

What are the Examiners looking for?

The Assessment Objectives for Unit 2B Unseen Poetry are:

A01: Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations

This means: What are the main themes/ideas/feelings in the poem? Can they be explained and supported with evidence?

A02: Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings

This means: How does the poet convey their themes/ideas/feelings to the reader?

- The question will always ask you to explain the themes/ideas/feelings in the poem – to demonstrate your understanding of the point of the poem.
- The question will also always ask you to write about how the writer has communicated these themes/ideas/feelings.

In other words: What is the poem about, and how has the poet communicated what it is about?

THE EXAMINATION

You will have 30 minutes to read the poem and answer the question, which carries 18 marks – or about 12% of your English Literature grade.

You should spend about 10 minutes reading and thinking about the poem and the question. It's a good idea to underline and annotate interesting aspects of the poem while you think about what you are going to say about it.

You need to spend the rest of the time (20 minutes) answering the question. Remember that using short, relevant quotations is one of the ways to get marks – don't over-quote though, as this will waste time. Single words or phrases from the poem, embedded in your sentences, look sophisticated and purposeful.

Keep focused on what is going to get you the marks:

- demonstrating understanding of what the poet is saying in the poem
- supporting your points with short, relevant quotations or details
- commenting on the effects of techniques: language choices, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, repetition... *Never* 'technique-spot' though – only mention a technique if you can comment on why it has been used!

Targeting Grade C

For Grade C you will be expected to:

- cover both aspects of the question: *what* and *how*
- show you understand the writer's main ideas/themes/feelings
- explain how the writer uses language, structure, form or other features to convey these ideas
- support what you say by referring to relevant, appropriate *evidence* from the poem
- consider and explain the techniques used by the writer – the purpose and effect of the ways they have written the poem.

Targeting Grade A/A*

For Grade A/A* you will be expected to cover all the points for Grade C and:

- explore ideas/themes/feelings in some detail, showing empathy
- consider metaphorical meanings and alternative interpretations
- offer imaginative, persuasive, convincing interpretations of the poem
- analyse language, images, techniques very closely – saying a lot about a little.

Be prepared to be brave and independent with your ideas (supporting them with evidence) to create a convincing argument.

WRITING STYLE

Make your writing good to read:

- Vary your sentences. Include short as well as long sentences.
- Vary your sentence order. For example:
The tone changes as the verse develops. or: As the verse develops, the tone changes.
- Embed quotations within sentences. For example:
The powerful images of the night sky and the 'moon spilling out of the sea' take the reader back to the first verse.