

AS and A LEVEL

Delivery Guide

H074/H474

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)

Theme: Seamus Heaney

June 2015



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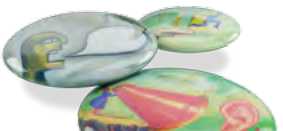
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Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected that best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

If you have any feedback on this Delivery Guide or suggestions for other resources you would like OCR to develop, please email resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk.

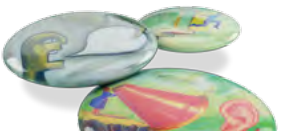
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Curriculum Content

Poetry – AS: Paper 2, Section B The Language of Literary Texts A Level Paper 2, Section A The Language of Poetry and Plays

At both AS and A Level, this examined component asks students to analyse the use and impact of poetic and stylistic techniques, demonstrating how meaning and effects are created.

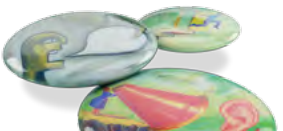
Topic: Seamus Heaney, selected poems

Key skills:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a substantial poetry collection.
- Apply relevant methods for text analysis, drawing on linguistic and literary techniques.
- Explore how linguistic and literary approaches can inform interpretations of texts.
- Identify how meanings and effects are created and conveyed in texts.
- Analyse the ways in which a poetry text draws on its literary, cultural and stylistic contexts.

At AS Level, the exam asks the students to compare two named poems from the collection they have been studying.

At A Level, the exam asks the students to compare the named poem with one or two others of their choice from the collection they have been studying.



Thinking Conceptually

This examined component requires the students to read the following fifteen poems written by Seamus Heaney: "Death of a Naturalist", "Churning Day", "Fodder", "Anahorish", "Act of Union", "The Tolland Man", "Punishment", "Strange Fruit", "Funeral Rites", "The Haw Lantern", "Oysters", "The Toome Road", "A Kite for Michael and Christopher", "Mycenae Lookout", "Postscript".

In this specification, the students will analyse how meanings are shaped in poetry, exploring how the poet uses poetic and stylistic techniques to present ideas. They will focus on the way in which meaning is created through the use of pattern making and pattern breaking, (deviation) and through repetition.

This analysis will require the students to have an awareness of phonology, lexis and semantics, grammar and morphology, pragmatics and discourse.

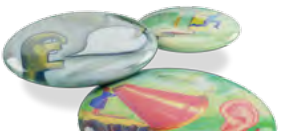
Students will also analyse the connections between the poems, and explore the influence of context on the poems. The context may be the literary context (the way in which the poem uses the conventions of a particular genre, for example), or the broader social or historical context.

Conceptual links to other parts of the specification

In common with AS Paper 2, Section A (The Language of Prose), and A Level Paper 3, Section A (Reading as a Writer, Writing as a Reader), this paper requires the students to think about how the texts are constructed, rather than simply analysing the themes, for example. The focus might be on how the choice of first person narrator shapes the meaning of the poem, for instance, rather than on who that narrator actually is.

The students closely analyse the language of poetry through poetic and stylistic techniques, which is a useful skill that can be applied to other AS and A Level units. The knowledge they gain about the way in which language works, the effects that it creates, and the way in which it can be used, is also an excellent basis for the students' own written work at A Level, and for any analysis that they do of either spoken or written texts in almost any genre.

An understanding of the relevance of context is essential to any study that requires students to think about the purpose or audience of the text (particularly relevant in the exploration of the texts in the anthology in AS and A Level Paper 1, for example).



Thinking Contextually

In this component, the students are already required to make connections between two named poems (AS) or between one named poem and one or two poems of their choice (A Level), and this process of finding connections is part of thinking contextually. The students are exploring the poem in the light of at least one other poem in the collection, and are therefore thinking about the patterns that emerge or the patterns that are broken in terms of the poet's choice of lexis, syntax etc.

An awareness of the broader context of other genres is also required in order that the students can see how the poet breaks or follows those conventions.

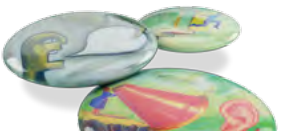
Some knowledge of wider social or historical context may be useful, if that context affects the grammatical, or lexical choices made by the poet.

The following activities in this guide are examples of the way in which the context of the poems can be explored.

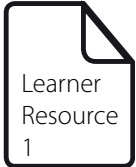

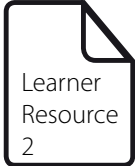


Learner Resource 1 – overview of poems and themes, integrating the poet's own comments with more general identification of themes.

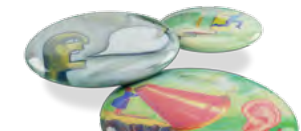
Learner Resource 4 – where students interpret “The Haw Lantern”, with reference to different contextual stimuli (folklore, the Irish Troubles, Diogenes), exploring to what extent the context might influence their reading of the poem.

Learner Resource 5 – an activity that requires students to use the guidance for one poem, to provide the inspiration for the analysis for another, and in the process the students are asked to integrate context into the general examination of voice, lexis, grammar and syntax, figurative language etc.

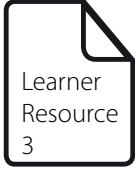

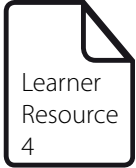
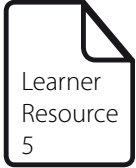


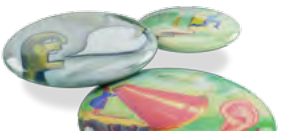
Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Learner Resource 1: an overview of the characteristics of Heaney's poetry (AO1, AO3, AO4)</p> <p>In this activity, students are given a list of nouns taken from 15 of Heaney's poems and asked to find any links they can between them. They may start by identifying thematic links, but then, as they refer back to the poems, they can then go on to begin to think about the characteristic narrative voice, or any lexical patterns that are evident.</p> <p>This task would serve as an introductory activity to the study of Heaney's poetry, and consequently, there is support for the students in terms of a list of Heaney's themes, for example. They can then go on to link their findings to extracts from The Nobel Lecture ("Crediting Poetry"), as a consolidation activity.</p> <p>It would provide a good starting point for Learner Resource 2, which asks the students to more closely analyse the poetry.</p> <p>For an overview of Heaney's work and a list of further reading see:</p> <p>http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/seamus-heaney</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 1</p> <p></p>
<p>Learner Resource 2: linguistic analysis of "A Kite for Michael and Christopher" (AO1, AO2)</p> <p>This is an activity in which students work in groups on clusters of different word classes taken from the poem "A Kite for Michael and Christopher". They have guidance in the form of open and closed questions to help their discussion and analysis. Having heard all the feedback, it may be worth having a discussion about how the meaning emerges from these apparently disconnected words. This may be a new way for the students to approach the poem, and they may be surprised to discover the depth of analysis that can be achieved. The summative discussion that takes place after the students have read the poem is therefore important. The introductory paragraph task could be done individually in class, as an assignment, or as a group activity.</p> <p>This activity would work well early on in the teaching of Heaney, building the students' confidence in terms of writing about Heaney and considering his use of poetic and stylistic techniques.</p> <p>For an example of stylistic analysis of a poem (at degree level) see:</p> <p>http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/stylistics/sa1/example.htm</p> <p>To listen to Heaney giving a short talk about, and then reading "A Kite for Michael and Christopher" see:</p> <p>http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xrucpc_seamus-heaney-a-kite-for-michael-and-christopher_creation</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 2</p> <p></p> <p></p>



Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p>Learner Resource 3: phonology in “Anahorish” (AO1, AO2)</p> <p>The students are encouraged to think about the phonology of “Anahorish” and how Heaney uses the sound of words to help shape the meaning in the poem. This activity guides them through the first verse, before asking them to continue to plot the sound through the remaining three verses.</p> <p>This task could be applied to any of Heaney’s poems, perhaps offering the students a slightly different way of approaching a poem, revealing how the patterns of sound affect its tone.</p> <p>For more analysis on “Anahorish”, see Component 02 – Candidate style answers with commentary on the OCR website: http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-english-language-and-literature-emc-h074-h474-from-2015/</p> <p>This activity would work well mid-way through study of Heaney’s work, as a general knowledge of the poet’s characteristic preoccupations/lexis etc. would help the students’ analysis.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 3</p> <p></p>
<p>Learner Resource 4: context, imagery and lexis of “The Haw Lantern” (AO1, AO2, AO4)</p> <p>This activity gives students an opportunity to see how context can affect the way in which we read a poem. Three groups are each given a different piece of stimulus material, and a set of questions that they can choose to guide their analysis of the poem. In the feedback, the subjectivity of analysis becomes clear. The final task requires them to think about the lexical groups within the poem, and the fluidity with which the poet moves between metaphorical and literal.</p> <p>The activity could be used as classwork, which then extends into an assignment where the students complete the analysis (looking at, for example, rhyme, rhythm, phonology, form, grammar and syntax), producing either an annotated poem, (or with the guidance of a question) an essay plan, or the essay itself.</p> <p>This task would work well near the end of the study of Heaney’s poetry, as it has the potential for independent work, and could be used without the guiding questions.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 4</p>
<p>Learner Resource 5: “Punishment” and “Strange Fruit” – exam-type question (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4)</p> <p>In addition to the activity offered in the Learner Resource, these two tables could be used in many ways in the classroom. They could be used after the students have done their own analysis, and they could annotate the tables to add in their own ideas. They could use them to help to think about the structure of their essay, numbering the boxes and discussing whether they agree as a class. They could work in groups, taking the notes as a starting point to produce a presentation on one of the poems, or on a comparison of the poems, to the rest of the class. They could be encouraged to do further research on, for example, the bog bodies.</p> <p>This activity is designed to be done later on in the study of Heaney, as it presumes that students have an understanding of the terminology and of Heaney’s characteristic use of language.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 5</p>



Learner Resource 1



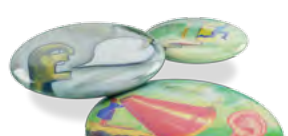
Look at the nouns below. They are taken from one line from each of the fifteen poems you are studying. In pairs, decide what single word most accurately summarises the links that you notice in each line.

1. frogs, sods; necks, sails, slime kings, vengeance, hand, spawn ("The Death of a Naturalist")
2. staff, whiskey muddler, wood, lid, mother, turn, rhythms, hours. ("Churning Day")
3. fother, arms ("Fodder")
4. treaty, body, pain, opened ground ("Act of Union")
5. Anahorish, consonant, vowel-meadow ("Anahorish")
6. Jutland, parishes, home ("The Tolland Man")
7. voyeur, brain's combs, muscles' webbing, bones ("Punishment")
8. girl, axe, beatification, reverence. ("Strange Fruit")
9. manhood, coffins, dead relations, rooms, news, murder, ceremony, rhythms ("Funeral Rites")
10. haw, season, crab, thorn, light, people ("The Haw Lantern")
11. coast, flowers, limestone, friendship, memory, thatch, crockery ("Oysters")
12. morning, cars, convoy, tyres, alder branches ("The Toome Road")
13. kite, wood, line, hands, boys, grief, strain ("A Kite for Michael and Christopher")
14. thing, bystanding ("Mycenae Lookout")
15. feathers, heads, underwater, hurry, things ("Postscript")

All of the following words or phrases have been identified as preoccupations or themes of Heaney's poetry. You might choose to refer to them to prompt you.

Loss of childhood innocence	Personal history and the past	Religion
Names and labels	Family	Love and relationships
Language and the craft of writing	Identity	Myths and folklore
Irish history and culture	Man and the natural world	Irish landscape and tradition
Self-discovery	Farming	
Death	War and conflict	

As a class, compare your findings. Are there any further links you could make regarding the narrative voice, lexical patterns, syntax, phonology or rhyme?



Learner Resource 1

Below are three extracts taken from a speech made by Seamus Heaney when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. Divide into three groups. Each group is responsible for reading one extract and identifying at least three links back to the list of quotes. Feedback your findings to the class.

You may want to create a wall display that illustrates the recurrent themes and contexts of Heaney's poetry. This could be a display to which you add, as you learn more about Heaney and his work.

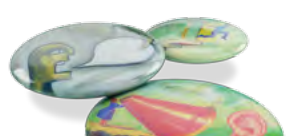
In the nineteen forties, when I was the eldest child of an ever-growing family in rural Co. Derry, we crowded together in the three rooms of a traditional thatched farmstead and lived a kind of den-life which was more or less emotionally and intellectually proofed against the outside world. It was an intimate, physical, creaturely existence in which the night sounds of the horse in the stable beyond one bedroom wall mingled with the sounds of adult conversation from the kitchen beyond the other. We took in everything that was going on, of course – rain in the trees, mice on the ceiling, a steam train rumbling along the railway line one field back from the house – but we took it in as if we were in the doze of hibernation. Ahistorical, pre-sexual, in suspension between the archaic and the modern, we were as susceptible and impressionable as the drinking water that stood in a bucket in our scullery: every time a passing train made the earth shake, the surface of that water used to ripple delicately, concentrically, and in utter silence.

The child in the bedroom, listening simultaneously to the domestic idiom of his Irish home and the official idioms of the British broadcaster while picking up from behind both the signals of some other distress, that child was already being schooled for the complexities of his adult predicament, a future where he would have to adjudicate among promptings variously ethical, aesthetical, moral, political, metrical, sceptical, cultural, topical, typical, post-colonial and, taken all together, simply impossible. So it was that I found myself in the mid-nineteen seventies in another small house, this time in Co. Wicklow south of Dublin, with a young family of my own and a slightly less imposing radio set, listening to the rain in the trees and to the news of bombings closer to home – not only those by the Provisional IRA in Belfast but equally atrocious assaults in Dublin by loyalist paramilitaries from the north.

... for years I was bowed to the desk like some monk bowed over his prie-dieu*, some dutiful contemplative pivoting his understanding in an attempt to bear his portion of the weight of the world, knowing himself incapable of heroic virtue or redemptive effect, but constrained by his obedience to his rule to repeat the effort and the posture. Blowing up sparks for meagre heat. Forgetting faith, straining towards good works. Attending insufficiently to the diamond absolutes, among which must be counted the sufficiency of that which is absolutely imagined. Then finally and happily, and not in obedience to the dolorous circumstances of my native place but in despite of them, I straightened up. I began a few years ago to try to make space in my reckoning and imagining for the marvellous as well as for the murderous.

* a low bench used to kneel on while praying

Seamus Heaney, "Crediting Poetry" (Nobel Lecture, December 7, 1995)



Learner Resource 2 dismantling the poem

See
page 8

Divide into four groups.

Group one

Group one is responsible for looking at the verbs and verb phrases: flew, [had] seen, [had] tapped, dried out, [had] tied, was, dragged, were, hauled, lift, says, is, sags, ascends, weighs, plunges, take, feel, stand, take.

- Are there any patterns or links that you can find in this list?
- What do you notice about the tense changes here?
- Is there a development or turning point evident in this list of verbs?
- Can you create a narrative from this list? What story do these words tell?

Group two

Group two is responsible for looking at nouns and noun phrases: Sunday afternoon, kite, Sunday, drumhead, chaff, bows of newspaper, tail, lark, string, rope, shoal, friend, human soul, snipe, soul, string, furrow, heavens, kite, wood, line, hands, boys, grief.

- Are there any patterns or links that you can find in this list?
- How many abstract v concrete nouns are there? Why? What does it tell you about the poem?
- Can you construct a narrative from the nouns you have here?

Group three

Group three is responsible for looking at adjectives: tightened, grey, slippy, white, stiff, six-foot, small black, bellied, wet, at anchor, two, strumming, rooted, long-tailed.

- Are there any patterns or links that you find in this list?
- Are there any contrasts that are evident?
- Are there any that seem unusual or out of place? In what way?
- Can you construct a narrative from the adjectives you have here?

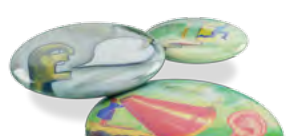
Group four

Group four is responsible for looking at syntax and punctuation.

- There are five verses and each of the first four verses is composed of: verse 1 – simple sentence, verse 2 – complex sentence, verse 3 – complex sentence, verse 4 – complex sentence. In the last verse, there are three sentences: complex, simple and compound. What might this suggest about the nature of the poem?
- The first four sentences are declarative. The last three take the form of the imperative ("take""feel""stand""take"). How would you expect the tone of the poem to change?
- There is the syntactical repetition of "I'd seen it." "I'd tapped it. . ." "I'd tied. . ." in verse two, and then verse three begins with the syntactical repetition of "But now. . ." "and now." What might this suggest about the way in which the poem is structured?

Each group should feedback its analysis to the class. Do the predictions about what this poem might be about differ? If they do, discuss why this might be.

Now read the poem. How accurate were the predictions? Are there any specific words that have altered in meaning in the context of the poem?



Learner Resource 2 dismantling the poem

Short writing activity:

Using your analysis, choose one of the sentences below to write a paragraph of an essay on "A Kite for Michael and Christopher":

1. In this poem the innocent activity of kite flying assumes a symbolic value, marking the continuity of the family, from grandfather, to father, to sons. The choice of verbs reveals ...
2. In this poem the innocent activity of kite flying assumes a symbolic value, as the speaker encourages his sons to experience both the pain and the elation of life. The choice of adjectives reveals...
3. In this poem the innocent activity of kite flying assumes a symbolic value, as we see the kite as a tethered soul, temporally flying, yet destined to return to Earth. The choice of nouns reveals...
4. In this poem the innocent activity of kite flying assumes a symbolic value, as it becomes clear that it represents a father's advice to his sons about the tie that they will always have to both their personal and also their political history. The choice of syntax and punctuation reveals ...

You may choose to then share your paragraphs, reading them aloud to the class.

Discuss as a whole group whether there is a single interpretation that seems most convincing, or would you take aspects of each? Or perhaps another reading entirely?

Figuratively speaking:

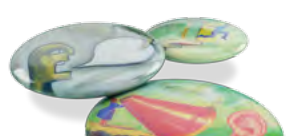
In "A Kite for Michael and Christopher" (published in 1984), where the kite is destined to "plunge into the woods", the figurative language associated with the kite includes:

- tightened drumhead
- a flitter of blown chaff
- small black lark
- bellied string
- a wet rope hauled upon//to lift a shoal
- soul at anchor
- weighs like a furrow
- long-tailed pull of grief

In Heaney's poem "A Kite for Aibhín" (published in 2010) the figurative language associated with the kite includes:

- White wing
- Long-tailed comet
- Thin-stemmed flower
- A windfall

Can we anticipate the narrative of this poem by looking at the figurative language that Heaney uses?



Learner Resource 3 phonology in “Anahorish”



In “Anahorish” the speaker draws attention to the name itself (“soft gradient//of consonant, vowel meadow”), and the reader is encouraged to think about the shape and the sound (the phonology) of the name.

Look at the first verse of “Anahorish” below. Work in pairs to decode the colours: what do the sounds in each colour have in common with one another?

My “place of clear water”,

The first hill in the world

Where springs washed into

The shiny grass

In your pairs, one person reads the poem and the other chooses a colour and echoes that specific sound as your partner reads. For example, you may choose “l” so you would echo “hill” “in” “springs” etc.

Now choose another sound to echo. Discuss whether changing the emphasis to a different sound changes the tone of the poem, or shapes the meaning in any way.

As a class, find out whether everyone agrees about the predominant sound in the first verse and the effect it creates. You might, for example, argue that the sibilance is essential to the subject matter of the first verse.

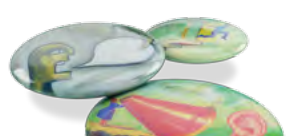
Now highlight the rest of this poem, plotting out the trail of sound.

In pairs, and then in larger groups, discuss your observations. For example:

1. Are there verses where the “l” re-emerges? Why might this be?
2. Are there verses where a particular sound (noticeable in early verses) disappears completely?
3. Is there a single sound that dominates each verse? If so, what it is and why do you think the poet has used it?

In your pairs, look at the following statements about the structure of the poem, and find one link with your analysis of the phonology.

1. The structure of the poem moves from the speaker’s personal relationship with the place, to a more dream-like liminal space, before ending with an imagined version of the past.
2. Constructed of three sentences, the first focuses on the memory and the topography of the place (the hill, the springs), the second on the name itself (the sound, its appearance) and the third on the recreated history of the place.
3. The agents of the first two verbs in this poem (“washed” and “darkened”) are the springs, but the verb “swung” has no agent, in a sentence that forms a bridge between the physical, external world of “Anahorish” and the imagined world of the past. The final verse contains two verbs, and the tense moves from the past to the present.



Learner Resource 4



Divide into three groups. Each group should have a copy of “The Haw Lantern”, a piece of stimulus material and the same eight questions.

Group one:

- The “haw” referred to in this poem is the berry of the hawthorn bush or tree; a plant that is native to Europe. In May, it has clusters of small, white flowers, and in the Autumn it grows red berries generally about the size of a fingernail. The berries are similar in appearance to the crab apple (“crab of the thorn”).
- Hawthorn trees have a great deal of folklore attached to them, and in Irish folklore they are considered to be “faery trees”. Tradition dictates that you should not disturb a hawthorn bush out of respect for the fairies, or even hang your clothes on one in case you dislodge the fairies’ clothes that are already hanging there.
- According to Irish folklore, hawthorn trees and bushes stand at the threshold to the other world, and pagan altars were situated near them. Even now, hawthorns often are found near holy wells, and those visiting the wells hang offerings on them in the name of good luck.

You may choose to use the following questions to guide your analysis:

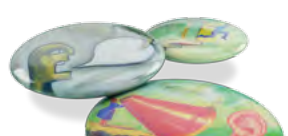
1. Why is the berry burning “out of season”?
2. Who or what are the “small people”?
3. The personification of the haw (“a small light”) in the first verse suggests humility (“wanting no more from them but that...” “not having to blind them...”). Why does Heaney create this impression?
4. The tone changes in verse two, (marked by the conjunction “but”). In what way does it change?
5. Why is it relevant to the poem that Diogenes is created from “your breath”?
6. “Your” appears once in the second verse and “you” appears five times. Why?
7. In the final verse the haw is described as having “bonded pith and stone”, “pecked-at ripeness”, and as a “blood-prick”. How have the connotations of the haw altered from that described in the first verse?
8. At the end of the poem, the scrutinizer “moves on”. Why?

Group two:

- This poem was originally part of a collection called *The Haw Lantern*, which was published in 1987; a time when the conflicts in Northern Ireland still continued: the year, for example, in which seventy four people were killed during a Remembrance Day Service in Enniskillen.
- In “Crediting Poetry” Heaney talks of the period between 1974 and the ceasefires of August 1994 as a time when “... the dream of justice became subsumed into the callousness of reality, and people settled into a quarter century of life-waste and spirit-waste, of hardening attitudes and narrowing possibilities that were the natural result of political solidarity, traumatic suffering and sheer emotional self-protectiveness.”
- In many of his poems, Heaney shows the individual questioning what role to play in a violent society: here, are both society and the individual under scrutiny. He weaves the political troubles in Ireland into a personal reflection on what it means to be an observer in these times.

You may choose to use the following questions to guide your analysis:

1. Why is the berry burning “out of season”?
2. Who or what are the “small people”?
3. The personification of the haw (“a small light”) in the first verse suggests humility (“wanting no more from them but that...” “not having to blind them...”). Why does Heaney create this impression?
4. The tone changes in verse two, (marked by the conjunction “but”). In what way does it change?
5. Why is it relevant to the poem that Diogenes is created from “your breath”?
6. “Your” appears once in the second verse and “you” appears five times. Why?



Learner Resource 4

7. In the final verse the hawk is described as having “bonded pith and stone”, “pecked-at ripeness”, and as a “blood-prick”. How have the connotations of the hawk altered from that described in the first verse?
8. At the end of the poem, the scrutinizer “moves on”. Why?

Group three:

- Diogenes was a controversial Greek philosopher born at the start of the fourth century BC. He rejected all hypocrisy, greed and corruption in the name of virtue, declaring himself to be disinterested in politics, laws and the family, and refusing to fight for his country.
- He is said to have given away everything and to have chosen to live as a sort of urban hermit, living at times in a large, earthenware pot in the centre of Athens. (The Latin name for one species of hermit crab is Diogenes.)
- There are many stories about Diogenes, the most famous of which is that he walked through the streets of Athens during the day time, holding a lit lantern in front of him as he looked for an honest man. He failed to find one.

You may choose to use the following questions to guide your analysis:

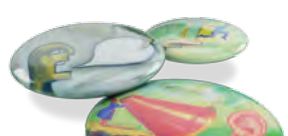
1. Why is the berry burning “out of season”?
2. Who or what are the “small people”?
3. The personification of the hawk (“a small light”) in the first verse suggests humility (“wanting no more from them but that...” “not having to blind them...”). Why does Heaney create this impression?
4. The tone changes in verse two, (marked by the conjunction “but”). In what way does it change?
5. Why is it relevant to the poem that Diogenes is created from “your breath”?
6. “Your” appears once in the second verse and “you” appears five times. Why?
7. In the final verse the hawk is described as having “bonded pith and stone”, “pecked-at ripeness”, and as a “blood-prick”. How have the connotations of the hawk altered from that described in the first verse?
8. At the end of the poem, the scrutinizer “moves on”. Why?

All groups should give feedback to the class, and discuss how your interpretations of the poem differ and why.

Now, either in pairs or individually, return to the poem and identify the lexical groups. You might, for example, collect those that relate to the seasons, to nature, to eyes and looking, to light and burning etc.

Once you have done this, go through the words and decide which ones Heaney is using metaphorically or figuratively, and which ones he is using in a literal or empirical sense.

Discuss your findings as a class. Do you agree?



Learner Resource 5 bringing it all together



In the exam, you are asked to compare two poems. This activity poses the following exam-type question:

- Explore how Seamus Heaney presents ideas and feelings about the relationship the speaker has with the past in “Punishment” and “Strange Fruit”.

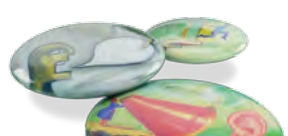
You should consider his use of stylistic techniques, as well as any other relevant contexts.

Below are two tables to help you to find ideas for the essay. Divide into two groups: one group is responsible for completing Table one and the other for completing Table two.

Once you have completed your half of the table, you can either take it in turns to feedback to the class, or swap one of your completed tables with another pair, so that you have the two halves to refer to when you write your essay.

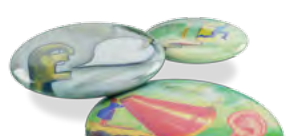
Table one:

Punishment	Strange Fruit
<p>Voice: First person narrator (“I” appears six times) “I can feel...” suggesting empathy, “I can see...” indicating a distance (ref. to the “artful voyeur”). Shift to addressing the girl in verse six – verse six is graphologically the central point of the poem.</p>	
<p>Form: 11 quatrains, moving from empathy prompted by the physical presence of the exhumed head, to a description of her head, (blindfold, noose), to an imagined vision of her alive, to a realisation of the speaker’s guilt about his silence against brutality (both current and that exacted against the exhumed girl).</p>	
<p>Lexical groups: I (× 6) “you” (× 3) “your” (× 5) “her” (× 8) – indicating the first person who observes throughout, and the move from definite article (“the nape”) to “her” neck to “your” face – suggesting the increasing personal engagement.</p> <p>Use of kennings (compound expression often in Old English and Old Norse poetry) “oak-bone” “brain-firkin” – indicating Heaney’s links to literary tradition.</p> <p>Low frequency lexis of “firkin” (small cask) “cauled” (head-covering for women) – again indicating links to the past.</p>	



Learner Resource 5 bringing it all together

Punishment	Strange Fruit
<p>Context: “It’s a poem about standing by as the IRA tar and feather these young women in Ulster. But it’s also about standing by as the British torture people in barracks and interrogation centers in Belfast. About standing between those two forms of affront. So there’s that element of self-accusation, which makes the poem personal in a fairly acute way. Its concerns are immediate and contemporary, but for some reason I couldn’t bring army barracks or police barracks or Bogside street life into the language and topography of the poem. I found it more convincing to write about the bodies in the bog and the vision of Iron Age punishment. Pressure seemed to drain away from the writing if I shifted my focus from those images.” http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1217/the-art-of-poetry-no-75-seamus-heaney</p> <p>“They have numbered all my bones” (Psalm 22): reference to a Roman Catholic prayer said after Mass and Communion, as part of a call for forgiveness – perhaps indicating the speaker’s own attitude to his reaction to brutality, ancient and current.</p> <p>One of several poems inspired by the bog bodies that had been found in Northern Europe, published in the collection <i>North</i> (1975). See also, for example, “The Tolland Man”, from <i>Wintering Out</i> (1972).</p>	
<p>Syntax: Use of the present tense – creating the immediacy of the speaker’s experience, and contrasting to the past tense of “punished”. Link of the past tense in “punished” and “cauled” – emphasising the connection between the ancient brutalities inflicted against the girl, and the more recent brutalities inflicted against the women in Ulster. Use of modal in “would”, (rather than “will”) – implying an uncertainty or tentativeness about how effective his “civilised outrage” (perhaps, this poem) really is.</p> <p>Use of naming: “Little adulteress” – indicating, perhaps, a patronising, judgemental attitude that reflects that of those who punished her, contrasting to “My poor scapegoat”, suggesting a personal engagement with the first person possessive pronoun, and a more contemporary perception. The naming coincides with the use of the second person pronoun “you”, as the speaker addresses the girl.</p>	

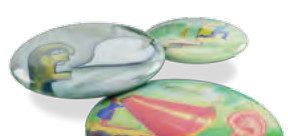


Learner Resource 5 bringing it all together

Punishment	Strange Fruit
<p>Rhyme/rhythm: No full end rhyme, but a few half rhymes (“drowned” “stone” “combs” “bones”) – internal open vowel sounds that evoke suffering perhaps: (“drowned” “body” “bog” “stone” “rods”, “boughs” etc.).</p>	
<p>Figurative language: Simile (x 1), metaphor (x 10) – the numbers of metaphors perhaps suggesting the immediacy of the experience: “barked sapling” “stubble of black corn” etc. – nature indicating the melding of the body and the land: “rigging” foreshadows “drowning” and “floating” in the next verse. Link of bog body and the current brutalities: the speaker recognises the voyeuristic nature of his observations about the girl, and feels complicit in his silence against all tribal revenge, including the recent Irish Troubles.</p>	

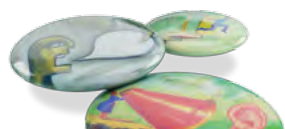
Table two:

Punishment	Strange Fruit
	<p>Voice: Implied first person narrator with deitic language (“Here is...”), but no first person pronoun – emulating a curator, perhaps, observing the external features of the head.</p>
	<p>Form: An unrhymed sonnet, with almost unbroken ten-syllable lines. Opening three sentences describe more recent history of the head as an object, before the reported speech from Diordorus Siculus prompts a realisation that the speaker was objectifying the head (with “what had begun to feel like reverence”), considering the brutality of the act. This change of direction in line ten could be seen as the “volta” (a term used to describe the turn – in tone, thought, idea, argument – that often occurs later on in a sonnet).</p>



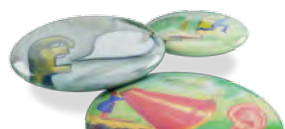
Learner Resource 5 bringing it all together

Punishment	Strange Fruit
	<p>Lexical groups: Nature: gourd, prune, fern etc.</p> <p>Use of kennings (compound expression often in Old English and Old Norse poetry) “oval-faced” “prune-skinned” – indicating Heaney’s links to literary tradition.</p> <p>Low frequency lexis of “pash” (head) and “tallow” (animal fat used for candles, for example) – indicating links to the past.</p> <p>One abstract noun (“beauty”) in the first 9 lines of the poem, and three (“ease”, “beatification”, “reverence”) in the last five lines – suggesting the change of tone from observation of the physical object, to personal reflection.</p>
	<p>Context: Same title as the song sung by Billie Holiday in 1939 – a protest song about racial brutality and injustice.</p> <p>Diodorus Siculus – a Greek historian from the first century A.D., who commented on how he became increasingly desensitised to the brutality he was observing.</p> <p>One of several poems inspired by the bog bodies that had been found in Northern Europe, published in the collection <i>North</i> (1975). See also, for example, “The Tolland Man”, from <i>Wintering Out</i> (1972).</p>
	<p>Syntax: Verbs – “they” are agents of three dynamic verbs in the first five lines; the girl’s head has the repeated dynamic verb in the final three lines – these first verbs are fixed in the past, the last repeated verb is ambiguously in the present.</p> <p>Cumulative effect of adjectives, pre-modifying the girl (rather than the head) – (“Murdered, forgotten, nameless, terrible//Beheaded”) – attempt to capture extremity of reaction; readjusting the speaker’s complacency in the face of this brutality from the past. Move into the pluperfect in the final line (“had begun”) to indicate something that no longer happens: the speaker no longer sees the head as an object to be admired and revered.</p> <p>Verb “outstaring” stretches from the past to the present in its continuous state: she outstared the axe, as she now outstares the speaker’s reverence towards her.</p>



Learner Resource 5 bringing it all together

Punishment	Strange Fruit
	<p>Rhyme and rhythm: Regular ten-syllable lines, with a change of tone marked by the move to the longer six-line sentence at the end (from “Diodorus – reverence”). Enjambment (appearing only twice elsewhere) increases the sense of insistence, and sense of the spoken voice and personal engagement at this point of the poem. Internal half-rhyme “broken nose” “eyeholes” “pools” – emphasise the connection of the head and the land.</p>
	<p>Figurative language: Contrast of imagery associated with cherished items (“unswaddled”, “treasure”) and that associated with nature – suggesting the features of the head as part of the land, and revealing the reverence of the archaeologists who found it, as well as that of the speaker.</p>





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