

# FACTFILE: GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE



## Unit 2 THE STUDY OF DRAMA AND POETRY



### Section B: Poetry

#### Unit

#### Unit 2 – The Study of Drama and Poetry

#### Option (if applicable)

#### Section B: Poetry

Students have a choice in Section B where they choose from one of the three poetry Anthologies on offer and they answer one question from a choice of two on each Anthology.

#### Purpose of FactFile?

The purpose of this FactFile is to provide details of the format of this section of the Unit in terms of its structure and assessment. Each of the Anthologies in Section B is explored and information is provided for use when teaching the text. Some sample questions are provided. The FactFile also provides a list of suggested websites and further resources.

This FactFile is intended as a starting point for further study, and suggests ways in which students can begin to build critical understanding of the poems.

#### Specific Learning Outcomes supported by the FactFile?

This FactFile supports the Learning Outcomes in the aims of the specification:

- read and understand an anthology of poems;
- respond to poems critically and imaginatively;
- select and evaluate relevant textual material;
- use details from poems to illustrate interpretations;
- explain and evaluate the ways in which the poets express meaning and achieve effects;
- make comparisons and explain links between the poems; and
- relate the poems to their social, cultural and historical contexts.

#### Target audience? Student? Teacher? Both?

The main target audience for this FactFile is teachers although some sections could be used by students.

**How the FactFile supports development of Key Stage 4 Statutory skills?**

Opportunities for UICT, PS, WO and Comm throughout.

**FactFile Content**

1. Studying Poems
2. Identity Anthology Starting Points
3. Relationships Anthology Starting Points
4. Conflict Anthology Starting Points
5. Additional Resources

**Questions to consider**

- How does the title of the poem help to create its meaning?
- Who seems to be speaking in the poem? How or why is this important?
- What tone(s) of voice does the poet seem to employ in the poem? Does it change throughout or remain the same?
- When was the poem written? Does its context reflect its meaning?
- When and where is the poem set? How and why the poet has made it clear, or unclear?
- What people or places are mentioned in the poem? Is a clear sense given of what they do or what they're like? How is this done or not done, and why do you think it is so?
- What language techniques are used? What effect does each have?
- What do you think is the meaning of the poem? Does it tell a specific story or is it more open to interpretation?
- How is the poem structured, and in what ways does that structure support or enhance the meaning or subject of the poem?
- What do you think the poet wants you to feel or understand when you read the poem? How effectively do you think he/she has done this?
- What are some of the points of contrast or comparison between this poem and others in the anthology? Try to pick at least four other poems and state briefly how you could compare them to the one you're studying.

**Additional information sources**

Section 5 suggests some additional resources for classroom use.

## 1. Studying Poems

Section B: Poetry is an open book examination, meaning you will have a clean copy of the anthology you have studied for reference during the exam. This is very useful to help you quote words and phrases accurately, but you still need to understand the themes, contexts, techniques and effects of each poem in great detail, as well as being able to make appropriate points of comparison between them.

When choosing pairs of poems for comparison, don't limit your practice to poems with the same main theme, e.g. two poems that are explicitly about childhood. Almost every poem in the Identity Anthology for example, uses first person narrative voice; many contain sensory descriptions linked to memory; often they refer to a particular experience or contain a philosophical view on the nature of people and the world. The more widely you consider various ways in which poems can be compared and contrasted, the more versatile you will become at comparing them.

Regardless of which anthology is studied, recommended tasks include:

- researching contextual information related to each poem, particularly those that may require some background knowledge of the situation to clarify understanding (e.g. *Kid*, *Out of the Blue* – 12, *Requiem for the Croppies*). Students can independently research and prepare short presentations on poems or work together to create a large-scale reference timeline showing the main details of each poem in the anthology studied;
- individual annotation of poems, including close language analysis and reference to structural devices;
- group discussion of poems with regard to occurrences, attitudes or perspectives, the speaker's tone(s), effects of imagery and implications/interpretations of choices made by the poet;
- practising writing comparative essays with different combinations of poems.

For more advice and ideas on ways to effectively study the poems of your chosen anthology, see the additional resources on the CCEA microsite.

## 2: Identity Anthology Starting Points

### IDENTITY

Our sense of identity and who we are in the world can be shaped by many factors – age, race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, family, abilities and experiences. It is important to bear in mind when studying the poems of the Identity Anthology how each relates to the poet's sense of identity, and what he or she is trying to communicate to the reader about who they are. While each poem takes the viewpoint of an individual, it's also worth thinking about how widely the personal themes they discuss can be empathised with and understood by any reader. In considering this, you can begin to evaluate how effectively the poet has created meaning.

What follows is an introduction to the poems in the Identity Anthology. It provides a starting point for ideas only and is not an exhaustive list.

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
Sonnet 29	William Shakespeare	First person	Love, relationships, pride/shame, discontentment, sense of self-worth, human nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sonnet form</li> <li>• Longevity of poem</li> <li>• Influence of love on sense of identity</li> </ul>
Dover Beach	Matthew Arnold	First person	Love, relationships, time/place, faith/doubt, loneliness, human nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical allusions</li> <li>• Use of imagery, especially nature</li> <li>• Identity in relation to place and time</li> </ul>
Invictus	William Ernest Henley	First person	Self-determination, will/fate, human nature, suffering, experience, courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhyme scheme and structure</li> <li>• Metaphor and language devices</li> <li>• Contrasts to create sense of identity</li> </ul>
The Road Not Taken	Robert Frost	First person	Choices, experience, will/fate, construction of identity as story/narrative, regret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhyme scheme and structure</li> <li>• Fame/wide interpretations</li> <li>• Anticipation of reframing event as story</li> </ul>
Piano	D H Lawrence	First person	Time/place, childhood, safety, family, sensory memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal to the senses</li> <li>• Structure and use of enjambment</li> <li>• Mixed nature of memory</li> </ul>
Prayer Before Birth	Louis MacNeice	First person	Innocence, danger, fear, human nature, conflict, experience, violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List-like structure</li> <li>• Repetition and language choices</li> <li>• Anticipation of how the world treats us</li> </ul>
I Remember, I Remember	Philip Larkin	First person	Construction of identity as story/narrative, time/place, childhood, regret, experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of negatives linked to last line</li> <li>• Structural deviation at end</li> <li>• Sense of childhood as series of tales</li> </ul>
Catrin	Gillian Clarke	First person	Parenthood, conflict, experience, human nature, pride, time/place, relationships, fear, the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Images of "love and conflict"</li> <li>• Two stanza structure</li> <li>• Sense of identity in light of togetherness and separation</li> </ul>

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
Belfast Confetti	Ciaran Carson	First person	Violence/conflict, communication, construction of identity as story/narrative, experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of punctuation and effect on structure</li> <li>• Use of proper nouns and their associations</li> <li>• Identity sought as an explanation or justification</li> </ul>
In Mrs Tilscher's Class	Carol Ann Duffy	Second person	Childhood, place/time, safety/danger, sensory memory, experience/knowledge, relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagery and appeals to the senses</li> <li>• Choice of narrative voice</li> <li>• Use/lack of proper nouns and their associations/effects</li> </ul>
Kid	Simon Armitage	First person	Childhood/growing up, failure, disappointment, self-determination, heroes, fame/infamy, experience, relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of structure and half rhymes</li> <li>• Use of pop culture allusions and slang expressions</li> <li>• Clues to identity of speaker and how tone is affected by his experience</li> </ul>
Here	R S Thomas	First person	Experience, youth/age, guilt, regret, sin/religion, time, wisdom/reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity/variety of possible interpretations</li> <li>• Structure, rhyme and economy of form</li> <li>• Imagery and language techniques</li> </ul>
Docker	Seamus Heaney	Third person	Religion/politics, bigotry, masculinity, class, work, relationships, violence/conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of proper nouns and effect</li> <li>• Imagery, especially of violence/toughness</li> <li>• Sense of identity in class/religion/job and how subject is portrayed by speaker</li> </ul>
Genetics	Sinéad Morrissey	First person	Family, religion, history, time/place, relationships, conflict, connection, the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of imagery and effect of repetition</li> <li>• Sense of identity as linking family and body/self</li> <li>• Structure of irregular but linked stanzas and end-stopped lines</li> </ul>

### 3: Relationships Anthology Starting Points

#### RELATIONSHIPS

The relationships we form with our families, friends and loved ones exude an incredible influence over our lives and have inspired multitudes of poems. Love and relationships may feel deeply personal to us as individuals, but since the different forms of love are usually familiar to everyone at different stages of their lives, poetry about relationships can have an almost universal appeal – something that is worth bearing in mind when you are evaluating each poet's attempts to convey the feelings about the relationship they are discussing. Not every poem in this anthology is about a romantic bond between people, so take care to try to appreciate the nuances of each relationship described.

What follows is an introduction to the main themes of the poems in the Relationships Anthology. It provides a starting point for ideas only and is not an exhaustive list.

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
On My First Son	Ben Jonson	First person	Parenthood, love, loss, grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets</li> <li>• Role of God</li> <li>• Sentiment expressed in last two lines</li> </ul>
Sonnet 130	William Shakespeare	First person	Love, humanity, truth, beauty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satirical use of false hyperbole versus unflattering truth</li> <li>• Use of sonnet form</li> <li>• Effect of last two lines</li> </ul>
How do I love thee?	Elizabeth Barrett Browning	First person	Love, faith/spirituality, passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looser adaptation of traditional sonnet form</li> <li>• Religious allusions</li> <li>• Repetition and other emphases</li> </ul>
To His Coy Mistress	Andrew Marvell	First person	Love, lust, persuasion, mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensual imagery</li> <li>• How poet's message fits with social mores of the time</li> <li>• Couplet structure and construction of argument linked to structure</li> </ul>
The Laboratory	Robert Browning	First person	Jealousy, rivalry, hatred, deception, revenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How structure, especially punctuation, and language contribute to speaker's tone(s)</li> <li>• Sense of time and place related to events</li> <li>• Sensual language</li> </ul>
Remember	Christina Rossetti	First person	Love, loss, death, mourning, remembrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sonnet structure, especially rhyme in final sestet</li> <li>• Repetition and its effect throughout</li> <li>• How poem reflects pre-Raphaelite concerns</li> </ul>
When You Are Old	W B Yeats	Second person	Love, memory, aging, youth, regret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure and rhyme</li> <li>• Use of imagery</li> <li>• What kind of mood and tone is evoked and how</li> </ul>

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
i carry your heart	E E Cummings	First person	Love, desire, hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure, especially lack of capitalisation and traditional punctuation</li> <li>• Use of parentheses</li> <li>• Imagery and repetition</li> </ul>
Funeral Blues	W H Auden	First person	Love, loss, death, grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of imperatives</li> <li>• How a sense of escalation is achieved</li> <li>• Structure, particularly effect of punctuation</li> </ul>
Long Distance II	Tony Harrison	First person	Love, loss, death, mourning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How language achieves sense of domesticity</li> <li>• The meaning of the final stanza</li> <li>• Structure and how it gives a sense of time having passed</li> </ul>
Wild Oats	Philip Larkin	First person	Lust, self-esteem, memories, youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms used to describe each girl in the poem</li> <li>• Indicators of conversational style and its effects</li> <li>• Structure, including enjambment</li> </ul>
Symptoms of Love	Robert Graves	Second person	Love, heartache, longing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure, including punctuation and enjambment</li> <li>• Use of imagery and its effects</li> <li>• Significance of ending on a question</li> </ul>
Before you were Mine	Carol Ann Duffy	First person	Childhood, youth, freedom, responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways in which the perspective of the speaker is unusual</li> <li>• Imagery of glamour and excitement</li> <li>• Structure showing passage of time</li> </ul>
Clearances 7: In the last minutes	Seamus Heaney	First person	Love, aging, generational difference, death, loss, family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sonnet structure</li> <li>• Use of direct speech and its significance</li> <li>• Effect of simple language choices</li> </ul>
I am very bothered	Simon Armitage	First person	Youth, love, regret, irresponsibility, guilt, emotional immaturity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of structure including rhyme scheme</li> <li>• Motif of marriage</li> <li>• Meaning of final lines and what they mean in context, especially "Don't believe me"</li> </ul>

## 4: Conflict Anthology Starting Points

### CONFLICT

The choice of poems in this anthology demonstrates just how varied attitudes to war and conflict can be. Context is usually important in understanding the details of what is happening in each poem as well as the attitude that the poet displays towards his or her subject. Many of the poems herein attempt to expose the horrors of war, but several take a more approving tone so it's important to consider the reasons behind this. There are also a few examples describing conflicts that are not based around war as we might usually define it; ensure you pay careful attention to how any essay question frames the concept of conflict and let that help you select the most appropriate poem for your answer.

What follows is an introduction to the main themes of the poems in the Conflict Anthology. It provides a starting point for ideas only and is not an exhaustive list.

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
The Charge of the Light Brigade	Alfred, Lord Tennyson	Third person	War, combat, death, sacrifice, sense of duty, glorification, patriotism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The poet's stance and tone(s) and how these are shown</li> <li>Attitudes to war at the time of the poem</li> <li>The effect of ballad features like rhyme, rhythm and repetition</li> </ul>
Vitaï Lampada	Henry Newbolt	Third person	Sportsmanship, patriotism, war, courage, sense of duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attitudes to war at the time as shown in the poem</li> <li>Use of imagery throughout</li> <li>Structure indicating changes of time and place</li> </ul>
The Man He Killed	Thomas Hardy	First person	War, uncertainty, sense of duty vs sense of doubt, guilt/regret, innocence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effect of conversational style, including colloquial language and direct speech</li> <li>Effect of structure, including punctuation showing hesitation</li> <li>Poet's suggested attitude to war</li> </ul>
Who's for the Game?	Jessie Pope	Third person	Patriotism, sense of duty, war, sportsmanship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structure, including use of questions and their effect</li> <li>Motivational/persuasive tone and attitude to war</li> <li>Use of imagery</li> </ul>
Easter Monday (In Memoriam E.T.) (1917)	Eleanor Farjeon	First person	Love, war, communication, death, loss, separation, anticipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of imagery, especially nature</li> <li>Use of foreshadowing and significance of last line</li> <li>Use of structure to give sense of time and place</li> </ul>
Anthem for Doomed Youth	Wilfred Owen	Third person	War, death, slaughter, religious ceremony, value of life, futility and waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of imagery, especially of religion/church and youth/innocence</li> <li>Structure, e.g. use of question and answer format</li> <li>The poet's attitude to war</li> </ul>

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
An Irish Airman Foresees His Death	W B Yeats	First person	Futility, sacrifice, realities of day-to-day life vs realities of war, family, sense of nationality/"country" vs sense of home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language choices and how they contribute to the speaker's tone(s)</li> <li>• Choice of structure, including single stanza and restrained punctuation</li> <li>• Simple use of imagery</li> </ul>
What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why (Sonnet XLIII)	Edna St. Vincent Millay	First person	Love, loss, passage of time, aging, loneliness, introspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways in which this poem might incorporate the 'conflict' theme</li> <li>• Use of traditional love sonnet structure</li> <li>• Use of natural/seasonal imagery and its effect</li> </ul>
Vergissmeinnicht	Keith Douglas	First person	Humanity of those who fight, diminished enmity, death, decay, sympathy, love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How structure mirrors shift in tone, especially shifting rhyme patterns</li> <li>• Imagery, particularly that used to describe the body</li> <li>• Message summed up in last stanza reflecting poet's attitude to war</li> </ul>
Bayonet Charge	Ted Hughes	Second person	Fear, humanity, futility, war, killing, patriotism, senselessness of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of imagery</li> <li>• Use of powerful verbs and other language to create sense of immediacy/action</li> <li>• Effect of three stanza structure and enjambment</li> </ul>
Requiem for the Croppies	Seamus Heaney	First person	Death, mercilessness, persecution, nature, resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of slang in title and effect of this in contrast to language of poem</li> <li>• Use of imagery, especially metaphor in the twelfth line</li> <li>• Use of traditional sonnet structure and the effect of this</li> </ul>
Mametz Wood	Owen Sheers	Third person	War, death, passage of time, futility and waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of imagery, especially choices of simile and metaphor</li> <li>• Structure, including instances of enjambment</li> <li>• Effect of poet's choice of perspective</li> </ul>

Poem	Poet	Narrative voice	Main themes	Things to consider
Last Post	Carol Ann Duffy	Second person	War, narrative, poetry, futility, tragedy, survival, remembrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intertextual references and their effect</li> <li>• Perspective and imagery chosen by the poet</li> <li>• Effect of structure including irregular rhythm, enjambment and how sense of time is created</li> </ul>
Poppies	Jane Weir	First person	War, parental love, loss, grief, remembrance, sensory memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagery of domesticity and childhood</li> <li>• Effect of structure, especially breaks forming stanzas</li> <li>• Tone(s) chosen by the poet</li> </ul>
Out of the Blue – 12	Simon Armitage	First person	Humanity, hope, terror, helplessness, desperation, death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choices made by the poet to personalise a large-scale tragedy</li> <li>• Structure and how the tone changes throughout</li> <li>• Repetition and its effects</li> </ul>

## 5: Additional Resources

CCEA GCSE English Literature microsite

BBC Bitesize [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english\\_literature/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/)

Teachit <https://www.teachit.co.uk/gcse-english-literature>

Poetry Foundation <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

Crossref-it – Recognising Poetic Form

<http://crossref-it.info/articles/category/17/poetry-recognising-poetic-form>

Sparknotes <http://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/>

