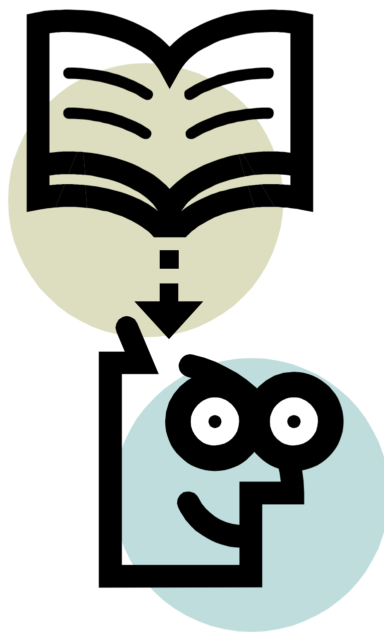
GCSE
English &
English Literature
Revision Guide



Examinations

GCSE English

Paper 1

Section A: Reading Media and Non-fiction Texts
Section B: Writing to Argue, Persuade or Advise

Paper 2

Section A: Reading Poetry from Other Cultures
Section B: Writing to Inform, Explain or Describe

GCSE English Literature

Section A: Of Mice and Men
Section B: Poems by Duffy + Armitage + Pre-1914 bank **or** Heaney + Clark + Pre-1914 bank

Paper 1

Section A: Reading Media and Non-fiction Texts

Revision Tips (ARC)

What the examiners are looking for

You will need to show that you can:

1. Follow an argument
2. Recognise how facts and opinions are used
3. Evaluate the effects of presentational (visual), organisational (structural and visual) and linguistic (use of language) devices
4. Compare texts looking for similarities and differences
5. Use PEE Point Example Explain- when writing your answers

Following an argument

Eg What reasons are put forward for visiting Antarctica with Trail Finders?
Eg2 Explain Humphry's view of waste

Tips:

- Explain *clearly and in detail* what the writer is 'on about'.
- Make sure you get sense of the structure of the text (beginning-middle-conclusion) to show your answer is *fully shaped and absorbed*.
- Put the answer in your own words with small 'embedded quotation'.
- Don't simply copy huge chunks of the text.
- To help structure your answer you can use: X's argument is….. Firstly he states…. Secondly…. Additionally…. Finally….

Recognising how facts and opinions are used

Eg How does Scott's use of fact and opinion help us in our understanding of his experiences?
Eg2 How does John Humprhrys use fact and opinion to persuade the reader?

Tips:

- You can begin with an overview statement such as 'John Humphrys uses facts in order to support his opinions.'
- Then move on to selecting around two facts- explaining what they are (using 'embedded quotation') and then explaining how/why they have been used. In this way you are using PEE
- Eg: Humphrys uses facts to explain the cost of waste. He states that British supermarket waste is worth 'about £400 million' and that it costs 'another £50 million to get rid of it.' By explaining the cost of waste using money the reader is more likely to be shocked by the

scale of waste and may even feel guilty about helping to contribute towards it. The £450 could be better spent on more worthwhile things!
- Then do the same by selecting two opinions.

Presentational and Organisational Devices: Text, Colour, Picture
Eg How does the presentation of the advert persuade the reader to go on this holiday?
Eg 2 How effective are the pictures in supporting what the text is saying?

Text related points
- **Headline-** to catch reader's eye and summarise article.
- **Subheadings**- to help clarify structure of text (what the next bit is about).
- **Font type**- traditional (Times Roman conveys authority) but may be more modern.
- **Italics and bold**- to emphasise certain words.
- **Columns and bullet points** to convey dense information more easily.

Colour related points
- **Step 1:** Identify the main colour used, or the range of different types of colour.
- **Step 2:** Explain how the colour(s) adds to the meaning of the overall text by thinking of what we associate different colours with. Possibilities are **white**=pure; **green/blue**=natural; **browns/reds**=homely; red= **romantic**; black=**mysterious**; **black & white**= arty or depressing; **yellow**= fresh; **sepia**= old fashioned/traditional etc.
- But be careful- these colours might mean something else in a particular advert.

Picture related points
- **Step 1:** Describe what you see in a particular picture.
- **Step 2:** Explain the effect it has. Things to consider:
- **Action shot/posed shot; in focus/blurred; well lit/shadow**
- **People-** look at **facial expression** and **body language**- what emotion is conveyed?
- **Product** if a product is being advertised how is it presented?
- Does the text make use of: **symbols, logos, cartoons, maps, sketches, diagrams**?

Linguistic (language) Devices
Eg How does the writer use language to persuade/entertain etc the reader?
- **Step 1:** Identify several language techniques used by the writer.
- **Step 2:** Explain the effect they have.

Consider:
- **Level of formality**- formal/informal tone
- **Which person** is it written in eg 1st (I), 2nd (you), 3rd (s/he)
- **Literary devices** eg: metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia, alliteration etc
- **Rhetorical devices:** rhetorical questions, rule of 3, repetition, contrast, sentence variety, use of personal pronouns (I, you, we)

- **Semantic fields** (similar vocabulary where words can be grouped together) eg holiday= beach, sand, sea, sun.
- **Voice/tone:** irony, sarcasm, ridicule, self-mocking
- **Conversation/quotation**
- **References to statistics/data/official reports**- to give writing more credibility
- **Emotive language**- eg 'outrage', 'devastating' 'the best ever' to influence reader

Comparing Texts

Words to indicate similarity: similarly, likewise, also, too
Words to indicate difference: whereas, however, although, on the other hand, conversely
Other comparison terms: brighter, clearer, more/less detailed

Writing about Purpose

Possible purposes include writing to: inform, persuade, argue, advise, instruct, entertain, describe, explain.

Writing about audience

Eg Who is the audience of this text? Consider:
Age: children, teenagers, adults, elderly
Gender: males, females, mixed
Groups: Think carefully about the types of people who are likely to read this text- and consider where the text has come from. Eg a guide of cycling routes would be for mountain bike enthusiasts; Capt. Scott's diaries may attract scientists, historians, people who love adventure; 'Medicine Monthly' is likely to be read by doctors; broadsheet newspapers are generally read by people who are more intelligent than tabloid readers (although a lot of people read both); charity leaflets target groups by postcode LS29= a wealthy area!!

Section B: Writing to Argue, Persuade or Advise

Advice:

- ✓ Read the questions carefully and chose **one** answer
- ✓ Identify the purpose, audience and format the writing needs to take to suit the question
- ✓ Plan work carefully, thinking about how you will structure your piece of writing

In your writing try to include:

- ✓ Imaginative ideas
- ✓ A variety of sentence types used for effect
- ✓ Varied and interesting vocabulary
- ✓ Ideas organised into paragraphs
- ✓ Full range of punctuation
- ✓ Accurate spelling

Past Paper Questions (from AQA website – Higher Tier)

- **Argue** for or against the idea that advertisements for sweets should be banned from TV.

  OR

- Write a letter to a TV company **persuading** them that they should produce more interesting programmes for teenagers.

  OR

- Write an article for parents **advising** them on how to get their children to follow a healthier lifestyle.

Paper 2

Section A: Reading Poetry from Other Cultures

When exploring the poems, focus on:

Meanings/interpretations
Language/structural/presentational devices
Language variations
Cultures

Key Words:

culture tradition identity language belief tongue religion metaphor image positive negative satirical sound effects represent reflection presentation tone voice

Some of these resources were found at www.universalteacher.org.uk/anthology/differentcultures.htm © Andrew Moore

Search For My Tongue

Sujita Bhatt was born and raised in India. Her mother tongue is Gujerati – an Indian language – but she writes in English. She has said:
'I am intrigued by the way various languages co-exist in one mind, the way they might clash and interfere with each other – but also the way they can enhance one another.'

'Search For My Tongue' was written when Bhatt was studying in English in the United States and was starting to worry about losing her mother tongue.

This poem (or rather extract from a long poem) explores a familiar ambiguity in English - "tongue" refers both to the physical organ we use for speech, and the language we speak with it. In the poem Sujata Bhatt writes about the "tongue" in both ways at once. To lose your tongue normally means not knowing what to say, but Ms. Bhatt suggests that one can lose one's tongue in another sense. The speaker in this poem is obviously the poet herself, but she speaks for many who fear they may have lost their ability to speak for themselves and their culture.

She explains this with the image of two tongues - a mother tongue (one's first language) and a second tongue (the language of the place where you live). She argues that you cannot use both together. She suggests, further, that if you live in a place where you must "speak a foreign tongue" then the mother tongue will "rot and die in your mouth".

As if to demonstrate how this works, Ms. Bhatt rewrites lines 15 and 16 in Gujarati, followed by more Gujarati lines, which are given in English as the final section of the poem. For readers who do not know the Gujarati script, there is also a phonetic transcript using approximate English spelling to indicate the sounds. What other reasons might the writer have had for structuring the poem in this way?

The final section of the poem is the writer's dream - in which her mother tongue grows back and "pushes the other tongue aside". She ends triumphantly asserting that "Everytime I think I've forgotten,/I think I've lost the mother tongue,/it blossoms out of my mouth."

Clearly this poem is about personal and cultural identity. The familiar metaphor of the tongue is used in a novel way to show that losing one's language (and culture) is like losing part of one's body. The poet's dream may be something she has really dreamt "overnight" but is clearly also a "dream" in the sense of something she wants to happen - in dreams, if not in reality, it is possible for the body to regenerate. For this reason the poem's ending is ambiguous - perhaps it is only in her dream that the poet can find her "mother tongue". On the other hand, she may be arguing that even when she thinks she has lost it, it can be found again. At the end of the poem there is a striking extended metaphor in which the regenerating tongue is likened to a plant cut back to a stump, which grows and eventually buds, to become the flower which "blossoms out of" the poet's mouth. It is as if her mother tongue is exotic, spectacular or fragrant, as a flower might be.

The poem's form is well suited to its subject. The flower is a metaphor for the tongue, which itself has earlier been used as a (conventional) metaphor, for speech. The poet demonstrates her problem by showing both "mother tongue" (Gujarati) and "foreign tongue" (English), knowing that for most readers these will be the other way around, while some, like her, will understand both.

The poem begins with 'you' and addresses the reader directly. Bhatt continues to address the reader directly throughout the poem, encouraging the reader to ask themselves how they would feel in this situation.

Unrelated Incidents

Tom Leonard was born in Glasgow, and still lives there. He has described his childhood upbringing as "working class West of Scotland Irish Catholic" (his father was from Dublin). Although his passport identifies him as a British citizen, Tom Leonard sees himself as thoroughly Scottish.

Almost all his poetry is written in his own Glaswegian dialect. His aim has always been to make poetry using 'my own ordinary working-class West of Scotland speech,that is still poetry'. He says he is interested in 'the political nature of voice in British culture'.

'Unrelated Incidents' is a set of six poems, each of which looks at some aspect of the way we use language. It was written in 1976.

This poem uses non-standard English to explore notions of class, education and nationality. The poem is a phonetic transcript which shows how a Glaswegian Scot might speak. The poet imagines the BBC newsreader smugly explaining why he does not talk "lik/wanna you/scruff" - though in this version, of course, he is doing just this. The writer takes on the persona of a less educated or "ordinary" Glaswegian, with whom he clearly identifies.

He or she speaks here in the accent of an ordinary speaker/viewer - just the kind of voice the newsreader is rejecting.

A newsreader would never really reveal his or her prejudices directly to the viewer in this way. So what the newsreader 'says' in this poem perhaps needs to be seen as the unspoken message (or sub-text) of the way the news is presented.

The poem is set out in lines of two, three or four syllables, but these are not end-stopped. The effect is almost certainly meant to be of the Autocue used by newsreaders (the text scrolls down the screen a few words at a time).

The poem seems puzzling on the page, but when read out aloud makes better sense. A Scot may find it easier to follow than a reader from London, say.

The poet has played with language in a number of ways, apart from the phonetic spelling:

There is almost no punctuation.

There are lots of slang and colloquial words ('scruff, belt up').

The newsreader talks directly to the reader (or viewer).

The lines of the poem are very short.

Think about the effects created by this use of language.

The most important idea in the poem is that of truth - a word which appears (as “trooth”) three times, as well as one “troo”. The speaker in the poem (with whom the poet seems to sympathize) suggests that listeners or viewers trust a speaker with an RP (Received Pronunciation) or “BBC” accent. He claims that viewers would be mistrustful of a newsreader with a regional accent, especially one like Glaswegian Scots, which has working-class or even (unfairly) criminal associations in the minds of some people.

The poem is humorous and challenges our prejudices. Leonard may be a little naïve in his argument, however: RP gives credibility to people in authority or to newsreaders, because it shows them not to favour one area or region - it is meant to be neutral. The RP speaker appears educated because he or she is aware of, and has dropped, distinctive local or regional peculiarities. And though RP is not spoken by everyone, it is widely understood, much more so than any regional accent in the UK. Tom Leonard's Glasgow accent would confuse many listeners, as would any marked regional voice. RP has the merit of clarity.

John Agard: Half-Caste

This poem develops a simple idea which is found in a familiar, if outdated phrase. Half-caste as a term for mixed race is now rare. The term comes from India, where people are rigidly divided into groups (called castes) which are not allowed to mix, and where the lowest caste is considered untouchable. In the poem John Agard pokes fun at the idea. He does this

- with an ironic suggestion of things only being “half” present,
- by puns, and
- by looking at the work of artists who mix things.

It is not clear whether Agard speaks as himself here, or speaks for others.

The poem opens with a joke - as if “half-caste” means only half made (reading the verb as cast rather than caste), so the speaker stands on one leg as if the other is not there. Agard ridicules the term by showing how the greatest artists mix things - Picasso mixes the colours, and Tchaikovsky use the black and white keys in his piano symphonies, yet to call their art “half-caste” seems silly. The image of the black and white keys on the piano was used in a similar way by Paul McCartney in the song Ebony and Ivory:

Agard playfully points out how England's weather is always a mix of light and shadow - leading to a very weak pun on “half-caste” and “overcast” (clouded over). The joke about one leg is recalled later in the poem, this time by suggesting that the “half-caste” uses only half of ear and eye, and

offers half a hand to shake, leading to the absurdities of dreaming half a dream and casting half a shadow. The poem, like a joke, has a punchline - the poet invites his hearer to "come back tomorrow" and use the whole of eye, ear and mind. Then he will tell "de other half/of my story".

Though the term "half-caste" is rarely heard today, Agard is perhaps right to attack the idea behind it - that mixed race people have something missing. Also, they often suffer hostility from the racial or ethnic communities of both parents. Though the poem is light-hearted in tone, the argument of the last six lines is very serious, and has a universal application: we need to give people our full attention and respect, if we are to deserve to hear their whole "story".

The form of the poem is related to its subject, as Agard uses non-standard English, in the form of Afro-Caribbean patois. This shows how he stands outside mainstream British culture. There is no formal rhyme-scheme or metre, but the poem contains rhymes ("wha yu mean...mix red an green"). A formal device which Agard favours is repetition: "Explain yuself/wha yu mean", for example. The poem is colloquial, written as if spoken to someone with imperatives (commands) like "Explain yuself" and questions like "wha yu mean". The punctuation is non-standard using the hyphen (-) and slash (/) but no comma nor full stop, not even at the end. The spelling uses both standard and non-standard forms - the latter to show pronunciation. The patois is most marked in its grammar, where verbs are missed out ("Ah listening" for "I am listening" or "I half-caste human being" for "I am half-caste").

Derek Walcott: Love after Love

This poem is about self-discovery. Walcott suggests that we spend years assuming an identity, but eventually discover who we really are - and this is like two different people meeting and making friends and sharing a meal together. Walcott presents this in terms of the love feast or Eucharist of the Christian church - "Eat...Give wine. Give bread." And it is not clear whether this other person is merely human or in some way divine.

The poem begins with the forecast of the time when this recognition will occur - a moment of great happiness ("elation") as "you...greet yourself" and "each will smile at the other's welcome".

The second stanza suggests that one has to fit in with others' ideas or accommodate oneself to the world, and so become a stranger to oneself - but in time one will see who the stranger really is, and welcome him or her home. Our everyday life is seen, therefore, as a kind of temporary disloyalty, in which one ignores oneself "for another" - but all along it is the true self, the stranger "who has loved you" and "who knows you by heart".

And when this time comes, then one can recall and review one's life - look at the record of love-letters, photographs and notes, and what one sees in the mirror - and sit and feast on one's life.

The poem is written in the second person - as if the poet addresses the reader directly. It is full of imperative verbs (commands) "sit", "give", "eat", "take" and "feast". The poet repeats words or

variants of them - “give”, “love”, “stranger” and “life”. The verse form is irregular but most lines are loosely iambic and some (the 8th and 13th, for example) are quite regular tetrameters.

This is a very happy poem, especially in its view of the later years of life, not as a time of loss but of fulfilment and recovery.

Imtiaz Dharker: This Room

This is a quite puzzling poem, if we try to find an explicit and exact interpretation - but its general meaning is clear enough: Imtiaz Dharker sees rooms and furniture as possibly limiting or imprisoning one, but when change comes, it as if the room “is breaking out of itself”. She presents this rather literally, with a bizarre or surreal vision of room, bed and chairs breaking out of the house and rising up - the chairs “crashing through clouds”. The crockery, meanwhile, crashes together noisily “in celebration”. And why is no one “looking for the door”? Presumably, because there are now so many different ways of leaving the room, without using the conventional route.

One's sense of self is also confused - we say sometimes that we are all over the place, and Ms. Dharker depicts this literally, as well - she cannot find her feet (a common metaphor for gaining a sense of purpose or certainty) and realizes that her hands are not even in the same room - and have taken on a life of their own, applauding from somewhere else.

We do not know the cause of this joyful explosion, but it seems to be bound up with personal happiness and fulfilment - it might be romantic love, but it could be other things: maternity, a new job, artistic achievement, almost anything that is genuinely and profoundly life-changing.

The central idea in this poem is like that in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar of “a tide...that taken at its flood leads on to greatness” - that is, that opportunities come our way, and we need to recognize them and react in the right way, “when the...furniture of our lives/stirs” and “the improbable arrives”.

The poem works very much like an animated film - the excited “pots and pans” suggest the episode in Disney's Fantasia of the Sorcerer's Apprentice. It is a succession of vivid and exuberant images, full of joy and excitement. (Even if one does not enjoy the poem, the reader might like to know what made the poet feel like this - and perhaps give it a try.)

In the poem our homes and possessions symbolize our lives and ambitions in a limiting sense, while change and new opportunities are likened to space, light and “empty air”, where there is an opportunity to move and grow. Like Walcott's Love After Love it is about change and personal growth - but at an earlier point, or perhaps at repeated points in one's life.

Niyi Osundare: Not My Business

This poem is about shared responsibility and the way that tyranny grows if no one opposes it. It is composed, simply, of three stories about victims of the oppressors, followed by the experience of

the speaker in the poem. The poet is Nigerian but the situation in the poem could be from many countries. It echoes, in its four parts, a statement by Pastor Martin Niemöller, who opposed the Nazis. Speaking later to many audiences he would conclude with these words, more or less:

"First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me."

The oppressors are not specified, only identified by the pronoun "they" - but we suppose them to be the agents of the state, perhaps soldiers or police officers. The first story is Akanni's - he is seized in the morning, beaten then taken away in a jeep. We do not know if he ever returned.

The second victim is Danladi - whose family is awoken at night. Danladi is away for a long time (though there is a hint that this person eventually comes back). Last comes Chinwe, who has been an exemplary worker (she has a "stainless record") but finds that she has been given the sack without any warning or reason.

After each of these three accounts, the speaker in the poem asks what business it is of his (or hers) - with the implication that these people's experiences are not connected to him. The speaker's only concern is for the next meal ("the yam" in "my savouring mouth").

The poem ends with a knock on the door, and the oppressors' jeep parked outside. There seems some justice in the timing of the appearance of the jeep: "As I sat down to eat my yam".

The poet makes it clear that the oppressors thrive when their victims act only for themselves - if they organize, then they can be stronger. Niyi Osundare also criticizes the character in the poem for thinking only of food - or perhaps understands that, in a poor country, hunger is a powerful weapon of the tyrant.

It is easy to take for granted the freedoms some of us enjoy in liberal democracies. But these are not found everywhere. There are housing estates, places of work and even schools where these basic liberties may be lost for some reason - anywhere where bullies find that their victims do not stand up for themselves or resist their power. Osundare makes it clear that it is always our business.

The poem has a very clear structure - we are told the time of each of the episodes and what happened, followed by the refrain: "What business of mine is it...?" Except for the last occasion - because it is obvious now that it (the state terror) is everyone's business. And now it is more obviously the speaker's business. We do not yet know what "they" have in store for this next victim, but we do not suppose it to be pleasant. And it turns out that merely to keep quiet and try not to be noticed is no guarantee of safety. Why not? Because the oppressors are not reasonable people who pick only on the troublemakers - they sustain a reign of terror by the randomness of their persecution of harmless or innocent people.

The names and the reference to the "yam" tell us that the poem has an African setting but apart from these details the scenes could happen in any place where the people suffer under tyranny.

Moniza Alvi: Presents from my Aunts in Pakistan

This poem can be compared usefully with the extracts from Search for My Tongue and from Unrelated Incidents, as well as with Half-Caste - all of which look at ideas of race and identity. Where Sujatta Bhatt, Tom Leonard and John Agard find this in language, Moniza Alvi associates it with material things. The poem is written in the first person, and is obviously autobiographical - the speaking voice here is really that of the poet.

Moniza Alvi contrasts the exotic garments and furnishings sent to her by her aunts with what she saw around her in her school, and with the things they asked for in return. Moniza Alvi also shows a paradox, as she admired the presents, but felt they were too exquisite for her, and lacked street credibility. Finally, the presents form a link to an alternative way of life (remote in place and time) which Ms. Alvi does not much approve: her aunts "screened from male visitors" and the "beggars" and "sweeper-girls" in 1950s Lahore.

The bright colours of the salwar kameez suggest the familiar notion of exotic clothes worn by Asian women, but the glass bangle which snaps and draws blood is almost a symbol of how her tradition harms the poet - it is not practical for the active life of a young woman in the west.

In a striking simile the writer suggests that the clothes showed her own lack of beauty: "I could never be as lovely/as those clothes". The bright colours suggest the clothes are burning: "I was aflame/I couldn't rise up out of its fire", a powerful metaphor for the discomfort felt by the poet, who "longed/for denim and corduroy", plainer but comfortable and inconspicuous. Also she notes that where her Pakistani Aunt Jamila can "rise up out of its fire" - that is, "look lovely" in the bright clothes - she (the poet) felt unable to do so, because she was "half-English". This may be meant literally (she has an English grandmother) or metaphorically, because she is educated in England. This sense of being between two cultures is shown when the "schoolfriend" asks to see Moniza Alvi's "weekend clothes" and is not impressed. The schoolfriend's reaction also suggests that she has little idea of what Moniza - as a young Pakistani woman - is, and is not, allowed to do at weekends, despite living in Britain.

The idea of living in two cultures is seen in the voyage, from Pakistan to England, which the poet made as a child and which she dimly recalls. This is often a symbol of moving from one kind of life to another.

Grace Nichols: Hurricane Hits England

The central image in this poem is not the poet's invention but drawn from her (and other people's) experience. The hurricanes that sometimes strike England as destructive storms really do bring

the Caribbean (or its weather) to Britain - they retrace the poet's journey from the west, and recall her own origins.

The poem begins in the third person (note the pronouns "her" and "she") but changes in the second stanza to a first-person view as the poet speaks of herself, and addresses the tropical winds. The speaker here could be anyone who has made this journey, but Grace Nichols is probably speaking for herself in the poem. The poem is written mostly as free verse - there is no rhyme scheme; stanzas vary in length, as do the lines, though the first line of the poem is a perfect pentameter.

The poem is interesting for its range of vocabulary. Ms. Nichols uses the patois form "Huracan" and names the gods ("Oya" and "Shango") of the Yoruba tribe, who were taken as slaves to the Caribbean in times past. She connects this to the modern world, as she names the notorious Hurricane Hattie (of October 1961). There is interesting word play in "reaping havoc" - a pun on the familiar phrase "wreaking (making or causing) havoc". The poem also brings together the four elements of earth, air (wind), fire (lightning) and water.

But the most striking things in this poem are the images and symbols from the natural world, which explain the poet's relationship to the Caribbean and to England. The wind is called a "howling ship" - "howling" we expect to find with "wind", not "ship". (Technically, this is a transferred epithet.) But the wind is like a ship in having travelled across the ocean. This nautical image is echoed later by the comparison of felled trees to "whales". The reference to an "ancestral spectre" calls to mind the worship of the spirits of ancestors, a practice the slaves took from Africa to the West Indies. Here the ghost of the ancestor is perhaps rebuking the poet for leaving the Caribbean.

In the fourth stanza, Ms. Nichols contrasts the massive power of the natural electricity of lightning with the electricity generated by man. The electrical storm cuts off the mains electricity, plunging us into "further darkness". This may be the literal darkness of England in winter, or a metaphor for the poet's dismay at leaving her homeland.

The fallen trees (which lie around in England after a tropical storm) are seen by the poet as like herself, uprooted from her home. The wind brings warmth to "break (the ice of) the frozen lake" in her - as if the English weather has caused her to lose touch with her emotions. (Associating one's mood with the prevailing weather is a well-established poetic convention, sometimes known as the pathetic fallacy. Here pathetic means to do with feelings [Greek pathos]. It is a fallacy [mistaken belief] because our moods do not literally control the weather (unless we have special magical powers), though often the weather does influence our moods!)

Perhaps the most powerful image, from a Caribbean writer, is that which has its own line, where Grace Nichols asks: "O why is my heart unchained?" In expressing her sense of joy, after the storm has hit England, she recalls the image of freed slaves being released from the chains in which they have been held. Here she shows awareness of her historical culture.

Finally, the sense that England and the Caribbean are all part of the same planet is spelled out in the poem's last line. This reads like a tautology (look it up) but expresses Ms. Nichols' sense that the reader needs to know the essential nature of the earth

Some useful notes on Cluster 2 poems can be found at
www.universalteacher.org.uk/anthology/differentcultures.htm

Past Paper Questions Cluster 1 (from AQA website – Higher Tier)

- The titles poets give to their poems can often be important. Write about 'Nothing's Changed' and **one** other poem. Compare the ways the poets use the titles in these poems.

- How does the poet create an image of a place in 'Night of the Scorpion'? Compare this with the way an image of a place is created in **one** other poem.

Past Paper Questions Cluster 2 (from AQA website – Higher Tier)

- Compare the methods the poets use to get across their points of view in 'Half-Caste' and in **one** other poem.

- Compare the ways the poet presents a particular culture in 'Not my Business' with the ways a poet presents a culture or cultures in **one** other poem.

Section B: Writing to Inform, Explain or Describe

Advice:

- ✓ Read the questions carefully and chose **one** answer
- ✓ Identify the purpose, audience and format the writing needs to take to suit the question
- ✓ Plan work carefully, thinking about how you will structure your piece of writing

In your writing try to include:

- ✓ Imaginative ideas
- ✓ A variety of sentence types used for effect
- ✓ Varied and interesting vocabulary
- ✓ Ideas organised into paragraphs
- ✓ Full range of punctuation
- ✓ Accurate spelling

Past Paper questions (from AQA website - Higher Tier)

- Choose something you are interested in and know about. Write in a way that will **inform** other people.

  OR

- Think about a decision you, or someone else close to you has made that has changed your life or the lives of other people. **Explain** what the decision was and the changes it brought about.

  OR

- **Describe** a place you would like to be in right now.

  OR

- Write **informatively** about a journey you have made and **describe** the things you saw on the way.

English Literature Paper

Section A: Of Mice and Men

Some of these resources were found at:
www.universalteacher.org.uk/prose/ofmiceandmen.htm © Andrew Moore

Character

Any statement about what characters are like should be backed up by evidence: quote what they say, or explain what they do (or both). Do not, however, merely retell narrative (the story) without comment. Statements of opinion should be followed by reference to events or use of quotation; quotation should be followed by explanation (if needed) and comment. This is rather mechanical, but if you do it, you will not go far wrong.

In this guide, general comments will often be made without supporting evidence (to save time). As you study or revise you should find and list this evidence. If you cannot find any, ask a teacher who knows this text. You should certainly, in any case, be making your own revision guides, and marking your copy of the book. If you are preparing this text for an examination, you may be allowed to underline key passages or to use bookmarks.

In Of Mice and Men the characters are clearly drawn and memorable. Some could be the subject of a whole essay, while others would not. Of course a question on a theme (see below) might

require you to write about characters, anyway: for example, to discuss loneliness, you write about lonely people.

George and Lennie

The principal characters are George Milton and Lennie Small (whose name is the subject of a feeble joke: "He ain't small". Who says this?). Lennie is enormously strong. He is simple (has a learning difficulty) though he is physically well co-ordinated and capable of doing repetitive manual jobs (bucking barley or driving a cultivator) with skill.

Lennie has a man's body, but a child's outlook: he gains pleasure from "pettin' " soft things, even dead mice, and loves puppies and rabbits. He is dependent, emotionally, on George, who organizes his life and reassures him about their future. Lennie can be easily controlled by firm but calm instructions, as Slim finds out. But panic in others makes Lennie panic: this happened when he tried to "pet" a girl's dress, in Weed, and happens again twice in the narrative: first, when he is attacked by Curley, and second, when Lennie strokes the hair of Curley's wife.

Lennie's deficiencies enable him to be accepted by other defective characters: Candy, Crooks and Curley's wife. He poses no threat, and seems to listen patiently (because he has learned the need to pay close attention, as he remembers so little of what he hears). As a child is comforted by a bedtime story, so George has come to comfort Lennie with a tale of a golden future. To the reader, especially today, this imagined future is very modest, yet to these men it is a dream almost impossible of fulfilment. As George has repeated the story, so he has used set words and phrases, and Lennie has learned these, too, so he is able to join in the telling at key moments (again, as young children do).

George is a conscientious minder for Lennie but is of course not with him at all times; and at one such time, Lennie makes the mistake which leads to his death. He strokes the hair of Curley's wife (at her invitation) but does it too roughly; she panics and tries to cry out, and Lennie shakes her violently, breaking her neck.

There is no proper asylum (safe place) for Lennie: Curley is vengeful, but even if he could be restrained, Lennie would face life in a degrading and cruel institution - a mental hospital, prison or home for the criminally insane. George's killing of Lennie, supported by Slim (who says "You hadda' ") is the most merciful course of action.

In the novel's final chapter we have an interesting insight into Lennie's thought. Until now we have had to read his mind from his words and actions. Here, Steinbeck describes how first his Aunt Clara and second an imaginary talking rabbit, lecture Lennie on his stupidity and failure to respect George. From this we see how, in his confused fashion, Lennie does understand, and try to cope with, his mental weakness.

George is called a "smart little guy" by Slim, but corrects this view (as he also corrects the idea that Lennie is a "cuckoo": that is, a lunatic - Lennie is quite sane; his weakness is a lack of

intelligence). George's modesty is not false - he is bright enough to know that he isn't especially intelligent. If he were smart, he says, "I wouldn't be buckin' barley for my fifty and found" (=$US 50 per month, with free board and lodging). George is not stupid, but there is no real opportunity for self-advancement, as might be achieved in the west today by education. He is, in a simple way, imaginative: his picture of the small-holding (small farm) he and Lennie will one day own, is clearly-drawn and vivid, while some of the phrases have a near-poetic quality in their simplicity, as when he begins: "Guys like us...are the loneliest guys in the world".

Lennie is a burden to George, who frequently shows irritation and, sometimes, outright anger to him. But it is clear that George is not going to leave him. What began vaguely as a duty, after the death of Lennie's Aunt Clara, has become a way of life: there is companionship and trust in this relationship, which makes it almost unique among the ranch-hands. George confesses to Slim how he once abused this trust by making Lennie perform degrading tricks; but after Lennie nearly drowned, having (although not able to swim) jumped, on George's orders, into the Sacramento River, George has stopped taking advantage of Lennie's simplicity. At the end of the novella George confronts a great moral dilemma, and acts decisively, killing Lennie as a last act of friendship.

Other characters

Slim

All the other characters are important for their dealings with these two, but some are worthy of comment in their own right. Unlike all the other characters, however, is Slim. This man is not just a hired labourer, but a craftsman (he drives a team of mules or horses). He is "the prince of the ranch" and he is regarded as an authority. For most of the novel he is a detached figure who observes Lennie's and George's relationship. At one point he is called to make a judgement, when he decides that Candy's dog should be shot. By listening to George in the ranch house, Slim allows him to reveal a great deal about his relations with Lennie, and to describe incidents from their past.

The Boss and Whit

The Boss appears briefly, voicing suspicion at George's speaking for Lennie, while Whit is important for one incident. He shows the other ranch-hands a letter in a magazine, written by a worker he had known on the ranch previously. He relishes the memory of this man (Bill Tenner) and shows his own loneliness, and longing for friendship; yet even as he shows the magazine to George, he will not let go of the page.

Candy

Far more important is a trio of misfits or outsiders: Candy is an old man, reduced to cleaning the bunkhouse after losing his hand in an accident at work. He has been compensated by his employer and has saved the money, which he offers to give to George, in return for a share in his and

Lennie's dream. George is happy to agree to this, but is not interested in buying the smallholding with Candy alone, after Lennie has killed Curley's wife.

Candy is excluded from the social life of the ranch-hands, by his age, his disability and demeaning job, and by his own choice ("I ain't got the poop any more", he says when the others go into town on Saturday night). His lack of status appears when he is powerless to save his old dog from being shot. He bitterly (and unfairly) reproaches Curley's wife for the loss of his dream.

Crooks

Crooks is also disabled and a Negro, unusual at this time in California. (He points out that he is not a "southern negro", referring to the "deep south", states like Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, where coloured people live in large numbers). He is excluded by his colour from the bunkhouse (he is allowed in at Christmas, but has to fight one of the men, it seems). Crooks protects his feelings by keeping to himself. When Candy tells him of the dream ranch, he offers to work for nothing. But Curley's wife reminds him that he has no hope of sharing the dream, and he pretends the offer was made as a joke. (But it seems clear that he means it when he says it.)

Curley's wife

Curley's wife is the most pathetic of the outsiders: unlike the others, even Lennie, she seems not to understand her limitations - or she refuses to admit them. She still dreams of what might have been, seeing herself as a potential film-star. But she has no acting talent, men (one from a travelling show, one who claimed to be in the movies) make bogus offers as a chat-up line, and now that films require actresses to talk, her coarse speech would be a handicap. Her naiveté shows in her belief that her mother has stolen a letter (from her "contact" in Hollywood) which was obviously never written; her immaturity appears in her instant reaction of marrying the loathsome Curley.

Desperate for companionship she does not find at home, she flirts with the ranch-hands. They are uneasy about this, as they think her to be seriously promiscuous, and are fearful of Curley's reaction. Her inappropriate dress on the ranch and her coquettish manner brand her as a "tart". She is, perhaps, the most pathetic of all the characters.

Curley

Curley, her husband, is a rather two-dimensional villain. Conscious of his own failings, he tries to earn respect by picking fights, but is vain, boastful and aggressive. He suspects everyone of laughing at him. His wife's behaviour ensures that they do laugh, even Candy.

Carlson

Carlson typifies the men George describes as "the loneliest guys in the world". He is outwardly friendly, but essentially selfish. He finds the smell of an old dog offensive so the dog must be

shot. He has little regard for the feelings of the dog's owner. At the end of the novella, as Slim goes to buy George a drink, and comfort him, it is Carlson who says to Curley, "What the hell...is eatin' them two guys?"

There is, clearly, only one real relationship depicted in the novel. All the characters, save George and Lennie, are more or less in search of a relationship. We see how far their failure to find friendship or company, even, is due to general attitudes, to their circumstances, and to themselves.

Themes

The themes of this novella are very clear: one (the fragility of people's dreams) is indicated in the title. The other themes are friendship, and its opposite, loneliness.

The fagility of dreams

The novella's title comes from a poem, To a Mouse (on turning her up in her nest with the plough) by the Scots poet Robert Burns (1759-1796):

'The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley (often go wrong). And leave us naught but grief and pain for promised joy.'

Burns shows how the plans of men are no more secure than those of the mouse, and this is the point of Steinbeck's title. The source of the characters' dreams is their discontent with their present. Steinbeck shows how poor their lifestyle is: they have few possessions, fewer comforts, no chance of marriage or family life and no place of their own.

George's and Lennie's dream is at first a whim, but becomes clearer. The unexpected opportunity offered by Candy's money means it is no longer a fantasy, but the threat to the fulfilment of this dream, ever-present in Lennie's behaviour finally destroys it, just as it has become possible. Candy and Crooks both try to share in this dream. Candy is desperate and, so, ready to trust his fortune to a near stranger.

Crooks is most cynical about the dream of owning land: "Nobody never gets to heaven and nobody never gets no land", even though every ranch-hand, he says, has "land in his head". Yet even he, recalling happy times in his childhood, hopes, briefly, for a share in George's and Lennie's dream.

Curley's wife indulges a different fantasy, far less likely of fulfilment. As many young women do, she aspires to stardom in films. She knows she is pretty, and, believing too readily the man who says she is "a natural", thinks her talent is merely waiting for an opportunity and that her mother has stolen the letter which represents her chance for fame. Steinbeck describes precisely "the small grand gesture" (an oxymoron or contradiction in terms) with which she demonstrates to Lennie her supposed talent.

The end of the novella seems to confirm Crooks's pessimistic view. None of the characters does achieve his or her dream. But this seems more due to a lack of opportunity and the way society is organized, than to anything else.

Loneliness and friendship

To the people on the ranch, even the broad-minded Slim, George's and Lennie's partnership is very unusual. It is clear that most of them are lonely. Some, like Whit, feel the loneliness and remember wished-for friends with affection. Others learn to be self-sufficient emotionally, or just plain selfish. Crooks insists on his right to be alone even though he dislikes it, while Carlson seems incapable of actually sympathizing with anyone else's viewpoint. Curley can only communicate through aggression. He marries to impress the men with his sexual prowess and to boast to his wife about how he will give "the ol' one-two" to his opponents. Slim enjoys respect and a friendly manner, if not actual friendship, from the others on the ranch. He is welcoming and sympathetic to George and Lennie, and forces Carlson to consider Candy's feelings: he allows the dog to be shot, but Carlson must bury it; Candy should not have to do this. Candy is desperate for companionship, and readily discusses the proposed ranch with Lennie ("I been figurin' how we can make on them rabbits") without any sense that Lennie is too simple to follow his conversation.

Crooks astutely notes that Lennie cannot remember what he is saying, but points out that most people in conversation do this, that being with another is what counts; and so he talks freely to Lennie, who has the same effect on Curley's wife. She cannot speak to her husband but pours out her troubles to Lennie. It is ironic that the retarded man should be taken into the confidence of these supposedly normal characters. It is unfortunate that the rare relationship of friends should be ended by one of them; in killing Lennie, George knows (and tells Candy) he is condemning himself to the life of working for a month, then blowing his pay in the pool-room and "lousy cat-house". And the detailed references to the two brothels in Soledad remind us both of the lack of opportunity for the ranch-hands to have a lasting sexual relationship, and the absence of opportunities for women to work in respectable jobs.

The author's technique

Structure

Steinbeck's narrative method is unremarkable but effective in a simple way; for this reason it is not an obvious subject for study. The structure of the novella is clear and quite simple: each chapter is an extended episode, in the same place. Some things happen while others, which have happened, are re-told (George tells Slim about Weed; Whit tells the hands about Bill Tenner's letter; Curley's wife tells Lennie about her past).

Time and place

Steinbeck controls time and place very skilfully. Though he recalls events from earlier, what he narrates directly takes place over a single weekend. The narrative is framed by the opening and

closing chapters, which are set in a beautiful clearing by a stream, close to the ranch. All the other chapters are set on the ranch, inside: in the bunkhouse, in Crooks's room or in the barn. The text is very short, and yet a great proportion is taken up with dialogue, in the form of direct speech. It is clear from all of this (a series of "scenes"; no single viewpoint, nor access to thought; unity of time and place; past events recalled in conversation; indoor locations, and heavy reliance on dialogue) that the novella has been written with an eye to dramatization. It is not surprising to discover that Steinbeck himself did write a dramatization for the stage, and that this has subsequently been made into (two) very successful feature films.

Viewpoint

The novella is written in the third person, but there is no single viewpoint. We read of scenes in which George or Lennie or both are present, but we may briefly follow other characters (Candy or Crooks, say). We are never told what anyone is thinking, but must work this out from what people say, with one curious exception. In the final chapter, Steinbeck describes the imaginary talking rabbit (as one would expect from Lennie, it does not see anything odd in telling him he is not fit "to lick the boots of no rabbit"!) and the remembered Aunt Clara, who appear to Lennie, their voices supplied by his talking aloud.

Language and symbolism

The language of the narrative is fairly simple; most vocabulary is of an everyday kind, except for names of items of farm equipment to which Steinbeck refers. In the dialogue, Steinbeck uses slang and non-standard terms ("would of", "brang" and so on) to convey an authentic sense of the speaking voice.

Apart from the symbolism in the title, we should note the symbolic function of the killing of Candy's old dog. At various points in the novel shooting is mentioned as a way out of trouble (as when George says he would shoot himself if he were related to Lennie). The killing of the dog parallels the shooting of Lennie: both are depicted as merciful, in both cases the shot is in the same place (base of the skull) and Slim approves both killings.

Essay Template - Examine the importance of dreams in 'Of Mice and Men' (ARC)

Introduction

The idea of dreams is an important theme running throughout the novel. It is based on the belief in the 'American Dream' that America provides a land of opportunity where everyone has the opportunity for security (to have their own place) and success (to be their own boss.) This dream is shared by most of the characters in 'Of Mice and Men', particularly the migrant ranch workers whose real existence is to travel from place to place seeking work. Ironically, because the novel is

set during the 1930s, the years of the Great Depression, their dream is unlikely to ever turn into reality.

George's and Lennie's dream

George and Lennie, the two central characters of the novel share the dream of wanting to have their own piece of land and to be their own boss. The dream is explained several times throughout the novel, noticeably at the beginning and the end, giving a sense that the dream is trapped in a circle. George's and Lennie's dream is important to them for several reasons. Firstly having their own home provides security and independence, a place they can call home 'we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres and… live of the fatta the land'. This contrasts with their (and their fellow ranch workers') real existence 'Guys like us are the loneliest guys in the world…They got no family. They don't belong no place…They aint got nothing to look ahead to.' Secondly we see how the dream offers companionship 'We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us.' Friendship and care is important in a world of isolation and self-survival. In their 'dream home' they can also be their own boss- in charge of their own lives, without someone telling them what to do all the time. Furthermore the dream offers them an aim, something to work towards to and something which makes their current lives of hardship worth living.

Whenever George repeats the dream for Lennie his voice alters 'George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before.' This suggests it is almost like a prayer possibly based on the belief that if he chants it enough times it may come true. However, a prayer or wish is all that this dream is likely to be. At the end of the novel George repeats the dream possibly to sooth his nerves before killing Lennie. Lennie dies along with the dream. However, there are earlier clues in the novel to suggest the dream is unlikely to ever be a reality. This is when they share the dream with other characters.

Candy's dream

In chapter 3 when Candy hears about the dream he is desperate to be included. In this society people are valued by how hard they can work. For an ageing old man with a bad hand he knows his time on the ranch is limited. Indeed, the shooting of his dog is a reminder of the lack of respect with which the elderly are treated. When he offers money to contribute towards the house, for the first time it seems the dream might become a reality. 'This thing they believed in was finally coming true.' However, typical of Steinbeck's style, just when good news and hope give a sense of optimism and credibility to the dream, the reader is soon brought back down to reality with the arrival of Curley. After a brief conversation he launches into a fight with Lennie. The sense of pessimism returns to the chapter, again putting the dream into doubt.

Crooks' dream

In chapter 4, Crooks is introduced to the dream. Write this paragraph yourself. Look at how he is initially sceptical of the dream, then wants to be part of it. Why it is important for him? How yet again does the mood of the chapter change to put the dream under threat?

Curley's wife's dream
Curley's wife's dream is revealed in chapter 5 when she talks to Lennie. Her dream was to become a famous actress in the pictures. He talks about a man she met from Hollywood who promised to 'put me in the movies.' She is entranced by the possibility that 'I coulda sat in them big hotels, an had pictures took of me… An all them nice clothes like they wear.' Curley's wife's dream shows us what she wants in this life- to be liked, respected, famous and to experience nice things. Ironically by marrying Curley she is ignored and isolated and spends her time on the ranch constantly seeking the attention she craves.

Conclusion
We can see the importance of dreams for several characters: Curley's wife's Hollywood dream and George's, Lennie's, Candy's (and later Crook's) dream of owning your own place. Even the other ranch workers are interested by the dreams offered by the romanticised western cowboy magazines. For all these characters the dream offers hope of a better life to come and so makes their current hard lives bearable. However, throughout the novel Steinbeck suggests the dreams are unlikely ever to become a reality. Maybe George's and Lennie's dream was shattered the minute they had to leave Weed.

Sample Essay: "How important are the settings to the novel?" (SA)

Of Mice and Men clearly reflects the experiences its author gained when working as a farm labourer on ranches in California. John Steinbeck goes further, however, to use the ranch in the novel as a microcosm for wider issues he identified in the depression-hit America of the 1930's. He makes use of a range of settings to tell the story of George and Lennie – characters whose experiences mirror the lives of a whole generation of migrant workers.

The setting of the novel is firmly rooted in the landscape. Steinbeck's choice of title expresses how vulnerable his characters are and how dependent they have become on nature both to survive and to stand any chance of achieving their dreams in the "promised land" that California represented. The enduring rhythms and cycles of wild nature are pitted against the hopes and expectations of all the characters in the novel:

"Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves…"

George and Lennie typify the thousands of workers who escaped the "dust bowl" of the mid-western states only to find further hardship and poverty. If they are not strong enough they will not survive and raise the "stake" required to own a ranch of their own. Even though the clearing by the river is established as a place of safety there are reminders of potential dangers:

"A stilted heron laboured up into the air and pounded down river…"

At the end of the novel the heron succeeds in claiming its prey:

"A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked (the water snake) out by the head…its tail waved frantically…"

The only thing that offsets the indifference and the danger of nature is the compassion of George towards Lennie. When Lennie threatens to go off into the hills George says "…Course I want you to stay with me." As much as it's obvious that Lennie would not survive alone the comments also reveal George's need for companionship. It is at this point in the novel that the reader is introduced to the "dream-setting" of the ranch. Here, Steinbeck links the individual aspirations of George and Lennie with the dreams of millions of Americans who work hard only to have others reap the benefits. Lennie's excitement at the prospect of living "…off the fatta the lan'…" drives him and George throughout the novel.

By way of contrast to the dream ranch Steinbeck describes the walls of the bunkhouse in the second section as "…white-washed" and the floors as "…unpainted." Instead of offering companionship and comfort it is presented as impersonal and functional. The ranch as a whole represents man's attempt to impose some order on the landscape. The hierarchy it creates, however, succeeds in dividing rather than uniting people. The boss is "…as sore as hell…" that George and Lennie are late arriving. The prejudice in American society is reflected in the treatment of Crooks. He has only been allowed into the bunkhouse on one occasion and that has led to a fight: "…Smitty took after the nigger…" Envy and distrust prevents people from working together. Candy tells George and Lennie that "A guy on a ranch don't never listen nor don't ast no questions…" When the reader is introduced to Curley's wife she is framed in the doorway of the bunkhouse:

"…the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off. A girl was standing there looking in." She too is an outsider.

Lennie, for all his simplicity, at least recognises how hostile a place the ranch is:

"Le's go, George. Le's get outta here. It's mean here."

Beyond the very artificial divisions within the society of the ranch the author reminds us that nature is still the dominant force. When Slim looks into the bunkhouse he comments that "It's brighter'n than a bitch outside…"

The ranch is a place where characters are forced together by circumstance. Because of this it is a place that generates unhappiness and loneliness. George and Lennie's dream is to "…have our own place where we belonged and not sleep in no bunkhouse." They would have a direct interest in the ranch because they would "…know what come of our plantin." The setting of the ranch prevents

rather than encourages healthy relationships. The absence of women means the men rely on the girls at "Susy's place." This encourages the view that all women are "tarts" or "jail bait."

Candy's interest in the dream is a reflection of how little he is valued on the ranch. Like his dog he is old and becoming increasingly worthless: "They'll can me purty soon…" This is a reflection of a wider society where a man is judged simply on his ability to work and make money. He longs to escape the ranch and he can't quite believe George and Lennie's conversation:

"You know where's a place like that?"

The third section of the novel ends with the fight between Lennie and Curley. At times it is the setting which causes rather than just reflects the behaviour of the characters. The tensions in the bunkhouse revolve around petty jealousies and resentments. Curley is desperate to assert himself and – unlike Slim who seems to generate a more natural authority ("There was a gravity in his manner…") – resorts to violence to achieve it:

"No big son-of-a-bitch is gonna laugh at me…"

The portrayal of Crooks in the next section is a good example of where the ranch setting is used by Steinbeck to represent a microcosm of American society as a whole. His little shed "…leaned off the wall of the barn." He is seen almost as an animal: "…Crooks' bunk was a long box filled with straw…"Again, the author makes use of Lennie's child-like simplicity to highlight the inequalities on the ranch:

"Why ain't you wanted?"

There is some irony in the fact that, unlike the majority of the ranch hands, Crooks was actually born in California and his family owned a ranch. Prejudice and discrimination have denied him his place to belong. He, more than anyone then, recognises the importance of having a place of your own:

"Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'…"

At the end of the section he is reminded of his place on the ranch and in the wider setting of America in the 1930's. Curley's wife – in an attempt to raise her status in the novel - threatens Crooks:

"…I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny…"

Crooks ends this part of the novel as he began it. There is no means of escape from racial prejudice. His place is fixed in the hierarchy of the ranch:

"…he fell slowly to rubbing his back…"

As if to remind the reader again of the dominance of nature and its cycles the fifth section opens with:

"The afternoon sun sliced in through the cracks of the barn walls…"

The writer repeatedly places references to nature alongside the actions of the characters on the ranch. This reminds the reader of man's place in the overall scheme of things – compared to the permanence of wild nature the characters' lives are trivial and transient. Lennie's isolation from the other men on the ranch is clear:

"Only Lennie was in the barn…"

The killing of Curley's wife in the barn gives the author another opportunity to comment on the smallness of man. The pigeon and the shepherd bitch acknowledge the dead body but only in a sensory fashion:

"…she caught the dead scent of Curley's wife, and the hair arose along her spine."

She is just another dead creature but at least she has escaped the tension and hostility of the ranch:

"…the ache for attention (was) all gone from her face…" The reader can see her differently now, freed from the prejudices of the ranch hands. She is no longer "jail bait" but "…very pretty and simple." Once dead she is outside of the hierarchy of the ranch.

Structurally, the novel ends in the same setting as it began. The clearing by the river has been established as a place of safety by George. This might seem strange to the reader but it is the place where Lennie is saved from the brutality of Curley – "I'm gonna shoot the guts outa that big bastard myself…" Curley is associated with the predatorial heron mentioned in the first section of the novel. Although Lennie is shot George prevents him from suffering unnecessarily. In effect he breaks the predatorial cycle and allows Lennie to dream one last time:

"Lennie begged: Le's do it now. Le's get that place now…"

There is a place, therefore, for kindness in the novel. Nature can be harsh and indifferent and human society seems to generate tension and conflict. George's compassion goes some way towards countering the apparent indifference of nature and the pettiness of the characters on the ranch.

In conclusion, Steinbeck makes use of a variety of settings in the novel. Just as George, Lennie and the other characters represent any number of Americans living at the time the novel was written,

the settings act to represent a number of wider social and political concerns. The natural backdrop to the events in the novel shows man's smallness and his dependence on the landscape. The desire to survive and prosper breeds competition, frustration and resentment. At times human nature does win out but the "worlds" of the individual characters are invariably lonely and suggest that America in the 1930's was far from the "promised land" it was envisaged to be

Past Paper Questions (from AQA website – Higher Tier)

- How does Steinbeck prepare you for the idea that the death of Curley's wife is inevitable?

- In *Of Mice and Men* Steinbeck presents some of his characters as being weak in some way. Choose **two** characters you think are weak. Write about these characters and how they are presented.

Section B: Reading Literature Poems

Assessment Objectives

- Respond to poems critically, sensitively, and in detail, using quotations to support your answers
- Comment on/explore how language, structure and forms contribute to meaning of the texts, considering alternative approaches/interpretations - in other words why a poet chose particular words, organised the poem in a certain way and these choices affect the reader.
- Explore similarities and differences between poems (four). These might be similarities and differences in ideas, attitudes and feelings in the poems, the writer's purposes, their appeal to the reader and the skills the poets have used to write them – in other words, what you have looked at in 1 & 2

Some of these resources were found at:
www.universalteacher.org.uk/anthology/simonarmitage.htm © Andrew Moore
www.universalteacher.org.uk/anthology/carolannduffy.htm © Andrew Moore
www.universalteacher.org.uk/anthology/pre1914poetry.htm © Andrew Moore

Some useful notes on Heaney and Clark poems and other Pre-1914 poems can be found at www.universalteacher.org.uk.htm

Havisham

This poem is a monologue spoken by Miss Havisham, a character in Dickens' Great Expectations. Jilted by her scheming fiancé, she continues to wear her wedding dress and sit amid the remains of her wedding breakfast for the rest of her life, while she plots revenge on all men. She hates

her spinster state - of which her unmarried family name constantly reminds her (which may explain the choice of title for the poem).

She begins by telling the reader the cause of her troubles - her phrase "beloved sweetheart bastard" is a contradiction in terms (called an oxymoron). She tells us that she has prayed so hard (with eyes closed and hands pressed together) that her eyes have shrunk hard and her hands have sinews strong enough to strangle with - which fits her murderous wish for revenge. (Readers who know Dickens' novel well might think at this point about Miss Havisham's ward, Estella - her natural mother, Molly, has strangled a rival, and has unusually strong hands.)

Miss Havisham is aware of her own stink - because she does not ever change her clothes nor wash. She stays in bed and screams in denial. At other times she looks and asks herself "who did this" to her? She sometimes dreams almost tenderly or erotically of her lost lover, but when she wakes the hatred and anger return. Thinking of how she "stabbed at the wedding cake" she now wants to work out her revenge on a "male corpse" - presumably that of her lover.

The poem is written in four stanzas which are unrhymed. Many of the lines run on, and the effect is like normal speech. The poet

- uses many adjectives of colour - "green", "puce", "white" and "red" and
- lists parts of the body "eyes", "hands", "tongue", "mouth", "ear" and "face".

Sometimes the meaning is clear, but other lines are more open - and there are hints of violence in "strangle", "bite", "bang" and "stabbed". It is not clear what exactly Miss Havisham would like to do on her "long slow honeymoon", but we can be sure that it is not pleasant. Think about the following questions:

- Why does the poet omit Miss Havisham's title and refer to her by her surname only?
- Why does the poet write "spinster" on its own? What does Miss Havisham think about this word and its relevance to her?
- What is the effect of "Nooooo" and "b-b-breaks"? Why are these words written in this way?
- What is the meaning of the image of "a red balloon bursting"?

Anne Hathaway

Anne Hathaway (1556-1623) was a real woman - famous for being the wife of William Shakespeare. (We do know some things about her - she was nine years older than her husband, but outlived him by seven years. They married in 1582, when Anne was already pregnant, and had three children together. Although Shakespeare spent many years working in London, he made frequent visits to their home in Stratford-upon-Avon.)

In the poem Anne sees her relationship with Shakespeare in terms of his own writing. She uses the sonnet form (though she does not follow all the conventions of rhyme or metre) which

Shakespeare favoured. She suggests that as lovers they were as inventive as Shakespeare was in his dramatic poetry - and their bed might contain "forests, castles, torchlight", "clifftops" and "seas where he would dive for pearls". These images are very obviously erotic, and Ms. Duffy no doubt expects the reader to interpret them in a sexual sense. Where Shakespeare's words were" shooting stars" (blazing in glory across the sky) for her there was the more down-to-earth consequence of "kisses/on these lips".

She also finds in the dramatist's technique of "rhyme...echo...assonance" a metaphor for his physical contact - a "verb" (action) which danced in the centre of her "noun". Though the best bed was reserved for the guests, they only dribbled "prose" (inferior pleasure) while she and her lover, on the second best bed enjoyed the best of "Romance/and drama". The language here has obvious connotations of sexual intercourse - we can guess what his verb and her noun are and what the one is doing in the other, while the guests' "dribbling" suggests a less successful erotic encounter.

The poem relies on double meanings very like those we find in Shakespeare's own work. It gives a voice to someone of whom history has recorded little. The language is strictly too modern to be spoken by the historical Anne Hathaway (especially the word order and the meanings) but the lexicon (vocabulary) is not obviously anachronistic - that is, most of the words here could have been spoken by the real Anne Hathaway, though not quite with these meanings and probably not in this order.

Before You Were Mine

This poem is quite difficult to follow for two reasons. First, it moves very freely between the present and different times in the past, which is frequently referred to in the present tense. Second, because the title suggests romantic love but the poem is about mother and daughter. The poem is written as if spoken by Carol Ann Duffy to her mother, whose name is Marilyn. The poem comes from Mean Time (1993). On first reading, you might think that the "I" in the poem is a lover, but various details in the third and fourth stanzas identify the speaker as the poet. Younger readers (which include most GCSE students) may be puzzled by the way in which, once her child is born, the mother no longer goes out dancing with her friends. In 1950s Glasgow this would not have been remotely possible. Even if she could have afforded it (which is doubtful) a woman with children was expected to stay at home and look after them. Going out would be a rare luxury, no longer a regular occurrence. Motherhood was seen as a serious duty, especially among Roman Catholics.

"I'm ten years away" is confusing (does "away" mean before this or yet to come?) but the second stanza's "I'm not here yet" shows us that the scene at the start of the poem comes before the birth of the poet. Duffy imagines a scene she can only know from her mother's or other people's accounts of it. Marilyn, Carol Ann Duffy's mother, stands laughing with her friends on a Glasgow street corner. Thinking of the wind on the street and her mother's name suggests to Duffy the image of Marilyn Monroe with her skirt blown up by an air vent (a famous scene in the film The

Seven Year Itch). She recalls her mother as young and similarly glamorous, the "polka-dot dress" locating this scene in the past.

Duffy contrasts the young woman's romantic fantasies with the reality of motherhood which will come ten years later: "The thought of me doesn't occur/in...the fizzy, movie tomorrows/ the right walk home could bring..."

In the third stanza Duffy suggests that her birth and her "loud, possessive yell" marked the end of her mother's happiest times. There is some poignancy as she recalls her child's fascination with her mother's "high-heeled red shoes", putting her hands in them. The shoes are "relics" because they are no longer worn for going out. The "ghost" suggests that her mother is now dead, but may just indicate that the younger Marilyn is only seen in the imagination, as she "clatters...over George Square". The verb here tells us that she is wearing her high-heeled shoes. The image recalls her mother's courting days. Duffy addresses her as if she is her mother's parent, asking whose are the love bites on her neck, and calling her "sweetheart". The question and the endearment suggest a parent speaking to a child - a reversal of what we might expect. "I see you, clear as scent" deliberately mixes the senses (the technical name for this is synaesthesia), to show how a familiar smell can trigger a most vivid recollection.

In the last stanza Duffy recalls another touching memory - the mother who no longer dances teaching the dance steps to her child, on their "way home from Mass" - as if having fun after fulfilling her religious duties with her daughter. The dance (the Cha cha cha!) places this in the past: it seems glamorous again now but would have been deeply unfashionable when the poet was in her teens. "Stamping stars" suggests a contrast between the child's or her mother's ("sensible") walking shoes, with hobnails that strike sparks and the delicate but impractical red high heels. And why is it the "wrong pavement"? Presumably the wrong one for her mother to dance on - she should be "winking in Portobello" or in the centre of Glasgow, where she would go to dance as a young woman. Or perhaps the "right" pavement was not in Scotland at all but some even more glamorous location, Hollywood perhaps, to which the mother aspired.

This is an unusual and very generous poem. Carol Ann Duffy recognizes the sacrifice her mother made in bringing her up, and celebrates her brief period of glamour and hope and possibility. It also touches on the universal theme of the brevity (shortness) of happiness. (This is sometimes expressed by the Latin phrase carpe diem - "seize the day"). The form of the poem is conventional: blank verse (unrhymed pentameters) stanzas, all of five lines. A few lines run on, but most end with a pause at a punctuation mark. Note the frequent switches from past to present both in chronology and in the tenses of verbs - the confusion here seems to be intended, as if for the poet past and present are equally real and vivid. The language is very tender: the poet addresses her mother like a lover or her own child: "Marilyn...sweetheart...before you were mine" (repeated) and "I wanted the bold girl". What is most striking is what is missing: there is no direct reference to Marilyn as the poet's mother.

It is an account of a real mother, doing her best in tough circumstances and making sacrifices for her daughter. There are trust and generosity here, so that the poem is light years away from the suspicious and unhealthy atmosphere of We Remember Your Childhood Well.

Education for Leisure

This powerful poem explores the mind of a disturbed person, who is planning murder. We do not know if the speaker is male or female, though this barely seems to matter. What we do know is that he (or she) has a powerful sense of his own importance, and a greater sense of grievance that no one else notices him. The poem contrasts the speaker's deluded belief in his own abilities with the real genius that is creative. We do not know if the poem is based on any real person, though it has echoes of the true story of the young American woman who shot dead several of her classmates, and when asked about her reasons answered, "I don't like Mondays" (an episode that inspired the Boomtown Rats' rock song with this title). There may be an allusion to this in the first stanza, where the would-be killer says the day is "ordinary" and "a sort of grey with boredom stirring..."

The speaker informs us that he is going to kill "something. Anything" - who or what seems irrelevant, so long as the gesture is dramatic enough and gains the world's attention, because the speaker wishes not to be "ignored" any longer, and would like to "play God".

As he kills a fly casually, he recalls doing "that at school. Shakespeare". What he recalls, vaguely, is Gloucester's speech in Act 4, Scene 1 of Shakespeare's tragedy, King Lear. Gloucester, blinded by his enemies, is thinking of his son (who at this moment stands before him, pretending to be a madman and beggar). He says: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods/They kill us for their sport..." Gloucester takes the killing of flies as a metaphor for casual suffering that falls on men. The speaker here does it literally, but he also thinks of killing people literally. Gloucester's speech is a protest against cruelty, not a commendation of it - and the speaker in the poem seems to have missed the point of King Lear, which commends humanity and rebukes cruelty and violence. He thinks Shakespeare's play is not in the language he speaks, and notes that the fly is also now "in another language" - at least no longer in the world of the living. His comment on Shakespeare is true but not in the way he intends - of course King Lear is written in English, but its values are wholly alien to him. He commits the common error of stupid people in supposing that an author approves of the things his characters do. In reading the poem, we should not fall into the same error - Carol Ann Duffy does not want us to admire this speaker.

Mention of Shakespeare prompts the boast that he is a "genius" who could "be anything at all, with half the chance". But we see that he has no idea of real creativity. As soon as he claims that he can "change the world" he limits this to "something's world". He kills the goldfish and notes that the budgie is frightened (how does a budgerigar panic?) while the cat, supposedly as a recognition of his "genius" has "hidden itself". Almost as an aside the speaker tells us that he is unemployed, and goes into town "for signing on".

Finally, as there "is nothing left to kill", he phones a radio talk show to assert his genius - but is cut off by the presenter. So he goes out with a bread knife. The poem has been presented as a first-person monologue throughout, but ends by addressing the reader as if he or she were the first human victim - "I touch your arm".

The poem's title seems ironic - we see that the speaker's education has done him little good. It has not enabled him to find work, nor to cope with the boredom of enforced "leisure". But this may not be the fault of the school and teachers - if the response to King Lear is anything to go by (remembering a metaphor to justify the violence against which it was meant to be a protest).

The poem is in five stanzas, each of four lines (quatrains). They are unrhymed and the metre is not regular, though many lines are in the form known as Alexandrine (six iambic feet). The lines are mostly end stopped, and every stanza concludes with a full stop.

The egotism of the speaker appears in the repeated use of "I" - can you count how many times "I", "me" and "my" appear?

Apart from the reference to King Lear, there is an even more sinister allusion that follows the flushing of the goldfish "down the bog". The speaker tells us: "I see that it is good" - an obvious echo of the creation story in Genesis. After each day's work of creation, we read that: "God saw that it was good". We know that the sick character here wishes to "play God", but he can only destroy where God and Shakespeare create.

The poem shows us the prelude to violence, but does not describe any violence against a real human being - the ending hints at this. Perhaps what happens next depends on the choice of victim, as well as things we do not know - whether the speaker has the strength and speed to harm the victim, or even whether he or she has the resolution to kill. But perhaps this person does not need much resolution, since he or she seems not to care about others' feelings or even to be capable of connecting with other people.

And this may make us think about what else the poem does not tell us:

The poem may seem mildly humorous on a first reading - if you study it in school, then some people may laugh when reading the poem or listening to a reading. The cat's hiding, the budgie's panicking and the shameless account of flushing the goldfish "down the bog" may make us smirk. But it is not a poem that still seems funny after repeated readings. It can be seen as a cautionary tale about what happens to those who have nothing to do, and tire of waiting for other people to give them a living or some kind of recognition, that they have not earned.

As an explanation of how criminal violence happens, the poem is clear enough and quite convincing. Carol Ann Duffy portrays a character we may recognize from fiction and from real-life reports. It has much in common with Stealing, though the criminal there, while very unsympathetic still seems vaguely in touch with other people. The speaker here lacks the criminal experience and low cunning of the thief in Stealing. He is a weaker character by far, but less predictable.

"Mother, any distance greater than a single span"

Book of Matches (1993) is a collection of poems without titles. Each poem is meant to be read in the time it takes a match to burn down - about twenty seconds, unless you want to burn your fingers. There is a pun in the title: we call a packet from which we tear out the matches a book, but this is also a book in the normal sense, with words for us to read.

The speaker in the poem (who may be the poet himself) is measuring up a house - it appears that he is moving in, and is measuring for curtains and carpets. His mother has "come to help" him as he needs "a second pair of hands" to measure distances greater than the span of his two arms. ("Span" as a measurement traditionally refers to a handspan, from thumb to little finger when the hand is splayed.)

While his mother stays put, he reels out a tape measure, calling figures for her to record. Eventually he reaches the limit of the tape - as he looks at an open hatch, opening on an "endless sky". He imagines himself passing through this - "to fall or fly".

The poem explores the emotional connection of mother and child (we may assume it is a son, but if the poem is not autobiographical, there is no real reason why the speaker should not be a daughter). The tape measure becomes a metaphor for this. Now the child is ready to let go, but is unsure whether he can succeed on his own.

The reeling out of the tape is like the passing of the years - and the poet compares it to other kinds of line. Perhaps his mother is an anchor and he is a kite - this may bring security but may also limit his freedom to fly. Yet another image of attachment comes in the suggestion that the poet is space-walking - the phrase is a pun, as he is also walking through the "empty" space of the bedroom.

The "last one hundredth of an inch" marks the limit of the tape measure - beyond this, the speaker has to let go (or break the tape). The conclusion of the poem is ambiguous, but reflects a real experience most of us undergo, not knowing whether independence is a chance for us to thrive or to fail. The mother's fingertips "still pinch" - she has come to help the child measure up, but now may be reluctant at the last to let go.

The poem has an irregular rhyme scheme - including occasional internal rhyme. The speaker suggests the sense of adventure in leaving home with images of vast space "acres" and "prairies", and "reporting...back to base". The mother is seen as a fixed point in an uncertain world, but she is not stopping her child from moving out.

Homecoming

This poem is a puzzle for the reader - there are some things the poet has not told us, and without them, our reading of the poem relies on guesswork. This seems deliberate, as the first thing the poem invites us to do is to look at two things separately, then put them together. The poem is

written mostly in the second person, addressed to "you". This may at first seem to be the general reader, but later in the poem, Armitage writes "I" and "we" - and it seems that here he speaks to a particular individual. The context and other clues suggest this is a lover or friend (someone he meets "sixteen years" after the incident he describes in the second section of the poem). Perhaps he wants the reader not so see this as something that happened once to another person, but as something all of us can, and maybe should, do.

The first stanza - after the opening line - is quite easy to follow. The poet invites us think of a trust game. (Teachers and students of drama may know this game. Readers of the poem will perhaps have played it, or something like it.) "Those in front" spread their arms wide, and "free fall" backwards, while those behind catch them and "take their weight". The point of the game is for those in front, to overcome the instinct to bend their legs and fall safely. The "right" way to fall is only safe because there is someone to catch us.

The second stanza is far more puzzling, but will be familiar to anyone who knows school cloakrooms. A yellow cotton jacket has come off its hook. On the "cloakroom floor" it is trampled on - "scuffed and blackened underfoot." The sequel to this is that "back home", a mother (presumably the mother of the child whose jacket this is) "puts two and two together" and gets the wrong answer ("makes a...fist of it" in the dialect phrase). We do not know what the right answer would be. One possible reading is that the mother blames the child for being careless and not checking that the jacket was hung on its hook. What follows is accusation, tempers flaring and the child's being sent to bed:

"...Temper, temper. Questions In the house. You seeing red. Blue murder. Bed"

There is a further sequel - the child sneaks out of the house at midnight. She does not go far ("no further than the call-box at the corner of the street"). We do not know whom she rings, or what becomes of it. We may suppose that she goes back home - but in some way her relationship with her parents is damaged.

At this point the poem becomes confusing - the poet introduces a first-person speaker, who is "waiting by the phone" for this call. But his phone does not ring - "because it's sixteen years or so before we'll meet". (So we may suppose that the two people here are very close - lovers or friends - and that she has told him about this family row, many years later. In fact the poet does not even indicate the sex of either character, so the incident here could have happened to a boy or girl, and the "I" of the poem could be male or female. The "cotton jacket" may be a clue to its owner, however.

What follows may be what happened, but seems more like what should have happened (but didn't) or what should happen now. The poet uses an imperative verb (giving an instruction or command) and tells the "you" character to go back home - "Retrace that walk towards the garden gate."

What happens next seems to be an idealized act of reconciliation - the embrace of welcome is likened to putting on a garment, which becomes the "same canary-yellow cotton jacket". And, magically, it still fits - though years have passed. The point of the title becomes clear now. The "you" character can only come home (emotionally and psychologically) when the source of her quarrel has been removed. Putting the jacket back on her is a way of saying that everything is all right. We can be fairly sure that this is not literally the same jacket, because the poet does not know what it is like in detail - the "you" character is to say whether the fingers of the hands holding her are to make a "clasp", a "zip" or a "buckle".

We do not know whether the real father ever did make this reconciliation, or whether it is a scene that Armitage imagines. But at the least, he suggests, the father wanted (or should have wanted) to do this. What remains unclear to the reader is whether the imagined reconciliation here ever took place for the characters in the poem. If we see the poem as an account of something more universal - how children and parents fall out over relatively unimportant things, that become serious obstacles, then the biographical details are less important. The poet is telling us, to make our peace while we can.

The final stanza contains a beautiful image of someone - the "father figure" - embracing his child, while clothing her in an imagined garment. (It is not clear whether the "ribs" and "arms" are those of the person doing the holding or the person being held - but the former seems to make better sense. What do you think? It is also not quite clear whether the person "making" the jacket is facing the "you" character or behind her - which would be more like what happens in the trust game.) The "father figure" may not be the real father, but the "I" of the poem, restoring trust that another has lost - in which case, the "homecoming" may be to a new home, rather than the old one where the trust was lost. Stepping "backwards" suggests not only the spatial direction of the movement, but also a going back in time, to put right an old wrong. And "it still fits" suggests that the love of the father (or the "father figure") is something out of which the child never grows.

This is a very tender poem - it seems that the poet writes from the heart and his own experience, and that the "you" is someone he knows and loves. (But it is quite possible that he writes of an imagined experience - poetry does not need to be literally true to tell the truth about human nature.) It is also a fair poem - the "I" character does not take sides, but sees how parents, even the "model of a model", let down their children, yet this does not mean that they love them the less.

The poet treads delicately here - his task is to set right a wrong. But he cannot be too direct about it, as the "you" figure may resist any attempt at reconciliation. On the other hand, he does in some ways lead the reader through the poem.

The poem has a regular metre (the iambic pentameter), while the sections vary in length. There are occasional rhymes but they are not very intrusive. The effect of this is to give the poem a serious tone. There is some drama in the second section, where the mother's anger and the child's defiance flare up - shown in the short sentences, and the infantile language of "Temper, temper"

and parents' command: “Bed.” The contrast of “seeing red” and “blue murder” seems almost violent (we have already had the “yellow” of the jacket, and its being “blackened”).

The poem, on the page, is broken into four sections. But its structure comes more from its argument and from indications of time. The introduction of the “I” character, waiting by a phone that doesn't ring, is a dividing point between then and now, between the damage done and the remedy, or between what did happen (once) and what should happen (now and for the future).

As so often, we find Armitage writing in lists - here he lists features of a garment and corresponding body parts. There are adjectives of colour, but mostly the vocabulary is simple and understated. Until the end of the poem most of the images to be taken literally - like the “silhouette” of the father figure. In the final stanza this changes, though we do not find conventional poetic metaphor here, either. Instead we can envisage someone acting out a demonstration - pointing to ribs and saying they are “pleats or seams”. In fact, we cannot properly understand this stanza unless we visualize the physical actions and gestures.

Kid

This is a comical monologue, spoken by Robin the Boy Wonder, sidekick to Batman, the Caped Crusader of Gotham city, in the comic strip, TV series and various feature films.

The form of the poem matches its humour - every line ends with the unstressed “-er” syllable, leading naturally in the final line to “the real boy wonder”. (Where the lines rhyme, as most of them do, either with half or full rhyme, it is called a double or feminine rhyme.) As the similar line endings accumulate, the reader wonders how the poet will keep it up. On the page, we can see this, but the poem is ideal for spoken performance, as the listener tries to guess what is coming next. Perhaps, when we finally hear “boy wonder”, we will not be totally surprised, since mention of “Batman” may have put it into our heads. The rhythm (basically trochaic with occasional dactyls - this is the metre used famously by H.W. Longfellow, in his American epic *Hiawatha*) accentuates the final word. It places a heavy stress on the last-but-one syllable: “order”, “wander”, “yonder” and so on, so we cannot miss the effect.

Armitage imagines that Batman has separated from Robin, who has succeeded without him, and now gives away some of the hero's secrets - “scotched” the “rumour”, “blown the cover” and “let the cat out”. Having spent his earlier years as Batman's “shadow”, Robin has succeeded on his own, while Batman is bored and barely able to fend for himself (no food in his outsize “larder”).

As a poem that sends up Batman, this is a light-hearted and amusing piece. Perhaps Armitage is making a slightly more serious comment about heroes and icons generally - that they do not live up to their reputations, while they depend on others for their continued success. Among humorous features of the poem we find:

- Scandal or bad taste - the report of Batman's adventure with a married woman

- Punning - for example “caper” (which suggests Batman's and Robin's capes, and Batman's nickname of the Caped Crusader) or the word association of “robin-redbreast-nest-egg”
- Parody - using Batman's favourite adjective “holy” in extravagant noun phrases
- Incongruity - Robin's using British slang (“motor” for the Batmobile), naval jargon (“wander leeward”) and referring to “jeans” and a “crew-neck jumper”
- Self-ridicule - mocking the superhero outfit, the “off-the-shoulder/Sherwood-Forest-green and scarlet number”
- Bathos - Batman's near-empty larder - showing how he used to rely on Robin to shop for food (not something mentioned in the original stories)

In thinking about this poem, you might like to consider

- whether it is about Batman specifically or all heroes (and heroines)
- what other icons might deserve this kind of ridicule

Hitcher

This poem comes from Book of Matches but is a longer poem than the “matches” - and has its own title. It is a monologue of sorts, in which a man confesses to murder. We notice that he is at once like, and yet unlike, his victim. Briefly, the speaker in the poem has been taking time off work - feigning illness and not answering his phone. Being threatened with the sack (losing his job), he goes in to work again. He gets a lift to his hired car (a short distance we suppose). As he drives out of Leeds he picks up a hitchhiker who is travelling light and has no set destination. Some little way later (coming out of Harrogate) he attacks his passenger, and throws him out of the still-moving car. The last he sees of the hiker, he is “bouncing off the kerb, then disappearing down the verge” - we do not know if he is dead or just badly injured. The driver does not care.

The two men have some things in common - what are they?

- Both hitch lifts, and
- They are more or less of the same age.

Can you think of anything else? On the other hand, they differ in lots of ways:

- One hitches to a specific place for a specific reason; the other is following the sun.
- One is going to work; the other appears not to work.
- One navigates by town and city names; the other by points of the compass.
- One is a victim of his work; the other has a carefree attitude.
- One learns about weather from the forecast; the other loves sun and wind.

The contrast also appears in the way the men speak. The driver repeats the language of the weather forecast “moderate to fair” and the driverspeak of dropping “into third” while the hitcher uses hippie clichés about the good earth as his bed, about the truth, in the words of Bob Dylan's song “blowin' in the wind” and even a metaphor of the breeze running “its fingers/through his

hair". The driver is quite materialistic - he refers to the ansaphone, the Vauxhall Astra, the krooklok and the mirror.

We may judge the driver not only by his violent attack but also by his boss's threat - this suggests that he is not really ill, but is a malingerer. So "tired" and "under the weather" are not convincing - though "weather" here has an echo in the "outlook for the day" in the final stanza. And the driver is a coward - his argument is with his boss or his own way of life. But he attacks the hitcher, whose carefree values seem almost to mock him.

The poem is arranged in five stanzas, each of five lines - and most end with a full or half rhyme. But the arrangement is more for the eye than the ear - the lines are not all end-stopped and the poem, read aloud, sounds as expansive as natural speech.

- What is the effect in the poem of
  - proper nouns - places (Leeds and Harrogate) and brand names (ansaphone, Vauxhall Astra, krooklok) and of quoting from the radio (the weather forecast)?

Ben Jonson: On my first Sonne

About the poet

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was an actor, playwright and a poet. He wrote his plays around the same time as Shakespeare, whom he outlived. (According to an eccentric and almost certainly false theory, someone else wrote Shakespeare's plays - and Jonson is the one of the chief suspects, along with Francis Bacon.) In his own time, Jonson was more highly regarded than Shakespeare. In 1598 he was convicted of murdering a fellow actor, Gabriel Spencer, but escaped the hangman by claiming benefit of clergy (he proved he was in holy orders, and so not liable to trial in the ordinary courts). His work is closer in style to the classical dramatists of the ancient world. He published two collections of poems and translations.

About the poem

The poem records and laments (expresses sorrow for) the death of the poet's first son. We call such poems elegies or describe them as elegiac. Jonson contrasts his feelings of sorrow with what he thinks he ought to feel - happiness that his son is in a better place.

The death of a child still has great power to move us - Seamus Heaney records a similar experience in Mid-Term Break. It would have been a far more common event in 17th century England, where childhood illnesses were often fatal. The modern reader should also be aware of Jonson's Christian faith - he has no doubt that his son is really in a "state" we should envy, in God's keeping. Sometimes poets write in the first person (writing "I") but take on the identity of an imagined speaker (as Yeats does in <u>The Song of the Old Mother</u> and Browning does in <u>My Last Duchess</u>). Here we can be sure that Jonson is speaking for and as himself.

The poem in detail

Jonson writes as if talking to his son - and as if he assumes that the boy can hear or read his words. He calls him the child of his "right hand" both to suggest the boy's great worth and also the fact that he would have been the writer's heir (the image comes from the Bible - it reflects ancient cultures and the way Jesus is shown as sitting at God's right hand).

The poet sees the boy's death as caused by his (the father's, not the boy's) sin - in loving the child too much - an idea that returns at the end of the poem. He sees the boy's life also in terms of a loan, which he has had to repay, after seven years, on the day set for this ("the just day"). This extended metaphor expresses the idea that all people really belong to God and are permitted to spend time in this world.

Jonson looks at the contradiction (or paradox) that we "lament" (cry over) something we should really envy - escaping the hardships of life and the misery of ageing. The writer suggests that "his best piece of poetry" (the best thing he has ever made, that is) is his son. Remembering his sin (of loving too much) he now expresses the hope or wish that from now on, whatever he loves, he will not love it "too much".

The poet's method

The poem uses the line that Shakespeare, Jonson and others rely on for most of the dialogue in their plays (the technical name is the iambic pentameter - as it has five [Latin penta] poetic "feet", each of which has two syllables, of which the second [usually] is stressed). Jonson arranges the lines in rhyming pairs, which we call couplets.

The poem is written in the form of an address to the dead child - but really shows us Jonson's own meditations. The short lyric contains one striking metaphor - that of the boy's being "lent" for "seven years", and paid back "on the just day". (When the poet develops an image in this way, we may call it an extended metaphor.)

The last two lines are memorable - a quite complex idea is packed neatly into two rhyming lines, an effect we call an epigram. (The couplet is at the same time both epigram and epitaph!)

William Shakespeare: Sonnet 130 -

About the poet

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is widely regarded as among the greatest of all writers - and certainly the most celebrated figure in English literature. He was brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, where, in 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, by whom he had three children. Shortly after this, he left for London, where he joined a theatre company, as an actor and playwright. Shakespeare wrote well over thirty plays - the number is sometimes disputed, and he had collaborators for some of his work - which include histories, tragedies, comedies and pastoral

romances. Shakespeare also wrote poetry in narrative and lyric forms. His Sonnets appeared in print in 1609 but much of the work was completed in the 1590s. Shakespeare was a shareholder in the theatre company, and owned property in London. He became wealthy, and retired to Stratford in 1613.

About the poem

This is one of the 154 Sonnets that Shakespeare published in 1609. The first 126 sonnets present a young man, whom the writer evidently admires, who may well be the person named in a dedication at the start of the collection as "Mr. W.H.". Sonnets 127 to 152 concern a woman known to scholars as the Dark Lady. The last two sonnets have more conventional themes. Sonnet 130 praises the Dark Lady unconventionally by rejecting the usual exaggerations of love poetry (which Shakespeare calls "false compare") in favour of a more truthful and modest description.

The poem in detail

Shakespeare opens with a bold statement that the eyes of his beloved lady are not like the sun (where another poet might say they are as bright as, or brighter than, the sun) - and continues in this way to understate her attractions or present them honestly. Her lips are red, but not as much as coral. Her skin is not white as snow but brown and her hair black. Shakespeare describes the contrast of red and white on a rose that is "damasked" (the term comes from Damascus, in Syria, which was known for decorative arts). But, he says, he has not seen this damask rose effect in his mistress's cheeks. Her breath, he says, is not as delightful as perfume (a line that may cause us to think about the lack of oral hygiene in Elizabethan England. "Reeks" does not have the modern suggestion of an unpleasant smell, but means more or less to give off an odour - which may or may not be pleasant. We might use the verb "smells" nowadays, but until quite recent times, this verb referred only to what we do with our noses). And her voice is less "pleasing" in its sound than music. Although he has never seen a goddess moving, Shakespeare suggests that goddesses do not need to tread on the ground - whereas he knows that his beloved does "tread on the ground", when she moves.

Having acknowledged all of her imperfections or limitations, the poet swears that his beloved is, nonetheless, as special as any woman "belied" (misrepresented) by "false compare" (untrue or lying comparisons).

The poet's method

This poem is a sonnet of the kind we call Shakespearean - it has a twelve line section (organized as three quatrains - groups of four lines - with an ABAB rhyme), leading to a concluding rhymed couplet. The first twelve lines make out the case for the ordinariness of the beloved. The concluding couplet changes the way we read this, however, by claiming that the beloved is just as special as any other woman who is the subject of more extravagant descriptions - because these are false.

The lines almost suggest alternative versions in which the "false compare" might appear - for example, the first line could easily be changed to "My mistress' eyes are very like the sun" or "brighter than the sun", while the second line could begin "coral is no more red..."

Shakespeare names many of the things, especially those from the natural world, that might appear in a conventional love poem - the sun, coral, snow, roses, perfume, music and a goddess. Perhaps the most important image is the familiar one in the eleventh and twelfth lines - the poet has not seen a goddess (he does not claim his mistress is a goddess, as some might do) but knows that his beloved is down to earth or has her feet on the ground. To the reader who wants to see women as dainty and idealized creatures, this may seem shocking; but to the reader who is attracted by real and tangible flesh and blood, the image will be more persuasive.

Robert Browning: My Last Duchess

About the poet

Robert Browning (1812-89) was, with Alfred Lord Tennyson, one of the two most celebrated of Victorian poets. His father was a bank clerk, and Browning educated himself by reading in the family library. He published many verse dramas and dramatic monologues (poems, like My Last Duchess, in which a single character speaks to the reader), notably the collections Men and Women (1855) and Dramatis Personae (1864). His greatest success came in 1868 with The Ring and the Book - a verse narrative in twelve books, spoken by a range of different characters. In her lifetime his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61) was more famous. She was a semi-invalid, following an accident in her teens. In 1846 she and Robert ran away from her father (who tried to control her) and eloped to Italy.

About the poem

The date in the AQA Anthology is wrong. This poem was published in Dramatic Lyrics in 1842. (the same year as Tennyson's Ulysses). The poem reflects Browning's interest in Italian politics of the late Middle Ages (the time known as the Renaissance). The poem appears as one half of a conversation. The speaker is the unnamed Duke of Ferrara, a city-state in Lombardy (now the north of Italy - but Italy as a unified state was created only in the 19th century - long after Browning wrote this poem; in the Middle Ages each city, with the surrounding country, was an independent realm with its own ruler). The listener is an envoy (a kind of diplomat and messenger). His master, a count, has sent him to negotiate the dowry for the marriage of his (the count's) daughter to the duke, whose "last duchess" is the subject of his speech - and of the poem. While having her portrait painted, the duchess revealed innocent qualities that irritated the duke so far, that he chose to have her killed. His power is absolute, and she is easily replaced. But the portrait, by a master painter, is of far more value to the duke, and he is pleased to show this off to his distinguished visitor. The critic Isobel Armstrong sums up the poem like this:

"The mad duke...cannot love without so possessing and destroying the identity of his wife that he literally kills her and lives with her dead substitute, a work of art."

Her reading may be right - but are we sure the duke is mad? Perhaps he is sane but very cruel and ruthless. The duke names two artists - both imaginary. They are the painter Frà (Brother) Pandolf and the sculptor Claus of Innsbruck. The poem may draw on a literary tradition of despotic Italians (as we find in John Webster's play, The Duchess of Malfi or John Keats' poem, Isabella). But it is not so improbable - Dante, in the Inferno (Hell) recalls various true stories about Italian nobles which match or surpass (outdo) this for cruelty.

The poem in detail

Browning opens with the Duke's words to his guest. He explains why he has named the painter, and that the portrait is kept behind a curtain which he alone is permitted to draw back. And when he does this, he notes how the viewer is curious but perhaps frightened to ask about the thing that puzzles him. We see that this visitor is not the first to "ask" in this way.

So what is it that the viewer sees? It is a "spot of joy" in the cheek of the duchess. The duke tries to imagine what the painter said that would cause this slight reaction. The duke does not object to the artist's showing such courtesy. But he thinks his wife should be more dignified - and not so easily "impressed". Specifically he faults her for finding equal pleasure in four things - as if they are not at all of equal value.

These are:

- his "favour at her breast" - either a reference to their love-making or merely to the duke's approval of her appearance
- the sun setting
- a gift of fruit from an unnamed courtier
- the white mule she rode

The duke accepts that it was good for her to show gratitude, but bad that she ranked "anybody's gift" with his giving her his family name (nine hundred years old).

The duke considers the possibility of explaining to her why she was wrong. He notes that he lacks the "skill in speech" to make his will "quite clear to such an one". But anyway, he would not try even if he had the skill, because this would be a loss of dignity - "some stooping". And he chooses "never to stoop". Instead he let her carry on for a while - "this grew" - then "gave commands". We are not told what the commands were but can work them out from the result. This appears in three things:

- the statement that all smiles stopped - this may at first seem ambiguous, and we think it is because she had reason to be serious or unhappy. Then we realize that the duke means that all smiles and everything else stopped for the duchess
- the repeated statement that the duchess, in the painting "stands/As if alive" - but she isn't

- the sequel - the duke needs or wants a wife, and is arranging his next marriage. He praises the Count's known generosity while stressing that it is the wife, rather than the dowry, that he really wants.

The poem's ending recalls its beginning - as the duke points out another treasure. A bronze sculpture of Neptune (the Roman god of the sea, called Poseidon by the Greeks) taming a sea-horse. This is like the start of the poem. But it is also quite unlike it - Frà Pandolf's masterpiece is a portrait of a real person, to whom the duke was married - yet she is never named, only identified by her relation to the duke. Claus's bronze is of a fantastic, remote and mythical subject. Yet to the duke they may seem of equal value, since he mentions them in the same breath.

The poet's method

This is an amazingly skilful poem - there is one speaker, yet we learn about four characters:

- the duke
- the duchess
- the visitor (the count's envoy)
- the painter, Frà Pandolf

One of the reasons why Browning likes the monologue so much, is that he is able to exploit the gap between what the speaker (within the poem) wants us to know, and what the poet (standing outside the poem) allows us to read between the lines. What things do we (as readers) learn here, that the duke does not mean to tell his visitor?

In one way the piece is very unlike most lyric poetry - there are no notable metaphors or similes. All the images are of things that are literally present, or that the duke recalls from his memory of the past. Check this for yourself.

The poem is very conventional in form - it uses the line that Shakespeare relies on for most of the dialogue in his plays (the technical name is the iambic pentameter - as it has five [Latin penta] poetic "feet", each of which has two syllables, of which the second [usually] is stressed). In this poem Browning arranges the lines in rhyming pairs, which we call "couplets". Like Shakespeare (and later writers such as Coleridge and Wordsworth), Browning makes the lines run on - or if you prefer he does not end stop them. The technical name for this is enjambement ("using the legs" in French). What does this mean, and why should Browning do it?

- What it means mainly is that most punctuation marks appear within the lines (not at the end) and most lines end without a punctuation mark.
- What it also means is that, when you read the poem (aloud or in your head) you should not stop at the end of a line, but should pause or stop at any punctuation mark.
- Browning does it because rhyming couplets that stopped at the end of each line would seem mechanical and not at all like real speech - and he wants the poem to sound natural. Of

course, this is only a matter of feeling - if we look closely we will realize that even the cleverest speakers would not really be able to speak fluently in couplets.

Ambiguity and irony

This poem is one in which the relationship between appearance and reality is important - if you prefer, between what things seem and what they really are.

- On the surface it is an account of a polite negotiation between two noblemen, enlivened by the host's decision to show his privileged guest a masterpiece by a great portrait painter (something few visitors would be allowed to see: notice that the portrait is not in a public area but upstairs - at the end of the poem the duke speaks of going "down"), and to recount something of its subject, his previous wife.
- Beneath the surface is a terrible story of ruthless and despotic power - of the duke's disapproval of the natural and innocent behaviour of his naïve wife, who does not know the value of his great name. We are less sure about the artist - does Frà Pandolf know, or care about, these things? And equally we are unsure how the listener, the duke's honoured guest, feels about what he hears.

Sometimes we find that the lines have more to say than at first appears - we call this ellipsis, when something is missed out. Look at the following examples from the poem, and say what you think they mean in full - if you like, fill in any blanks that Browning has left for the reader:

- "Her looks went everywhere"
- "I choose/Never to stoop"
- "This grew"
- "I gave commands"
- "All smiles stopped together"

Pronouns, possessives and other forms of address

The only named characters in the poem are the two artists. The duchess and count are known only by their titles while the rest of the time, like the duke and his guest, they are identified by pronouns - look for the first person pronouns (I and me) for the duke, the second person (you) for the envoy, and the third-person (she and her) for the duchess. We also find the possessive "my" occurring quite frequently.

Browning finds other ways to avoiding using names - to show the duchess's lack of dignity he calls her "such an one", while his bride-to-be, mentioned well after her father, the count, is "his fair daughter's self". The envoy is "sir" repeatedly and (polite) "you", not intimate or familiar "thou" and "thee". This is courteous but marks the listener as the duke's social inferior - to a more eminent man or an equal he would use some such form as "your grace", "your highness" or "my lord".

Robert Browning: The Laboratory

About the poem

This piece, like My Last Duchess, comes from the 1842 collection, Dramatic Lyrics. It has a similar subject - a person who kills (or is about to kill) her rival, in the presence of her lover - who appears to be connected to the speaker in some way - perhaps her husband or an ex-lover who has spurned her for the rival who is soon to die. It is in the form of a monologue, and once more the silent listener is important, too. He is an expert in poisons (like the apothecary in Romeo and Juliet) who sells his services to a wealthy woman. The subtitle (ANCIEN RÉGIME) refers to an older form of rule or government - suggesting that the speaker comes from a past age. We do not know for certain that the speaker is female - but this is suggested by the things, listed in the fifth stanza, in which she will carry her poison ("...an earring, a casket/A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket..."), and by her offering a kiss to the poisoner, when he has finished his work. The poem recalls the saying that "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned". Browning explores the jealousy and vengefulness of someone disappointed in love.

The poem in detail

The poem opens with the speaker's putting on a mask, so she can see, with safety, the old man at work. She is curious, wondering which is "the poison" - either which is the best one for the job, or which is the one the old man has chosen. She speaks of "her" - we assume that this is a rival, but it is not yet clear. The second stanza suggests this more strongly, as we learn that "he" (an unspecified man) "is with her" and that "they know that I [the speaker] know", where they are and what they are doing. They think she is miserable because of their scorn and has gone to pray in a church - whereas she is angry and vengeful. The jealous speaker finds more pleasure, she says, in watching the old poisoner at work, than in being at the royal court where men wait on her. And she expresses her curiosity by asking about the poisonous substances - like the gum in the "mortar" (the pot in which the poisoner will grind things to powder, using a pestle). She asks about the small glass container (phial) and notes the beautiful colour of the deadly liquid in it.

The speaker has begun with a specific purpose - of poisoning one person - but now she indulges in a fantasy of carrying many different poisons, and giving them out liberally - perhaps at the court, where she imagines killing two women (named as Pauline and Elise). We assume that neither of these is her real intended victim, since this woman is never named elsewhere but always identified by the pronouns "she" and "her". (Maybe the man whose attentions now fall on the rival has also favoured Pauline and Elise at some time.)

When the poison is ready, the speaker seems disappointed

- first, that it is not as bright as the blue liquid in the phial, and
- second, that the dose is too little for such a powerful character, who ensnares men and has a "magnificent" control over the sex.

The speaker reveals that she has tried to face up to her rival conventionally, but without effect. And now she thinks, too, that she wants her victim to suffer and the lover to "remember her dying face". She wants also to remove the mask, once there is no danger to her, so that she can see closely the "delicate droplet" the poisoner has prepared. The poem ends with an invitation to the old poisoner to kiss the jealous client - though with a sudden afterthought, that first she should brush off the dust that has settled on her, in case this inadvertently kills her.

As with My Last Duchess, we form a vivid sense of the speaker, but it is not always clear and we have less clear ideas about anyone else here. We see something of the old man at work, and sense his greed for gain, as he helps himself to the client's jewels and gold. We also the speaker's view of "her" - the rival, a scornful and manipulative woman, who seems not to care for, or worry about, whatever the rejected "minion" might do to retaliate. And there are even fewer details about "him" - the man who prefers the rival. But we do not trust that these people are exactly as the speaker presents them.

She shows something of herself - she appears to be wealthy and mixes in the highest society. But she is very different from the Duke of Ferrara, who merely speaks a word, and silences his wife forever. This character is personally weak - unable to use her position or forceful speech to change her situation. She does not use open enmity - yet resorts to stealth. She cannot keep a man's love, but almost flirts with the old man who mixes the poison - she offers him a kiss, as if she were voluptuous and desirable, but we know that she cannot compete with her rival.

When she calls herself "little" and a "minion", she perhaps tries to show what others think of her.

The poet's method

The poem is written in twelve stanzas, all of four lines, rhymed AABB. The metre is anapaestic (two unstressed syllables, followed by a stressed one) - and this creates a rather jaunty effect, which seems unsuited to the poem's subject, if we take it too seriously. But Browning intends the poem to be perhaps almost comic, over the top and melodramatic - it has some of the qualities of a popular horror film, where the characters and situations are grotesque and outrageous.

This rollicking, lively effect is reinforced by the frequent alliteration - "moisten and mash...pound at thy powder".

Browning repeatedly points up the contrast between the luxury and opulence of the court and the grimness of the laboratory. At the same time, the speaker makes a comparison between conventional jewels that adorn the person, and the idea of special jewellery to hold deadly poisons - "an earring, a casket...a filigree basket". Perhaps Browning expects the reader to make the connection between the evil of the poison in the jewels and the idea that ordinary wealth (gold) is the root of all evils.

He revels in an exotic vocabulary (a special lexicon) both of the poison laboratory and of precious jewels - "mortar", "gum", "gold oozings", "phial", "lozenge" and "pastile".

There is also some incongruity between the formal politeness of the speaker, saying "prithee", and the grim nature of her request.

The poem will appeal to contemporary readers with its gothic qualities - we find these, before Browning, in prose fiction like the English gothic novel and the American gothic of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, which depict sick or unbalanced characters, often without passing a judgement. Nowadays we are used to novels and films that show us these abnormal mental states. The speaker in the poem would be more disturbing if we took her more seriously. And Browning also contrives the situation so that we care little for her intended victim - the revenge may be excessive, but "she" seems to invite some such violent punishment.

The hated rival

Browning does not show directly, though he hints at, what the woman is like for whom the poison is intended. Her own view of her situation might be very different.

- Maybe she thinks the man is trapped in an unhappy relationship with a spiteful or weak woman.
- Maybe she is not so scornful, and has taken a lover because she is looking for support or rescue.

On the other hand, perhaps she is every bit as nasty and self-indulgent as the speaker thinks she is. Write as a prose or verse monologue her view of things - how she sees her lover and her weak rival. Maybe she, too, is planning something unpleasant for the speaker about which she knows nothing.

An immoral poem?

The Laboratory does not fit modern ideas about Victorian values - which are usually depicted as virtuous, and concerned with happy family relationships. Browning, whose home life with his wife was mostly very happy, is careful to set his more extreme poems in past times and civilizations (he does so, for instance, in My Last Duchess and other pieces like Porphyria's Lover and Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came). We are used, perhaps, to poetry that presents good or healthy emotions, such as romantic love or the grief of a parent. But we may be less comfortable with a poem like this one, that seems sick and tasteless in its choice of subject and the way Browning develops it.

English Literature Exam Section B- Duffy, Armitage and Pre-1914 Poetry
How to handle the 4 poem comparison - ARC

A. Start by comparing poems 1 and 2-

Category	**Similarities**	**Differences between**	
		Poem 1	**Poem 2**
Subject matter/ situation			
Writer's ideas, feelings, attitudes or purposes			
Use of form/structure and language/poetic devices			

B. Then move on to comparing poems 3 and 4 (refer back to poems 1 and 2 if poss)-

Category	**Similarities**	**Differences between**	
		Poem 3	**Poem 4**
Subject matter/ situation			
Writer's ideas, feelings, attitudes or purposes			
Use of form/structure and language/poetic devices			

C. Conclusion- what do all 4 poems show about:
- the question
- change, or lack of change over time

Past Examination Questions (from AQA website – Higher Tier)

Duffy + Armitage + Pre 1914 Bank

- Compare the ways the relationships between the speaker of the poem and other people are shown in **two** poems from List A and two poems from List B.

List A	List B
Before You Were Mine (Duffy)	On my first Sonne (Jonson)
Education for Leisure (Duffy)	The Laboratory (Browning)
Mother, any distance (Armitage)	My Last Duchess (Browning)

OR

Answer both parts A and B

- a) Compare the ways Duffy and Armitage present anti-social behaviour in 'Education for Leisure' and 'Hitcher'.
  and then
- b) Compare the ways in which the attitudes of the speakers are presented in two poems from the pre-1914 poetry bank.

Past Examination Questions (from AQA website – Higher Tier)

Heaney + Clark + Pre 1914 Bank

- Compare how the poets have used structure to contribute to the meanings of 'At a Potato Digging' by Seamus Heaney, **one** poem by Gillian Clarke and **two** poems from the pre-1914 poetry bank.

OR

Answer both parts A and B

- a) Compare how weather is presented in 'Patrolling Barnegat' by Walt Whitman and 'Storm on the Island' by Seamus Heaney.

and then

- b) Compare the presentation of summer in 'The Field-Mouse' by Gillian Clarke and 'Sonnet' by John Clare.