**Unseen Poetry**

For the Unseen Poetry section of the exam you must read through a poem that you have not studied and write an essay response to a question.

After this you read another poem and write a short comparison with the first poem.

You are marked out of 24 for the first essay and 8 for the second.

You should spend about 30m on the first and 10m on the second question.

Always read through the questions carefully before writing.

Poem 1 Approach:

1. Reread the question carefully.
2. Reread through the poem identifying key parts that relate to the question focus.
3. Start - Use quotations from the most interesting things from the start and title and link this to the question focus.
4. End – Consider how the poem has developed using the most interesting quotations from the end and link this to the question focus.
5. Middle – Consider how this idea has run throughout the poem using the most interesting quotations from the middle and link this to the question focus.

Comparison Approach:

1. Reread the comparison question.
2. Reread both poems identifying key similarities and differences.
3. Use the same quotations from the first response and link these to similar/different parts of the start/end/middle of the second poem.

**Autumn**

Autumn arrives

Like an experienced robber

Grabbing the green stuff

Then cunningly covering his tracks

With a deep multitude

Of colourful distractions.

And the wind,

The wind is his accomplice

Putting an air of chaos

Into the careful diversions

So branches shake

And dead leaves are suddenly blown

In the faces of inquisitive strangers.

The theft chills the world,

Changes the temper of the earth

Till the normally placid sky

Glows red with a quiet rage.

Alan Bold

**In ‘Autumn’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about autumn? [24 marks]**

**Today**

If ever there were a spring day so perfect,

so uplifted by a warm intermittent breeze

that it made you want to throw

open all the windows in the house

and unlatch the door to the canary’s cage,

indeed, rip the little door from its jamb\*,

a day when the cool brick paths

and the garden bursting with peonies\*\*

seemed so etched in sunlight

that you felt like taking

a hammer to the glass paperweight

on the living room end table,

releasing the inhabitants

from their snow-covered cottage

so they could walk out,

holding hands and squinting

into this larger dome of blue and white,

well, today is just that kind of day.

Billy Collins

\* jamb – the sides of a doorway or opening

\*\* peonies – flowers

**In both ‘Today’ and ‘Autumn’ the speakers describe attitudes towards the seasons.**

**What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present these attitudes? [8 marks]**

**A Marriage**

You are holding up a ceiling

with both arms. It is very heavy,

but you must hold it up, or else

it will fall down on you. Your arms

are tired, terribly tired,

and, as the day goes on, it feels

as if either your arms or the ceiling

will soon collapse.

But then,

unexpectedly,

something wonderful happens:

Someone,

a man or a woman,

walks into the room

and holds their arms up

to the ceiling beside you.

So you finally get

to take down your arms.

You feel the relief of respite,

the blood flowing back

to your fingers and arms.

And when your partner's arms tire,

you hold up your own

to relieve him again.

And it can go on like this

for many years

without the house falling.

Michael Blumenthal

**In ‘A Marriage’, how does the poet present ideas about marriage? [24 marks]**

**Habitation**

Marriage is not

a house or even a tent

it is before that, and colder:

the edge of the forest, the edge

of the desert

the unpainted stairs

at the back where we squat

outside, eating popcorn

the edge of the receding glacier

where painfully and with wonder

at having survived even

this far

we are learning to make fire

Margaret Atwood

**In both ‘Habitation’ and ‘A Marriage’ the speakers express their opinions on marriage.**

**What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets show their opinions on marriage? [8 marks]**

**The cat’s song**

Mine, says the cat, putting out his paw of darkness.

My lover, my friend, my slave, my toy, says

the cat making on your chest his gesture of drawing

milk from his mother’s forgotten breasts.

Let us walk in the woods, says the cat.

I’ll teach you to read the tabloid of scents,

to fade into shadow, wait like a trap, to hunt.

Now I lay this plump warm mouse on your mat.

You feed me, I try to feed you, we are friends,

says the cat, although I am more equal than you.

Can you leap twenty times the height of your body?

Can you run up and down trees? Jump between roofs?

Let us rub our bodies together and talk of touch.

My emotions are pure as salt crystals and as hard.

My lusts glow like my eyes. I sing to you in the mornings

walking round and round your bed and into your face.

Come I will teach you to dance as naturally

as falling asleep and waking and stretching long, long.

I speak greed with my paws and fear with my whiskers.

Envy lashes my tail. Love speaks me entire, a word

of fur. I will teach you to be still as an egg

and to slip like the ghost of wind through the grass.

Marge Piercy

**In ‘The cat’s song’, how does the poet use the speaker’s voice to present the idea of a cat? [24 marks]**

**Dead Cat Poem**

She who flowed like mercury, or mist

over silent fields,

who had seen off foxes,

terrorized hedgerows, endangered

several species of rodent,

was now sitting on death's lap

and feeling his cold fingers.

We stood and looked for signs of her

in the grey bundle we had petted and stroked

lugged and loved through the years.

But she was looking elsewhere

untidy for the first time,

dusty and in disarray.

Strange that when we buried her

beneath a flowering bush, in the sunny place

where she loved to sit,

we could not touch her.

Scooped her up with a spade.

Ann Alexander

**Both ‘Dead Cat Poem’ and ‘The cat’s song’ show views of cats.**

**What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present cats? [8 marks]**

**Work, Sleep, Work, Sleep**

Work, sleep, work, sleep,

Work, sleep, work, sleep,

Work, sleep, work, sleep,

Work:

Oh free me please with gentle ease

From work, sleep, work, sleep, work!

This odium, pounding tedium

Of my work, sleep, work, sleep, work.

Just whisk me off to lands afar

From work, sleep, work, sleep, work -

That grinding train of rhythmic pain

Called ‘Work, sleep, work, sleep, work.’

Poor neural circuits fizzle and pop

In work, sleep, work, sleep, work,

In trying to make some sense of all this

Work, sleep, work, sleep, work.

But Hark! I see a golden gleam -

A saving spirit of hope:

‘You’re fired! ’ He screams. What news to bear,

This wondrous hangman’s rope!

So now I’m free, released from all this

Work, sleep, work, sleep, work -

Eternal peace and rest for me, no

Work, sleep, work, sleep, work.

Mark Slaughter

**In ‘Work, Sleep, Work, Sleep’, how does the poet present ideas about work? [24 marks]**

**Self-Employed**

I stand and listen, head bowed,

to my inner complaint.

Persons passing by think

I am searching for a lost coin.

You’re fired, I yell inside

after an especially bad episode.

I’m letting you go without notice

or terminal pay. You just lost

another chance to make good.

But then I watch myself standing at the exit,

depressed and about to leave,

and wave myself back in wearily,

for who else could I get in my place

to do the job in dark, airless conditions?

David Ignatow

**In both ‘Self-Employed’ and ‘Work, Sleep, Work, Sleep’ the speakers present views about work.**

**What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets present these views? [8 marks]**

**The Killer Snails**

The killer snails

Have slung their silver trails

Along the doormat, out across the lawn,

Under the bushes Where the alarming thrushes

Give night its notice, making way for dawn,

And the obliging lizards drop their tails.

On webs of dew

The spiders stir their pots of glue

And drag their quartered victims to the shade.

Soaked in their rugs

Of grass and moss the slugs

Wind up another night of sluggish trade

And young ingredients get into a stew.

The sorrel\* bends.

The path fades out but never ends

Where brambles clutch and bracken wipes your feet.

It goes in rings.

Its mind’s on other things.

Its way and its intentions never meet.

Meetings of friends?

It gives no undertaking.

It depends.

James Fenton

\*sorrel: a plant; a type of herb

**In ‘Killer Snails’, how does the poet present ideas about snails? [24 marks]**

**Considering the Snail**

The snail pushes through a green

night, for the grass is heavy

with water and meets over

the bright path he makes, where rain

has darkened the earth’s dark. He

moves in a wood of desire,

pale antlers barely stirring

as he hunts. I cannot tell

what power is at work, drenched there

with purpose, knowing nothing.

What is a snail’s fury? All

I think is that if later

I parted the blades above

the tunnel and saw the thin

trail of broken white across

litter, I would never have

imagined the slow passion

to that deliberate progress.

Thom Gunn

**In both ‘Considering the Snail’ and ‘Killer Snails’ the speakers describe snails.**

**What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets describe snails? [8 marks]**

**Great-grandfather**

Great-grandfather would sit in the back parlour

For hours listening to the gramophone.

I have no photograph of him doing this,

So the picture I see of him sitting alone

With his head inclined towards the trumpeting

Green lily is colourful and unfaded.

The handkerchief, with which he blots the tears

Schubert serenades from him, is distinctly red

And the gramophone’s tin horn grows steadily

More greenly lily-like and rare,

Grows into antiquity – and soon will be found

Surviving only behind glass in conditioned air.

Great-grandfather knows nothing of this, but

Such an instrument will be treasured as though

It were a silver trumpet once discovered

Lying in the tomb of some young Egyptian Pharaoh;

And only on certain occasions will it be taken

From its case and played with careful ceremony –

when thinnest sound will summon the ready armies

Of imagination to salute the music lovers of history.

And great-grandfather will be one of those.

Freda Downie

**In ‘Great-grandfather’, how does the poet present the speaker’s views of their great-grandfather? [24 marks]**

**On the Verge**

The skin is wrinkled and speaks of age.

I watch it change from year to following year

As hurrying life turns yet another page,

And feel it as it drops another gear.

It’s not that bits have started to fall off,

Though annual checks will monitor decline.

Occasional wheeze is now a chronic cough.

Leg muscles wither though the brain seems fine.

The three score years and ten\* are long-term past.

And dreams of action close as I can get.

The body has mislaid that key word ‘fast’.

And ‘slow’ or ‘creeping’ are a better bet.

It’s no good worrying at this lack of urge

For life’s still sweet here resting on the verge.

Michael Ware

three score years and ten\*: 70 years

**In both ‘On the Verge’ and ‘Great Grandfather’ the speakers consider the idea of older people.**

**What are the similarities and/or differences between the ways the poets consider older people? [8 marks]**

**Unseen Poetry (24 marks (AO1 = 12, AO2 = 12)**

**First Poem Question:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mark** | **Typical Features:** |
| Level 6  Convincing, critical analysis and exploration  **21-24 marks** | * Critical, exploratory conceptualised response to task and text * Judicious use of precise references to support interpretation(s) * Analysis of writer’s methods with subject terminology used judiciously * Exploration of effects of writer’s methods to create meanings |
| Level 5  Thoughtful, developed consideration  **17–20 marks** | * Thoughtful, developed response to task and text * Apt references integrated into interpretation(s) * Examination of writer’s methods with subject terminology used effectively to support consideration of methods * Examination of effects of writer’s methods to create meanings |
| Level 4  Clear  understanding  **13–16 marks** | * Clear, explained response to task and text * Effective use of references to support explanation * Clear explanation of writer’s methods with appropriate use of relevant subject terminology * Understanding of effects of writer’s method to create meanings |
| Level 3 Explained, structured comments  **9–12 marks** | * Some explained response to task and text * References used to support a range of relevant comments * Explained/relevant comments on writer’s methods with some relevant use of subject terminology * Identification of effects of writer’s methods to create meanings |
| Level 2  Supported,  relevant  comments  **5–8 marks** | * Supported response to task and text * Comments on references * Identification of writers’ methods * Some reference to subject terminology |
| Level 1  Simple, explicit comments  **1–4 marks** | * Simple comments relevant to task and text * Reference to relevant details * Awareness of writer making choices * Possible reference to subject terminology |
| **0 marks** | Nothing worthy of credit/nothing written |

**Comparison Question:**

**AO2:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mark** | **Typical features of response** |
| **Level 4**  **7–8 marks** | * Exploratory comparison of writers’ use of language, structure and form with subject terminology used judiciously * Convincing comparison of effects of writers’ methods to create meanings |
| **Level 3**  **5-6 marks** | * Thoughtful comparison of writers’ use of language and/or structure and/or form with subject terminology used effectively to support consideration of methods * Comparative examination of effects of writers’ methods to create meanings |
| **Level 2**  **3-4 marks** | * Relevant comparison of writers’ use of language and/or structure and/or form with some relevant use of subject terminology * Some comparison of effects of writers’ methods to create meanings |
| **Level 1**  **1-2 marks** | * Some links between writers’ use of language or structure or form * Some links between effects of writers’ methods to create meanings |