

# 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.**

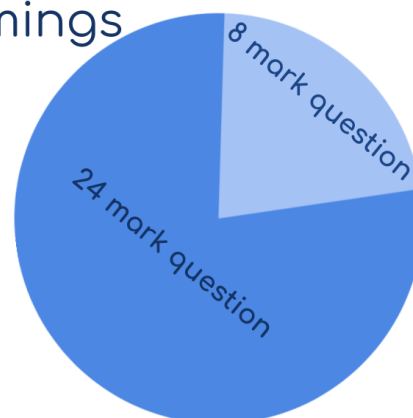
- AQA English GCSE Specification  
”

**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**.



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