and dismay.  
 Ah then at times I drooping sit,  
 And spend many an anxious hour;  
 Nor in my book can I take delight,  
 Nor sit in learning's bower,  
 Worn through with the dreary shower.  
 How can the bird that is born for joy  
 Sit in a cage and sing?  
 How can a child, when fears annoy,  
 But droop his tender wing,  
 And forget his youthful spring!  
 O father and mother if buds are nipped,  
 And blossoms blown away;  
 And if the tender plants are stripped  
 Of their joy in the springing day,  
 By sorrow and care's dismay,  
 How shall the summer arise in joy,  
 Or the summer fruits appear?  
 Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,  
 Or bless the mellowing year,  
 When the blasts of winter appear?

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*The poem is about the beauty and power of nature.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about the natural world?*

### The Tables Turned

William Wordsworth

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun above the mountain's head,  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
He, too, is no mean preacher:  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless—  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—  
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

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*This poem is about the relationship between children and parents.*

*How does the poet convey her feelings about her parents?*

**Genetics**

*Sinéad Morrissey*

My father’s in my fingers, but my mother’s in my palms.  
I lift them up and look at them with pleasure –  
I know my parents made me by my hands.

They may have been repelled to separate lands,  
to separate hemispheres, may sleep with other lovers,  
but in me they touch where fingers link to palms.

With nothing left of their togetherness but friends  
who quarry for their image by a river,  
at least I know their marriage by my hands.

I shape a chapel where a steeple stands.  
And when I turn it over,  
my father’s by my fingers, my mother’s by my palms

demure before a priest reciting psalms.  
My body is their marriage register.  
I re-enact their wedding with my hands.

So take me with you, take up the skin’s demands  
for mirroring in bodies of the future.  
I’ll bequeath my fingers, if you bequeath your palms.  
We know our parents make us by our hands.

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This poem is about a son’s relationship with his mother.

How does the poet convey his feelings about his mother?

### Mother of Flip-flops

Mukahang Limbu

Mother of flip-flops, of  
chipped nail polish on ginger fingers – always  
the warm hands, your smile  
the kindest room in this house where  
we kill cockroaches with bay leaf  
you boil in your chai.

Mother of the money-plant, of orchids  
you cannot take care of, of the garden  
overgrown with weeds only you  
can’t seem to stand, mother  
of turning the light on, switch clicks  
like your broken English, you say

*Fill form in, look up this apartment –  
What this email say? And maybe  
before teaching you how to  
pronounce furlough i’ll write that reply  
to the lady at the bank writing  
about your loan and put it in*

the pre-paid envelope but  
maybe i won’t . Maybe  
i’ll send for a loan renewal, a debt  
rescindment, a chance for you to hate  
fractions, cook words out of alphabets

like rice cakes, to go flirt just a little  
more, ride on the back of some  
handsome’s bike, to keep dancing,  
to never be pregnant, to learn to make curry  
later in life, for yourself  
not for some stranger’s in-law. Mother

i’ll ask for some dirt for your knees  
those black knees of playing

too late in the streets –

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*This poem is about feeling trapped.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about money and work?*

**Toads**

Philip Larkin

Why should I let the toad *work*  
Squat on my life?  
Can't I use my wit as a pitchfork  
And drive the brute off?

Why should I let the toad work  
Squat on my life?  
Can't I use my wit as a pitchfork  
And drive the brute off?

Six days of the week it soils  
With its sickening poison -  
Just for paying a few bills!  
That's out of proportion.

Lots of folk live on their wits:  
Lecturers, lispers,  
Losers, loblolly-men, louts-  
They don't end as paupers.

Lots of folk live up lanes  
With fires in a bucket,  
Eat windfalls and tinned sardines.  
They seem to like it.

Their nippers have got bare feet,  
Their unspeakable wives  
Are skinny as whippets - and yet  
No one actually *starves*.

Ah, were I courageous enough  
To shout, *Stuff your pension!*  
But I know, all too well, that's the stuff  
That dreams are made on:

For something sufficiently toad-like  
Squats in me, too;  
Its hunkers are heavy as hard luck,  
And cold as snow,

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And will never allow me to blarney  
My way of getting  
The fame and the girl and the money  
All at one sitting.

I don't say, one bodies the other  
One's spiritual truth;  
But I do say it's hard to lose either,  
When you have both.



*This poem is about love fading over time.*

*How does the poet convey his feelings about the woman in the poem?*

**The Voice**

Thomas Hardy

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,  
 Saying that now you are not as you were  
 When you had changed from the one who was all to me,  
 But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,  
 Standing as when I drew near to the town  
 Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,  
 Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness  
 Travelling across the wet mead to me here,  
 You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,  
 Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,  
 Leaves around me falling,  
 Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward\*,  
 And the woman calling.

*norward = northward*

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*This poem is about finding a remote house in the middle of woods during a snowstorm.*

*How does the poet convey feelings of danger and uncertainty?*

### Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
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