

GCSE (9–1)

Specimen questions (for use alongside
Sample Assessment material Component 2)

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Section A – Poetry across time

J352/02

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Introduction

What are the Assessment Support resources?

This assessment support resource provides you with revised versions of our sample assessment materials questions to reflect the changes made to the Towards A World Unknown poetry anthology from first teaching September 2022. You can use these questions for mocks and other classroom-based assessments.

In this guide we have included revised versions of previous part (a) questions which used poems that have been removed from the updated anthology. The questions remain the same, but the poems used in the questions have been changed to reflect the updated selection of poems in each cluster.

This guide also includes revised indicative content for part (b) questions to reflect the updated selection of poems. As with the live mark schemes, indicative content is not designed to be exhaustive or encompass every possible response to the question. The content is used to point towards some of the most likely points which students might include in their answers.

This resource should be read alongside the [Component 2 Sample Assessment Material](#).

Sample assessment questions

Section A Poetry across time

1. Love and Relationships

Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

a) Compare how the speakers in these poems express feelings of being let down in love.

You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

Poem 1 *In Paris with You* by James Fenton

[Poem 2: *The Breather* by Billy Collins](#)

[20]

AND

b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology which expresses doubt or uncertainty in relationships.

[20]

2. Conflict

Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

a) Compare how these poems present the effects of war on people's lives.

You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

Poem 1: *We Lived Happily during the War* by Ilya Kaminsky

[Poem 2: *In Times of Peace* by John Agard](#)

[20]

AND

b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology that presents lives transformed by conflict.

[20]

3. Youth and Age

Read the two poems below and then answer both part a) and part b).

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on part a) and 30 minutes on part b).

a) Compare how these poems present the relationship between fathers and sons.

You should consider:

- ideas and attitudes in each poem
- tone and atmosphere in each poem
- the effects of the language and structure used.

Poem 1 *Happy Birthday Moon* by Raymond Antrabus

[Poem 2: *Those Winter Sundays* by Robert Hayden](#)

[20]

AND

b) Explore in detail **one** other poem from your anthology that presents a relationship between a parent and a child.

[20]

Indicative Content Mark Scheme

Sample assessment material

1. Love and Relationships

Question		Guidance	Marks
1	(a)	<p><i>In Paris With You</i> by James Fenton and <i>The Breather</i> by Billy Collins.</p> <p>Compare how the speakers in these poems express feelings of being let down in love. You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and attitudes in each poem • tone and atmosphere in each poem • the effects of the language and structure used. <p><i>Please bear in mind that other content may be equally valid and should be credited.</i></p> <p>AO2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fenton's imagery of warfare and injury ("I'm one of your talking wounded"), compared to Collins's image of the horror movie. • Fenton's extensive negative emotive imagery ("Don't...tearful...tearful...bamboozled...resentful") that marks the extent of his feelings of his being let down; Hardy's imaginary narrative of "that high compassion which can overbear/ Reluctance for pure loving kindness' sake" compared with the imaginary "airport embraces, and all the drinks" in the fantasy of Collins's speaker. • The presentation of rejection in each poem: Fenton's clear and strident exclamation, "I'm angry at the way I've been bamboozled"; compared to Collins's metaphor of "the two telephones" and "following the ringing to another room". • The impact of the final line of each poem: "I'm in Paris with you" completing Fenton's repeated, blunt, perhaps desperate claim that the feeling of being let down is in the past; contrasted with the sadness/emptiness of dialling "the extension in the darkened guest room upstairs". <p>AO1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of Fenton's expression of rejection, lack of compassion, and being let down that inform the first half of his poem and generate the second half; compared to Collins's presentation of a relationship based on delusions of intimacy. • Both speakers arguably question the reality of their relationship. Fenton's speaker suggests that he is intent on losing himself in the moment ("I don't care where are we bound") in a relationship that exists solely as an expression of being let down in love; compared with the speaker in <i>The Breather</i> questioning being loved at all – 'our tender overlapping...taking place only inside me'. • Expressions of loss in both poems – in Fenton's poem, there is the sense of being "on the rebound" and a clear "don't care" feeling; compared to Collins's speaker "following the ringing to another room/to find no one on the line". Different tone/atmosphere created e.g. could identify Collins's use of horror film metaphor and the speaker calling himself, or alternatively, more literal interpretation of poem could view it as simply sad. 	20

Question		Guidance	Marks
1	(b)	<p>Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology which expresses doubt or uncertainty in relationships.</p> <p><i>Please bear in mind that other content may be equally valid and should be credited.</i></p> <p>Possible poems might include: Jackie Kay's <i>Dusting the Phone</i>, Emily Bronte's <i>Love and Friendship</i>, Raymond Antrobus's <i>The Perseverance</i>, Helen Maria Williams's <i>A Song</i> or all of which explore the paradoxes of love.</p> <p>AO1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical overview of how another poem expresses doubt or uncertainty in relationships, e.g. Kay 'imagining the worst that could happen'. • Textual reference and quotation demonstrates appreciation of both surface meaning and deeper implications, e.g. Bronte's criticism of romantic love through the use of seasonal imagery. <p>AO2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation of the impact of poetic conventions, such as lyrical voice, choice of stanza form, figurative language, rhythm and sound effects, e.g. Williams's use of rhyme and iambic lines as characteristic of a traditional love song, with the significant change of tone ("But") in the third stanza. • Evaluation of the impact of language, aspects of poetic form and structure and the poet's choice of images to encourage the reader to reflect on doubt or uncertainty in relationships, e.g. Bronte's image that 'Love is like the wild rose-briar'; Antrobus's use of direct speech, along with his use of repetition ("Just popping in") to suggest the weary inevitability of the visit. 	20

2. Conflict

Question		Guidance	Marks
2	(a)	<p><i>We Lived Happily during the War</i> by Ilya Kaminsky and <i>In Times of Peace</i> by John Agard</p> <p>Compare how these poems present the effects of war on people’s lives. You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and attitudes in each poem • tone and atmosphere in each poem • the effects of the language and structure used. <p><i>Please bear in mind that other content may be equally valid and should be credited.</i></p> <p>AO2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effect of war in both poems is given from a perspective of distance: in Kaminsky the distance is established by non-involvement (“I took a chair outside and watched the sun”); in Agard the distance is that of time and the coming of peace and what its implications for people would be (“are eyes ready for the soft dance...?”) • Contrast of harsh and soft language to emphasise physical reality/brutality of war: Kaminsky’s “I was in my bed, around my bed America was falling” compared to Agard’s “heavy boots...stepping over bodies” when contrasted with “a bubble bath”. • The use of repetition and parallel structures to emphasise the poems’ messages: in Agard, the insistently rhetorical “how will...how will...how will...”; in Kaminsky, the damning repetition of “In the of money”. • Use of conversational tone in both poems (in Agard through the use of rhetorical questions; in Kaminsky through the in parenthesis “forgive us”) to engage the audience in a personal perspective. <p>AO1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both poems are questioning and are concerned by the negative effects of war on people’s lives: in Kaminsky, the effect is that of a self-confessed and appalling complacency (“we opposed them but not enough”); in Agard, the effect is a world desensitised and possibly unable to love and trust again (“what of hearts in times of peace?”) • Both poems are essentially strong protests about what war does to people and the profoundly damaging effect it has on them. • In both poems the main effect is not the expected physical effect of war, although that is present (Agard’s “stepping over bodies; Kaminsky’s “they bombed other people’s houses”) but rather a psychological one. 	20

Question		Guidance	Marks
2	(b)	<p>Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology that presents lives transformed by conflict.</p> <p><i>Please bear in mind that other content may be equally valid and should be credited.</i></p> <p>Possible poems might include: Frances E. W. Harper's <i>Songs for the People</i>, Caleb Femi's <i>Thirteen</i>, Louise Bennett's <i>Colonisation in Reverse</i>, William Wordsworth's <i>Boat Stealing</i>, Keith Douglas's <i>Vergissmeinnicht</i>, Denise Levertov's <i>What Were They Like?</i> Gillian Clarke's <i>Lament</i> or all of which present how lives and perceptions are reshaped by conflict of different kinds.</p> <p>AO1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident critical overview of how another poem presents lives transformed by conflict, e.g. Douglas's soldier's corpse 'mocked at by his own equipment' personifying mechanised war's triumph over humanity; Harper's sense of people damaged by a history characterised by conflict that scars and threatens regardless of age or identity ("the jangle and discords Of sorrow, pain and wrong"). Apt textual reference and quotation will demonstrate understanding of both surface meaning and deeper implications, e.g. Wordsworth's boy moved by "huge and mighty forms that do not live/ Like living men" and shape his moral being. <p>AO2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitive and perceptive appreciation of the impact of poetic conventions, such as lyrical voice, choice of stanza form, figurative language, rhythm and sound effects, e.g. Levertov's villagers' "light hearts turned to stone" as a metaphor for the destructiveness of the Vietnam War; Femi's extended metaphor of "dying stars...black holes...supernovas" to reflect on the inevitability of wasted lives. Evaluation of the impact of language, aspects of poetic form and structure and the poet's choice of images to encourage the reader to reflect on lives transformed by conflict, e.g. Clarke's natural history of destruction through 'the long migrations and the slow dying'. 	20

3. Youth and Age

Question		Guidance	Marks
3	(a)	<p>Happy Birthday Moon by Raymond Antrobus and Those Winter Sundays by Robert Hayden</p> <p>Compare how these poems present the relationship between fathers and sons. You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas and attitudes in each poem • tone and atmosphere in each poem • the effects of the language and structure used. <p><i>Please bear in mind that other content may be equally valid and should be credited.</i></p> <p>AO2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form reflects content in both poems: Antrobus’s constant repetition reflects the persistence of the father with the activity in hand (“makes the Moon...He laughs...”); Hayden’s curt, self-contained stanzas enact the distance between parent and child. • Both poems use the perspective of the son and the use of the first person pronoun. • Both poems use language creatively to add to the presentation of the relationship: Hayden uses the imagery of winter (“the cold splintering, breaking”) to capture both the pain of the father and the difficulty of the relationship; Antrobus uses the clumsy sibilance (“son who slurs his speech”) to suggest the son’s attempts to speak and make his father happy. • Both use metaphor to describe emotional bonds. Hayden’s father is shown to have “driven out the cold” even if he is not thanked for it; while Antrobus uses physical senses and actions (“really hear each other...follow his finger”) to capture the emotional contact and closeness. <p>AO1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both poems present the relationship of fathers and sons through physical actions rather than the direct expression of emotions: in Antrobus, “Dad reads aloud...Dad taps the page...”; and polishing Sunday shoes and making “banked fires blaze” in Hayden’s verses. • Both poems illustrate the nature of the relationship by the telling of a story and reminiscence. • There is contrast in the essential core of the feeling expressed by the poem about the relationship: in the Antrobus at the time of the experience described, there is happiness (“He laughs”) and understanding (“we hear each other”). The end of Hayden’s poem suggests regret, and that “love’s austere and lonely offices” are only appreciated in retrospect. 	20

Question		Guidance	Marks
3	(b)	<p>Explore in detail one other poem from your anthology that presents a relationship between a parent and a child.</p> <p><i>Please bear in mind that other content may be equally valid and should be credited.</i></p> <p>Possible poems might include Thom Gunn's <i>Baby Song</i>, Sylvia Plath's <i>You're</i>, Sharon Olds's <i>My First Week</i>, or Kate Clanchy's <i>Love</i>, Zaffar Kunial's <i>Prayer</i>, all showing intense relationships between parents and children.</p> <p>AO1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident critical overview of how another poem presents relationships between children and parents, e.g. Gunn's witty portrayal of the pain of childbirth from the baby's perspective. Apt textual reference and quotation will demonstrate understanding of both surface meaning and deeper implications, e.g. Kunial's sense of repetition, circularity and completion: "First heard words, delivered to this right ear...mouth at her ear". <p>AO2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitive and perceptive appreciation of the impact of poetic conventions, such as lyrical voice, choice of stanza form, figurative language, rhythm and sound effects, e.g. Plath's simile for the child 'like a sprat in a pickle jug'. Evaluation of the impact of language, aspects of poetic form and structure and the poet's choice of images to encourage the reader to reflect on relationships between children and parents, e.g. Clanchy's parental wonder and trepidation: 'if you could meet/such a beast, if you could/get so near'. 	20

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