

AQA English Literature GCSE

Unseen Poetry Guide Section B



Overview

Expectations

“
Section C Unseen Poetry:
Students will answer one question on
one **unseen poem** and one question
**comparing this poem with a second
unseen poem.**

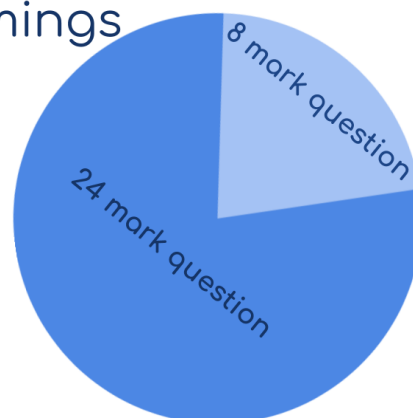
- AQA English GCSE Specification
”

24 marks for the first question focusing exclusively on the **initial unseen poem**.

8 marks for the second question, which focuses on comparing it to **another unseen poem**.

- The difference between **unseen poetry** and the **anthology section** on the paper is that there are **no marks awarded** for both **context** and **understanding the tone of the poems** presented to you.
- However, those marking your paper are checking to see if you've **examined the meaning behind the text**, and then how the author has used **structure, form, imagery and language** to create this meaning in their poem.
- You are allocated around **45 minutes** for **Paper 2 Section C**. It's probably a good idea to spend **30-35 minutes on the 24 mark question**, leaving your remaining time for the shorter **8 marker**.

Timings



[24]

How to Tackle Question 1

[24]

- When faced with the poem, stay calm and initially **read it over once**. There's no need to start annotating until you have got the **basic gist of the poem**. 
- If you don't understand it the first time you read it keep **the question in mind** and start thinking about the **connotations of the title** and spotting **poetic devices** (such as metaphors, similes, sibilance, etc). 
- When annotating make sure that you are **only labelling devices that you have something to write about**, if you annotate every single thing you find then you'll run out of time to write your essay. 
- Remember to **always keep thinking about the question**, and the theme or perspective it's asking you to explore, in relation to the poem. 
- Once you have come up with **2 - 4 points about the poem** (though three solid points tend to work effectively for most people), you can **analyse the structure**. You should note things like the **rhyme scheme used and syllable line length**, and you can then link these to your points about the **theme / perspectives** presented in the poem. 
- Also, gather **key quotes** which link to each of your points before you begin writing your essay. These can become **paragraphs** and mean you will have a **clear structure** in front of you to work from. 

For each of your paragraphs in your essay, try and include:

1-3 quotes which support your point from the poem.

Detailed analysis of at least one of your quotes, with **poetic devices** and the **meaning implied** from it included.

The effect on a **potential reader** and the reason the author may have used the **language**.

A comment on the **structure of the poem** which supports your point and links back to the **question**.

Different **interpretations** of both the **quote and structural point**, which also link back to the **overarching point** you're making in the paragraph and the question.



Tackling an Exam Question

How does Allen Poe present time in “A Dream within a Dream”?

A Dream Within A Dream

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow--
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand--
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep--while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

So, when faced with this question as the **24 marker in the exam**, after reading it through once and gaining a basic understanding of the gist of it, you need to think about the **following analytical categories**:

???
**Content
and Ideas**

**Structure
and Form**

Language



What sorts of things can we think about in Poe's poem?

Content & Ideas

- Poe discusses the **insignificance of human life** and how time is slipping away, alongside a general exploration of the **effects of time on life**.
- Considering the idea that so little is known about life in detail and that everything experienced is never permanent.
- Can be viewed as the **reflection a person makes** at the **end of their life**.

Structure & Form

- Unusual **stanza lengths** - 11 lines in the first then 13 lines in the second.
- Poem constructed of **rhyming couplets** and one **tercet** per stanza.
- The **title is repeated** in a sort of refrain.

Language

- Religious **connotations** of 'God', perhaps to suggest life is controlled solely by exterior forces.
- **Semantic field** of beach and the metaphor of sand to represent **time**.
- The extended metaphor of a **dream** to represent Poe's **experience of his own life**.
- **Consonance** in 'while I weep - while I weep'.
- **Personification** of 'hope has flown away'.

[8]

How to Tackle Question 2

[8]

As you have such a **little amount of allocated time** for this short question, a **brief plan** (if any) will suffice, but start writing as soon as possible.

- Focus on always **comparing similarities or differences** between the two given poems rather going into any **solidly detailed analysis** of just one or the other - remember, you have very **limited time**.
- Try and write **three short, concise paragraphs** - or **two** longer ones if you're going to go into more specific detail - on **two comparative points**.
- A good guideline to start planning this sort of question would be to **plan two paragraphs of similarities** and **one paragraph of difference** between the two poems.
- Try to include a **reference to structure in one of the paragraphs**. However, the key is to include a **quote** for each comparative point for each of the poem, along with a specific **poetic technique** the writer is using.
- Also remember to include how the **poetic techniques are used** and how the **message** the writer is trying to convey **affects the reader**.



1
2
3

PLAN
↓ ↓



What could you write about for structure and form and language?

You can try and identify the **following devices** within the poem you are presented with, but always remember to **link the device used back to the question** and explain the **effect** it has on the piece of writing and the reader.

Structure

- Extended Metaphors
- Enjambment
- Semantic Fields
- Symbols
- Extended Allegory
- Line Breaks
- Line / Stanza Length
- Caesura
- Speaker
- Narrative Style
- Narrative Tone
- Poetic Form [Sonnet, Villanelle, Ballad, Free Verse, etc]
- Meter
- Rhyming Scheme
- Flashbacks
- Chronological order
- Epigraph
- In medias res
- Syntactic sentence structures

Language

Anaphora	my world is here, my world is there, my world is everywhere
Analogy	as light as a feather
Assonance	try to light the fire
Alliteration	we woke well
Antithesis	one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind
Auditory imagery	the beach was dark and dim
Biblical Language	I incline to Cain's heresy
Colloquialism	ain't // gonna
Cliche	love is blind
Contrast	he was happy and sad
Dialect	aye // nay
Disjunct	frankly , he's boring
Ellipsis	...
Euphemism	passed away
Emotive Language	the girl was shaking in fear , with tears streaming down her face
Hyperbole	her bag weighs a tonne
Irony	the fire station is burning down
Intertextuality	they were like Romeo and Juliet
Juxtaposition	calm and chaos
Metonymy	the pen is mightier than the sword
Metaphor	she is the sky
Onomatopoeia	boom!
Olfactory imagery	she smelled the sweet scent of lavender waft towards her
Oxymoron	evil god
Personification	the sky cried
Pathetic Fallacy	the cavernous house was dark and damp
Plosives	plod
Repetition	we went, we walked, we won
Sibilance	she swam softly
Symbol	the bird symbolising freedom
Simile	brave as a lion
Tricolon	when we walk, we can fight, we can get freedom
Zoomorphism	cat woman

