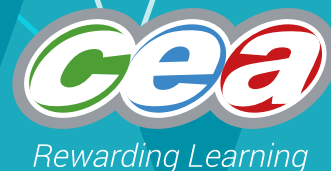


FACTFILE: GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE POETRY TOOLKIT



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Teacher Introduction

This resource is intended to offer a palette of ideas and exercises that can be mixed, matched and utilised in the classroom by both newer teachers and those with more established methods for the teaching of poetry. It aims to build on students' prior learning, encourage them to adopt independent approaches to analysing poems and offer ways to build their confidence.

Students who can approach a poem with confidence and initiative are more likely to offer imaginative interpretations, find interesting points of comparison and avoid rehashing bland interpretations they believe to be the "correct" ones. Moreover, the skills of close analysis which can be most easily taught in the study of poetry can then be applied to the study of other forms of literature, fostering students' attention to detail and ability to recognise themes and motifs. Those who can do this well are likely to achieve high marks overall in the Unit 2 examination.

The majority of material in this resource is presented under categories related to the mnemonic acronym TILTS; however, the sections can be taught independently of this, either in full or as selected discrete exercises supplementing other material. Should you wish to utilise the full model and teach the mnemonic device, notes explaining its use to students can be found on page 5.

Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive resource for the teaching of every poem in your chosen anthology; references to further resources that may be of use in designing your own scheme of work are provided at the end of this booklet.

Student Introduction

Studying poetry is a perfect way to hone your overall English skills. Poems are usually more compact than prose, and more densely packed with structural features and language techniques. Unfortunately many people are intimidated by the study of poetry, worrying they won't understand what is going on and believing there is only one "correct meaning" for every poem that can't be found within the poem itself without additional knowledge from somebody else.

The good news is that this isn't true, and that poems are nothing to be afraid of. Each one is different, and you will naturally find some easier to understand – and more enjoyable or resonant – than others, but it is possible to develop ways of making meaning within poems by reading them actively and carefully. This booklet aims to teach you a few different methods for understanding any poem. As you read more poems, you'll become more confident in analysing poetry, and understand it better by yourself.

Remember, the examiner is interested in hearing your own ideas about the poems, backed up by evidence. When you have learned to recognise relevant examples of different techniques, use them as evidence and comment on their effects, your analytical writing will get stronger and you will start to earn marks for showing skill in evaluation and interpretation.

As you work through this booklet:

- **try to approach each poem with an open mind** and have confidence that you can work through it as much as you need to;
- **read it through two or three times** before asking your teacher or looking at other sources for clues as to what it is about;
- **don't panic if you can't immediately figure out what is happening** in the poem – remember that the meaning might not always be obvious and it may take a little work to reveal what the poet was talking about;
- contextual information can often help you understand more about what the poem means, but don't rely solely on it – **use contextual material in conjunction with your own reading** of the poem itself;

- remember that **the more you break down the different aspects of the poem** and annotate/highlight/underline them, **the more paths you are making for yourself** when it comes time to analyse and compare the poem;
- if you're still having trouble understanding what the poet means, try to identify places where phrases seem unusual or refer to things you aren't familiar with – **you can use these as clues to be solved** and work from there to figure out the overall meaning.

The exam

In Section B of the Unit 2 exam paper, you will be asked to demonstrate your skills in analysing poetry by comparing two poems from an anthology. The poems won't be unfamiliar to you – you will have studied them in class – but in order to select and write about suitable poems for your choice of exam question, you will need to study and revise all of the anthology's fifteen poems.

You will study ONE anthology of poems in class, and it will be based around one of the following topics:

- Identity
- Relationships
- Conflict

You are given one hour to answer the Section B: Poetry part of the exam. You will answer one question in an essay format; you will have a choice of two questions for each themed anthology, so that you can select the question that appeals to you most. In the exam, you will have a clean, unannotated copy of the anthology you've studied in the exam so that you can easily refer to the poems you've selected to write about.

Prior knowledge

You will have studied poems before in class, so revise the terms you already know – even the simplest will be useful. See if you can match all of the definitions below to the terms listed on the left.

SIMILE	A word used to describe a noun, e.g. tall, harsh, green, happy, melodious
METAPHOR	The description of an animal, object or idea undertaking the actions of a person, e.g. "the sun smiled down on them"
ONOMATOPOEIA	A comparison using 'like' or 'as', e.g. "they swarmed like flies", "he tumbled like laundry in a drier"
ALLITERATION	The poetry equivalent of a paragraph; a structural unit of a poem, sometimes conflated with a 'verse'
ASSONANCE	The repetition of the same sound at the start of several words in close succession, e.g. "a lizard lay lengthwise, basking lazily"
ADJECTIVE	A direct comparison, e.g. "the school was a joyless prison", "your brother is a pig"
ADVERB	The repetition of the same vowel sound throughout several words in close succession, e.g. "the soft broad maw of the dog", "Sighing then smiling, I lied my way out of it"
STANZA	A word used to describe ways in which an action is completed, e.g. hurriedly, gently, now, almost
PERSONIFICATION	A word that evokes the sounds of what it describes, e.g. hiss, buzz, bang

In pairs or small groups, discuss:

- any definitions that were unfamiliar to you
- any terms you had forgotten

Think back to poems you studied in primary school and during Key Stage 3.

- which ones do you remember most clearly?
- why do you think they have stayed in your memory?
- do you remember any particular words or phrases from the poem, or more general features like the story it told?

Share your memories of the poetry you remember most clearly with the rest of the class. Try to focus on what ideas and techniques make a poem effective and memorable.

Reading an Unseen Poem

By the time you sit the Unit 2 Section B exam, you will be very familiar with all the poems in the anthology; however, when first reading through each one you will find them easier to understand, interpret and remember if you approach them first by yourself.

This can seem daunting but remember – when you first approach an unseen poem at this level, there is no rush. With a little careful attention and some patience, you will be able to decipher at least some of what is happening in the poem, and even partial awareness of it will form a much stronger base from which you can begin to understand the rest.

You may want to tweak the process slightly to suit your own learning style, but the basic steps are as follows:

1. before reading, look over the poem for its **basic shape and size**. Is it long, short, in many stanzas or in one block? Does it look neat, untidy, like a square or as if it has been purposely divided up in an unusual way? These initial impressions will help you make judgements when you need to analyse its structure.
2. **read it through once**, not rushing.
3. **check the title** to see if it gives any extra context clues, then read the poem again, aloud if possible.
4. **allow yourself a minute to look over it again** and think about where it could be, when and what is happening. You will already be starting to make judgements about some important aspects of the poem – its tone(s), its style of language, etc. At this stage, it may be a good idea to have a pen in your hand to underline any interesting phrases, unusual uses of language, etc.
5. if you can't decide what the poem is about overall, **select one or two smaller sections** – a memory, an action, a description – **that you can discern a meaning for**. Even if only these small phrases make sense to you, at least you have begun to understand the poem.
6. **look up any words or phrases you don't understand** in a dictionary or in double quotation marks (for "exact phrase") on a reputable internet search engine. The latter is especially useful for pop culture or colloquial references (e.g. a lot of the finer details Simon Armitage's speaker refers to in 'Kid', or when Carol Ann Duffy mentions "Marilyn" in 'Before you were Mine').

Still stuck? Don't worry:

- **discuss the ideas you do have** with a partner or small group in class and see if you can work out the meaning together.
- **find out the context** – the time and place it was set, when the poet wrote it, etc. This may give you clues about the poem and the intention behind it.
- **if you've exhausted all other sources, then** try looking it up online – lots of poetry guides and literature sites offer notes on the poems you're studying. The quality can vary though, and reading someone else's interpretation doesn't help you develop your own skills and confidence, so only do this as a last resort!

Example:

- reading through **'Before you were Mine' by Carol Ann Duffy**, we already know from the title that the poet seems to be speaking directly to someone ("you") who is close to her ("Mine") – we might assume it's a romantic partner or maybe a child.
- the poet gives **clues about the person** – she is female ("polka-dot dress", "sweetheart", "high-heeled red shoes", etc.) and young (laughing on the corner with friends, getting a "hiding"/beating from her mother for coming home late).
- **clues about the relationship**: the poet says she is "ten years away" and "not here yet"; mentions her own "loud, possessive yell" and in the last stanza talks about a "bold girl winking... before I was born". It becomes clear that the poet is talking to her own mother, imagining the kind of person she was before she had the responsibility of a baby.
- we can now start to pick out **images of childhood** (e.g. the poet as a child with her hands in the mum's red high heels, playing) **and glamour** ("Marilyn" and "fizzy, movie tomorrows"; the "stars from the wrong pavement" may be a reference to the Hollywood Walk of Fame, where famous actors and celebrities have their names set into special star designs on the path) and **understand a bit more about the kind of person the mother is** or used to be.

Now we know the main subject of the poem, we can pick out themes, analyse the language and structure and link it all back to how the poet wants to portray her mother and their relationship.

T.I.L.T.S.

A mnemonic is a device you can use to remember things more easily, and the acronym TILTS can serve as a useful mnemonic to help you recall some of the different aspects of poetry. This may be especially helpful since you will be asked to compare two poems; by using the same broad categories to break each poem down, you should find it easier to find points of comparison.

TILTS stands for:

T HEMES
I MAGERY
L ANGUAGE
T ONE
S TRUCTURE

You may have your own mnemonic already; even if you don't, it's not necessary to use TILTS in your studies if you don't want to. You can still work through the following sections to aid your understanding of the different aspects of poetry without using the acronym; the important thing is that you understand and can engage different ways of breaking down and analysing the poems you study.

You may have noticed that TILTS does not include a separate section on **context**. Don't be mistaken – context is still important, and you must include contextual details in your exam answer to meet the requirements of Assessment Objective 4. However, the focus needs to be on your analytical skills and ability to interpret, evaluate and compare the poems. Think of context as small details that can help you do this when added/applied relevantly to each point you make. Do not copy out huge chunks about the time/place/poet – it won't help you get better marks. Because the focus needs to be on analysis, TILTS doesn't contain a 'context' section; ensure you find a few contextual details for each poem and add them to your notes (see Poem Revision card example on page 15), but don't go overboard with it!

Before beginning with the aspects listed in TILTS, it can also be useful to consider the poem's title and what

impact it can have on our understanding of the poem.

Title

It may seem very simple, but there are lots of poems in which the title gives valuable extra context, information or meaning. In some cases, these can be used as clues to help you understand the meaning implied in the main body of the poem.

Here are some possible questions to ask yourself when looking at a title in detail:

- is the title long or short?
- is it referenced anywhere else in the poem?
- does it use similar vocabulary to the poem or not?
- is it, or could it be, a proper noun i.e. the name of a person or place?
- is it written in a particular way e.g. in capitals or including numbers or dates?
- does it contain any punctuation?
- does the language chosen evoke any imagery?
- Can you pick up on a particular tone in the title?

It's very important to ensure you don't simply identify a feature of the title, but that you comment on its possible effect as well. For example, it isn't enough to only say "The title has alliteration" or even "The title uses alliteration of sibilant 's' sounds" – this is simply pointing out what's there without saying why. You need to add an effect comment as well, e.g. "The title has alliterative 's' sounds, but they seem soft rather than harsh or hissing, which might suggest gentle whispering between the characters as they look out to sea, or even the sound of the sea itself as the tide comes in."

Look at the following examples. Can you pick out features of the titles and comment on a possible effect of these, even if you haven't read the full poem?

Title	Noticeable feature(s)	Possible effect	
IDENTITY	Docker	Single word (e.g. absence of "The" to introduce main word) Could be the term for a person's job/career	Terse effect – reflects the person? Suggests person may be defined by their job – doesn't give us any further info about them
	Genetics	Use of scientific term	
	I Remember, I Remember	Repetition Use of first person – "I"	
RELATIONSHIPS	How do I love thee?	Question Mark Use of old/archaic term "thee" First person – "I"	Title could be posing a question the poem will answer
	Symptoms of Love	"Symptoms" – this word connotes...	Suggests love is like an illness; probably not a positive poem or a good relationship overall
	Wild Oats	Idiom associated with...	Suggests poem may be about... The relationship in the poem is probably...

CONFLICT	Poppies	Imagery associated with war, death and remembrance	
	Vergissmeinnicht	Non-English word suggests...	Poem could be set in/around the time of...
	Easter Monday (In Memoriam E.T.) (1917)	Use of parentheses "In Memoriam" plus date implies...	

Depending on which anthology you're studying, try to pick another three titles not listed above and make a comment on how they relate to the content of the poem.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Themes

A theme is a symbolic idea or concept that appears within the poem. The anthologies themselves are each based on a different theme (Identity, Relationships and Conflict) and you will notice as you study that many of the poems in each anthology share further common themes, such as death in Conflict or childhood memories in Identity.

It's extremely useful to identify three to five themes for each poem as shared themes are one of the most common points of comparison between poems. Try to fill in the following table for each poem in your anthology.

Name of Poem	Main themes

Imagery

The use of imagery really relates to language features such as metaphors, similes and choices of adjective and verb; however, it's a very important part of many poems and emphasising it as a separate aspect from other language features may actually help you analyse it more closely and develop a more finely tuned sense of what can be evoked by language choice.

Imagery is the ideas and feelings suggested when particular turns of phrase, figurative language and specially selected verbs and adjectives are used. The most important thing, which also applies to any other aspect you comment on, is to link your ideas to effects created for the reader – to explain why the poet chose this imagery and how it contributes to what he or she was trying to communicate through the poem as a whole. You won't get marks just for saying "The poet uses a simile comparing his friend to a rhinoceros" – you must offer a **reason** the poet used it or comment on the **effect** it contributes to the poem overall.

So how can we spot imagery?

- Language that creates an image in your mind and/or appeals to your senses
- Language that directly or indirectly compares one thing to another
- Language that contributes to the atmosphere, especially in descriptions

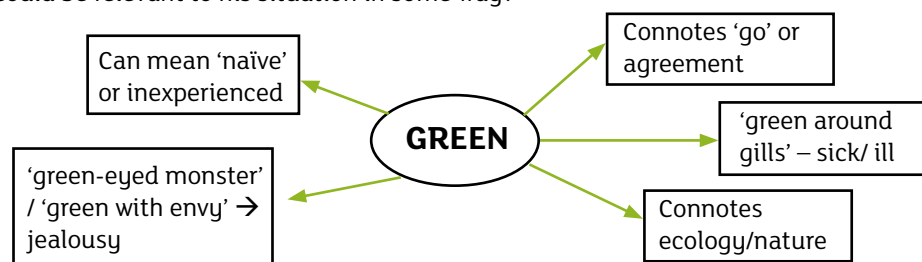
The first thing to do is re-read the poem with a pen in your hand. Begin very simply by underlining any adjectives you can find. Do the same for verbs, possibly in a different colour. If you can see any obvious threads that might relate to imagery, pick those out too. For example, look at the following extract from 'Genetics':

I shape a chapel where a steeple stands.
And when I turn it over,
my father's by my fingers, my mother's by my palms

demure before a priest reciting psalms.
My body is their marriage register.
I re-enact their wedding with my hands.

This clearly contains **imagery to do with religion, ceremonies and worship**: "chapel", "steeple", "priest", "psalms", "marriage" and "wedding" all have a religious connection. Look also at the verbs; those actions made by the poet – "I shape", "I turn it over", "I re-enact" – are all quite thoughtful and considered, as well as being mostly acts of creation rather than destruction. We could perhaps relate this to her attempts to be reconciled with her parents' destructive divorce and accept that she can still be a living tribute to her parents' former union.

Once you've picked out imagery, examine its associations. Colours can have many connotations, for example (see partial spider diagram for 'green', below), that might contribute to our sense of the imagery, and choice of verbs can implicitly suggest other qualities for people and things. Taking a few moments to pick out the implied meanings in a single choice of word shows good analytical skill, can help you understand the meaning and tone(s) of the poem and offers a way in to alternative interpretations. The description of a 'green' soldier about to go to war, for example, could connote several of the meanings listed below. Which ones could be relevant to his situation in some way?



Some poems contain little or no imagery yet others are rich with it, so annotate in as detailed a way as possible when the poem is able to yield some clues in its imagery and symbolic language. If there is none, don't worry – there are other language features you can analyse, as described in the following section.

Language

Assessment Objective 2 carries the most weight in the Unit 2 exam – it is the one that has the most marks available, and it is the one that tests your ability to analyse language and structure features. It is more important that context or comparison therefore, it is worth spending more time on language analysis (including imagery) than anything else.

As with any other aspect you comment on, it's important to link your ideas about language to effects. It isn't enough to simply identify use of direct speech in the poem, for example – you must offer a reason the poet used it or comment on the effect it contributes to the poem overall.

There are fifteen poems in each anthology and the language features of each can't be covered here in sufficient detail to be helpful; besides, it is better for the development of your skills if you approach and analyse language in poems yourself. Much as you did with imagery, pick out features and annotate them – suggest why they are there, what effect they have, and/or how they contribute to the meaning of the poem overall.

The following is not an exhaustive list (especially since imagery already featured and will overlap with some of these), but should help you make a start in being able to pick out language features yourself.

Language features can include:

- Colloquialisms
- Slang
- Jargon
- Onomatopoeic words
- Apostrophes/exclamations
- Alliteration
- Assonance
- Personification
- Oxymorons
- Puns
- Metonymy
- Synecdoche
- Proper nouns (places/people)
- Direct speech

As with everything else, link those you choose to comment on to an effect comment. Some of it will be open to interpretation, but that means you have a chance to earn good marks in discussing it. Remember language features can be a useful point of comparison as well, e.g. two poems that use religious imagery or two poems in which the main speakers employ slang.

Tone

Usually implied by a poet's language choices and/or by the poem's rhythm, tone helps to enhance a poem's meaning by helping us understand the feelings and intentions of the main speaker or voice in the poem (especially in poems where he/she is identifiably different from the poet). Understanding tone means we pick up sarcasm or bitterness from a character more clearly and may understand better when someone isn't saying what they mean.

Tone has to be suggested by language so always try to point to evidence that has led you to believe the tone is sarcastic/angry/loving etc.

Fill out the table below for your chosen anthology:

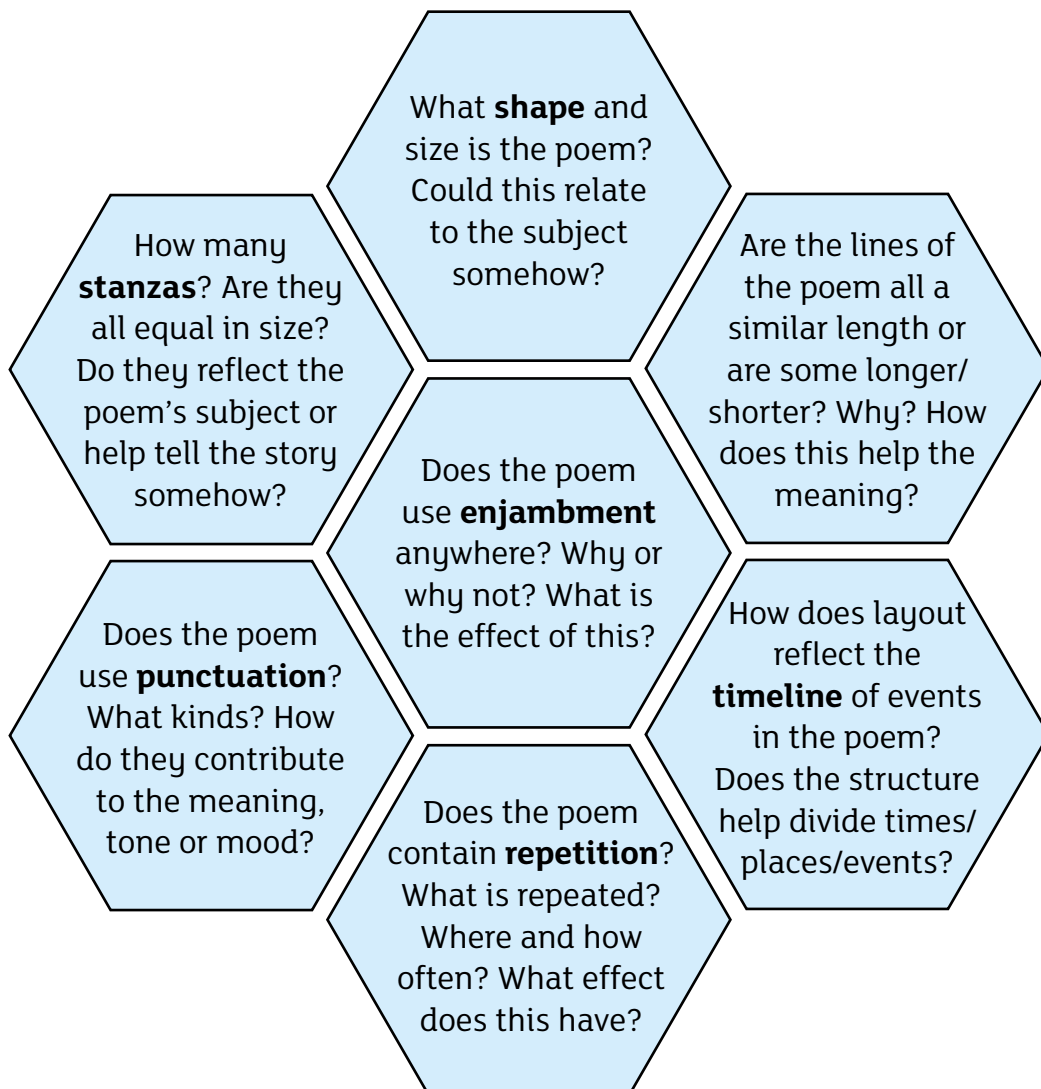
Poem	Tone(s)	Evidence

Structure

Many people find the idea of structure in poetry difficult, but once you understand it a little better it often becomes one of the easier things to comment on. Structure can refer to any aspect of how the poem looks on the page, from its use (or non-use) of punctuation to the way the stanzas are divided – even the shape of the poem itself can offer clues about the subject and meaning.

The most important thing, as with any other aspect you comment on, is to link your ideas to effects. It isn't enough to simply identify use of enjambment, for example – you must offer a reason the poet used it or comment on the effect it contributes to the poem overall.

The following list of questions isn't exhaustive but should help you make observations about a poem's structure in the first few instances until you get better at noticing structural features yourself.



It's important that **every structural feature you notice and comment on is somehow related to an effect and/or reason**. Examples might be: "Enjambment is used to show chaos – just like the words tumbling onto the next line of text without end-stopping, the situation is out of control"; or "The lack of punctuation reflects the speaker's unstructured stream-of-consciousness."

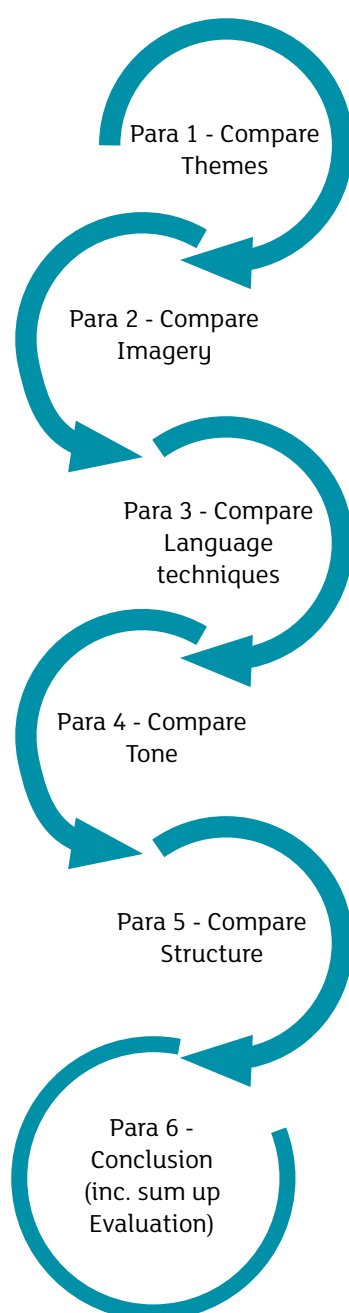
Comparing Poems

Many students find comparing poems somewhat difficult or intimidating, even when they know the individual poems well. It's essential that you are able to show skill in comparing poems in the exam, but this is easier to do if you make sure you:

- Know the poems well beforehand
- Select a second poem that will work well with the named poem in the question asked
- Use comparative language, e.g. sentence starters (see 'Other Useful terms')

Remember comparing is about similarities AND differences, so try to cover both.

The poems don't have to have much in common for you to compare them and contrasts can also be interesting!



Sometimes in the exam students try to write a long section analysing one poem, then a long section analysing the second poem, and then a bit at the end comparing the two. **This is not a good idea** because if you run out of time at the end of the exam, for whatever reason, you will not have shown your ability to compare poems. Instead, you can try using the TILTS information you know about both of the poems. Your first paragraph can be all about Themes – the shared themes, if any, and how Poem A treats the same theme compared to Poem B. The second paragraph compares the imagery used in both poems; the third paragraph compares language in detail, and so on.

If you're unsure how two things compare, turn to your own opinion. Saying "Both poems deal with terrible trauma, though I personally believe the use of language in Poem A is more emotionally affecting than Poem B" is better than just saying "Both poems deal with terrible trauma" – especially when you are about to or have already analysed and written about the language in the poems to back up your idea.

In the following grid, write the name of each poem in the anthology you're studying in the left-hand column; then pick three comparable poems for each and give a short reason (e.g. both employ first person narrative voice, both have theme of childhood, etc.).

You don't have to think of further new ones where the same poem combinations overlap later in the grid, but it's worth trying to – the more connections you make between poems the more versatile you'll become at comparing them well.

Name of poem	Three poems from anthology that could be compared with it	Reasons/points for comparison (1-2 similarities/differences for each poem)

Revising Section B: Poetry

Don't be tempted to avoid poetry revision simply because you will have a copy of the anthology in the exam to refer to – there won't be time for you to re-read several of the poems and decide which to work with before starting to plan and write your answer. You **must** be able to rely on your knowledge of the poems from the outset to save you time and ensure you make an appropriate selection of poem that is right for the question.

Remember – some students are intimidated by poems. They think there is only one “correct” interpretation of each poem, and that to find it we need an explanation from the poet themselves or a critic, dictating to us how the poem works. This isn't true. Provided you work from the textual and structural evidence that's presented in the poems, you can interpret their meanings in many ways. Bear this in mind when revising – make your own notes in your own words, and while it's fine to share ideas with other people, make sure they share ideas with you too, helping you come up with alternative interpretations or arguments you can contradict (e.g. “Some critics believe _____ but I disagree because of ...”) where useful.

Tips for successful revision

- Part of the exam question assesses your ability to compare the poems – it will therefore be beneficial to organise the information about each poem into the same categories/format so you can easily draw parallels between them. Using the TILTS of every poem is a good place to start, though you may want to add further categories.
- Small factfiles or ‘Top Trumps’ style cards are recommended – you can easily move them into pairs to develop your ability to compare the poems, and the process of reducing and editing your notes to fit onto smaller cards in a shorter form will help you memorise the information.
- Write brief notes about each poem to consolidate the key ideas; then experiment with creating exam-style paragraphs following the PEE format (Point, Evidence, Explanation) from your condensed notes.
- Put the names of all the poems into a hat. Everyone in class has to draw two at random and explain quickly how they would compare the two they have selected.
- Create small moodboards or collages for each poem to help you visualise and remember the imagery and descriptions. Keep each one in sight as you revise that particular poem.
- Ensure you know how to accurately spell all the poem titles, poets' names and poetic techniques you will need to know. Give yourself a treat if you get 100%!
- With a friend or classmate, play “Yes, And/Yes, But”. Each of you draws a ‘card’/poem. The first person makes a statement about their poem, e.g. “My poem is about _____”. The second person says “Yes, and...” (if their poem is similar) or “Yes, but...” (if their poem is different) and makes a statement about their poem in relation to the first statement. The first person builds on this with another “Yes, and” or “Yes but” statement, depending on the point they want to make next; the second person then does another “Yes, and” or “Yes, but” statement in response, the first person does the same, and so on. This helps you develop your skills of making comparisons and building arguments – the ‘Yes, and’ statements help promote similarities, and the ‘Yes, but’ statements encourage you to discuss differences.
- Don't cram everything in suddenly in the final day or two just before the exam! Give yourself a few weeks at least so you can take the information in slowly and remember it for longer.

POEM: (write title)

MAIN SPEAKER: (Name/describe the poem's narrative voice; say if 1st/2nd/3rd person)

MAIN THEMES: (List 3-5 main themes in poem)

IMAGERY: (List any similes/metaphors/adjectives etc. that create a figurative or symbolic image for the reader; short summary of effect)

MAIN LANGUAGE FEATURES: (List any other language features, with short quotations if necessary; add short summary of effect)

MAIN STRUCTURE FEATURES: (List 3-5 structural features and their effects)

TONE(S) OF VOICE: (suggest tone(s) – based on evidence from language/structure)

CONTEXT: (3-5 short contextual notes that can be applied/added to main points made about this poem in any general essay)

COULD COMPARE WITH: (Name 3 poems that share similar themes or show a clear contrast in attitude or might otherwise be apt for comparison)

Above: one suggested layout/format for Poem Revision cards.

Practice Exercises

IDENTITY ANTHOLOGY

Answer the following questions, **analysing language/structure/tone etc. for two poems of your own choice** for each:

1. Discuss how age and experience can contribute to a sense of identity.
2. How do two poets use memory to write about identity?
3. Discuss how a sense of regret or guilt is used to help show identity.
4. Compare two first-person narrators and evaluate which is more secure in their sense of identity.
5. Compare two poems you find inspiring and explain why each inspires you.

RELATIONSHIPS ANTHOLOGY

Answer the following questions, **analysing language/structure/tone etc. for two poems of your own choice** for each:

1. Discuss and compare two poems that show an unsatisfactory relationship.
2. Compare two first-person narrators and evaluate which is more secure in their relationship.
3. Discuss how a sense of separation affects how two relationships are presented.
4. Compare two poems describing relationships you believe to be good and explain which relationship is more positive and why.
5. Which two poems are most emotionally believable? Explain why you picked them and compare how they show emotion.

CONFLICT ANTHOLOGY

Answer the following questions, **analysing language/structure/tone etc. for two poems of your own choice** for each:

1. Discuss and compare the presentation of death in two poems.
2. Compare the views presented of two first-person narrators. Which in your opinion is more emotionally affecting and why?
3. Discuss how two poets use memory/reflection after time has passed to present war. In your opinion, how effective can poems be if they're set some time after a war took place?
4. Compare two poems that show different attitudes to conflict and explain how they differ.
5. Discuss and compare how two poets create a doomed or ominous atmosphere in their respective poems.

Other Useful Terms

You need to be able to express yourself clearly and coherently as Quality of Written Communication is assessed in this section of the exam. Look over the words and phrases below and try to adopt a few in your writing to help you make clear statements about the poems. They are organised by their purpose, meaning you can focus on each skill separately.

Words/phrases describing details

Detail

Reference → this refers to...

Allusion → this alludes to...

Indication → this indicates...

Suggestion → this suggests...

Implication → this implies...

Evocation → this evokes.../ this is evocative of...

Hint → This hints at.../ this offers the reader a hint of...

We can cite _____ as evidence of...

Words/phrases for alternative interpretation

Ambiguous

Indistinct

Indefinite

Equivocal

This could suggest...

This might imply...

Perhaps this hints at...

The poet may be alluding to...

This may indicate...

This could insinuate.../ this insinuates...

There is a suggestion that...

Words/phrases for comparison

In contrast to this...

Similarly...

An almost identical situation/phrase/ event occurs in [poem] when...

Complementing this...

In direct opposition to this...

Conversely...

Contrary to this...

In the same way...

This is comparable to...

Likewise...

Equally...

On the contrary...

This parallels...

This is echoed by...

Words/phrases for evaluation

This is convincingly done as...

This affects the reader because...

The effect is suitably _____.

This creates a sense of...

This evokes an atmosphere of...

The poet succeeds in reminding us that...

These methods combine effectively to (move/sadden/anger etc.) the reader by...

Glossary

Alliteration

A purposeful repetition of the same opening sound in a group of words for effect. The effect varies in accordance with the sound – for example, plosive sounds like b, d, k or t have a defined, forceful effect and can seem jarring, jagged, sudden or strong and commanding. Sibilant ‘s’ sounds can be soft like whispers or harsh like hissing, depending on the subject and context.

Assonance

The repetition of vowel sounds across words to help create a consistent effect. It can be quite subtle, so only comment on it if you feel you can link it to the effect created. Like alliteration, there can be various effects depending on the sound; one example would be the ‘ee’ sounds in the lines: “Replete with glee, we leap giddily among the trees” – the mouth shape created in the ‘ee’ sounds looks like a smile and so it emphasises the happiness in the line.

Ballad

A poetry form closely related to the folk tradition of tales told or sung from memory and not written down (since most people couldn’t read or write at the time). The main characteristics are usually an actual story with action rather than just descriptions, a regular rhythm or metre, a regular rhyme scheme and some repetition of verses/ choruses or lines. This was usually to make them memorable and easily performed or adapted.

Couplet

Two lines of verse that are paired in their rhythm and/or rhyme pattern, these can be known as a ‘rhyming couplet’ and used to ‘tidy’ the end of a longer poem with a different rhyme scheme, such as a Shakespearean sonnet.

Dramatic Monologue

A form of speech in drama and poetry in which a character speaks directly to the audience. A dramatic monologue usually involves a fictional speaker (a separate persona from the poet) and a symbolic setting, and it emphasises the speaker’s personal point of view and experiences – an

example of this is ‘An Irish Airman Foresees his Death’ by W B Yeats.

Elegy

Often associated with funerals, this kind of poem pays tribute to someone by lamenting their demise or misfortune.

Enjambment

Unlike an end-stopped line (in which a natural finish will occur at the end of the line of verse, followed by a new ‘sentence’ or idea beginning on the next line), enjambment causes the verse to continue onto the next line down without a proper break, like the words tumbled off the edge. It can create an effect of rushing, disorder or chaos, or suggest a disturbed or babbling speaker – it’s used in many poems, e.g. ‘Piano’ by D H Lawrence and ‘i carry your heart’ by E E Cummings.

Figurative language

Non-literal language – similes, metaphors and hyperbole, for example – used by writers to imply meaning about characters and situations.

Foot

A unit of metre/poetic rhythm, made up of a number of syllables arranged in a pattern. There are different names for the various combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables – e.g. the iamb (one unstressed and one stressed syllable – da-DUM – such as ‘divine’ or ‘delight’) as in ‘iambic pentameter’, or the anapest (two unstressed and one stressed syllable – da-da-DUM – such as ‘unaware’ or ‘disbelief’). See Metre.

Iambic pentameter

Rhythmically, each iamb is a foot (see Foot) consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, like the sound of a heartbeat. The ‘pent-’ suggests five of these iambs; five iambic feet makes a ten syllable pattern per line. Iambic pentameter was common in Shakespeare’s poetry and also in drama, as ‘blank verse’. See Metre.

Imagery

The ideas and feelings suggested when particular turns of phrase, figurative language and specially selected verbs and adjectives are used. Technically imagery is a language feature – in the TILTS model it is kept separate to emphasise its importance and encourage you to analyse examples of it closely.

Irony

A kind of contrast or discrepancy between words and their meaning. This can be verbal irony, in which a poet or character says one thing but means the opposite, or dramatic irony, in which a poetic character's speech takes on extra meaning because they are ignorant of a situation or event known to the audience.

Metre

The pattern of rhythmic accents in poetic verse, formed of stressed and unstressed syllables in certain numbers and combinations. Its basic unit is a foot (see Foot) which arranges stressed and unstressed syllables in regular patterns, and these are then arranged by regular number (e.g. iambic pentameter) or in combinations to create a poetic rhythm.

Metonymy

A form of figurative speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or idea. One example would be referring to royalty or a monarch as “the crown”.

Motif

A motif is a symbol, image or element that appears recurrently in a text. It is similar to a theme but differs in that it tends to be a concrete noun (e.g. the rain, a bird, a colour) while themes are usually abstract nouns (ideas such as justice or childhood).

Narrative poem

A poem which tells a story, often a ballad.

Onomatopoeia

Words which actually convey the sound being made.

Pathos

A quality of action in a poem or play that makes the audience feel pity for a character.

Personification

Presentation of inanimate objects as having human qualities.

Satire

The use of wit or humour to mock and/or attack a person, institution or event, especially if the subject of the mockery has power or status (e.g. the government or a celebrity).

Sonnet

A particularly well-known poetry form, 14 lines long. There are two classic sonnet forms: a) the Petrarchan or Italian sonnet which is divided into two sections, one with eight lines (octave) and one with six lines (sestet) organised by rhyme scheme; and b) the Shakespearean sonnet, with 14 lines divided into three quatrains (four line groups) and a rhyming couplet. Sonnets are commonly associated with love poetry.

Stanza

A ‘verse’ or structural unit of poetry – the equivalent of a paragraph in prose writing.

Structure

Any choices the poet has made about the way a poem is laid out and organised. This could be anything from the use of stanzas and punctuation to the ways the story or idea progresses at different stages in the poem.

Symbolism

See Figurative language.

Theme

A theme is a symbolic idea or concept that appears within the poem (see Motif).

Tone

Usually implied by a poet's language choices and/or by the poem's rhythm, tone helps to enhance a poem's meaning by helping us understand the feelings and intentions of the main speaker or voice in the poem (especially in poems where he/she is identifiably a different character from the poet).

Further Resources

CCEA GCSE English Literature microsite

BBC Bitesize

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/

Teachit

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

Chaparral Poets: Poetic Devices

<http://www.chaparralpoets.org/devices.pdf>

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/>