

Edexcel English Literature GCSE

Unseen Poetry Guide Section B



Overview

Expectations

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Part 2:

Students answer **ONE question** comparing **two unseen contemporary poems** that are linked by a **theme**. Students are required to compare the **poets' portrayal** of the theme through their use of **language, form and structure** (AO1 and AO2)." [20]

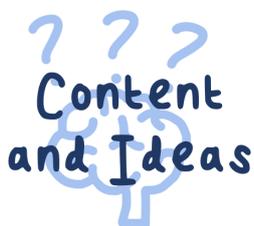
- Edexcel English Lit GCSE Spec

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This question is worth **20 marks**. As you only have **1 question** in this part of Section B, it is recommended that you spend around **45 minutes** on it, including **writing, planning, and proofreading**.

How to Tackle the Question

The question specifies that in your answer you must consider the **ideas** in the poems, the poets' **use of language**, as well as the poets' **use of form and structure**. Meanwhile, it is **essential that you can maintain a comparative tone** throughout your response.



For the category of ideas, think about what the poets are trying to **express** in the poem, or what they are **trying to get the reader to think**.



For **language, structure and form**, you could identify and talk about:

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



Tackling an Example Question

Compare the ways the two poets present time and life in “A Dream Within A Dream” and “If I Should Die”.

A Dream Within A Dream

Edgar Allen-Poe

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?

If I Should Die

Emily Dickenson

If I should die,
And you should live,
And time should gurgle on,
And morn should beam,
And noon should burn,
As it has usual done;
If birds should build as early,
And bees as bustling go,—
One might depart at option
From enterprise below!
'Tis sweet to know that stocks will stand
When we with daisies lie,
That commerce will continue,
And trades as briskly fly.
It makes the parting tranquil
And keeps the soul serene,
That gentlemen so sprightly
Conduct the pleasing scene!



So, when faced with this question as the **20 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**:

Similarities

Differences

Ideas

- Dickinson and Poe both explore the **impact of time on death**: both posit that human life is relatively insignificant.
- Concerned with the **fragility of time and life**.
- Both poems could be viewed as resembling the **reflection** a person makes at the end of their life.

- Poe focuses on the impact of time on **one person**, whereas Dickinson focuses on the **impact on the people** who remain alive after someone dies.
- Whereas Poe is considering the idea that **so little is known about life in detail** and that everything experienced is never permanent, Dickinson implies the opposite and presents a very **vivid and concrete image** of the world that exists after someone departs from it.

Structure & Form

- Both poems have **similar line lengths** in their stanzas.

- Poe's poem is **split into two stanzas**, which could reflect the **separation between life and death**, whereas Dickinson's is a single stanza, perhaps suggesting the **unity** between the concepts of time, life and death.
- Poe's poem has **unusual stanza lengths** - 11 lines in the first then 13 lines in the second.
- Poe's poem has a more **secure and stable rhyming structure** than Dickinson's.
- In Poe's poem, the **title is repeated** in a sort of refrain.

Language

- Both poets rely heavily on **natural language**, such as Poe's "golden sand", "wave" and "shore", and Dickinson's "daisies".
- Both poets also **use a lot of personification**, such as "pitiless waves", "hope has flown away", and "time should gurgle on".
- Both use **symbolism** - time as water in Dickinson's and time as sand in Poe's.

- Poe uses the **religious connotations** of 'God', perhaps to suggest life is controlled solely by exterior forces, whereas Dickinson **neglects to use any religious language**.
- There's the **extended metaphor** of a dream to represent Poe's experience of his own life, whereas Dickinson focuses on constructing a **vivid scene of imagery** for her reader.
- **Consonance** in 'while I weep - while I weep' in Poe's, whereas the sound devices in Dickinson's work focuses on **plosives** such as "burn" and "beam".

