



GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

Unit 1 – Poetry Revision Foundation Tier

Write about both poems and their effect on you. Show how they are similar and how they are different.

You may write about each poem separately and then compare them, or make comparisons where appropriate in your answer as a whole.

You may wish to include some or all of these points:

- *the content of the poems – what they are about*
 - *the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about*
 - *the mood or atmosphere of the poems*
 - *how they are written – words and phrases you find interesting, the way they are organised, and so on*
 - *your responses to the poems, including how they are similar and how they are different*
- [20]

The Hurt Boy and the Birds

The hurt boy talked to the birds
and fed them the crumbs of his heart.

It was not easy to find the words
for secrets he hid under his skin.
The hurt boy spoke of a bully's fist
that made his face a bruised moon –
his spectacles stamped to ruin.

It was not easy to find the words
for things that nightly hissed
as if his pillow was a hideaway for creepy-crawlies –
the note sent to the girl he fancied
held high in mockery.

But the hurt boy talked to the birds
and their feathers gave him welcome –

Their wings taught him new ways to become.

John Agard

Considering the Snail

The snail pushes through a green
night, for the grass is heavy
with water and meets over
the bright path he makes, where rain
has darkened the earth's dark. He
moves in a wood of desire,

pale antlers barely stirring
as he hunts. I cannot tell
what power is at work, drenched then
with purpose, knowing nothing.
What is a snail's fury? All
I think is that if later

I parted the blades above
the tunnel and saw the thin
trail of broken white across
litter, I would never have
imagined the slow passion
to that deliberate progress.

Thom Gunn

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[20]

3 a.m. Feed

Soon we abandoned our “turns”. I volunteered
 Finding that, alone, the world hushed, I could almost hear
 It whispered – “This is your son.”
 In the crook of my arm, a perfect fit,
 You were those words given weight.
 Your fish mobiles made it seem we sat on the sea bed,
 Your bottle a little oxygen tank,
 Your gentle sucking like a tick, tick, tick
 Timing how long before we had to go up,
 Face currents that tugged us apart – the fuss
 Of want-to-hold relatives and, worse, the office
 That kept me from your first step, first clear word.
 Those moments were in the presence of grandparents and mum
 Remembered in detail – “Ten past one,
 Blur on the radio; he went from the armchair
 To the coffee table.” Still, for me,
 Those feeds have equal clarity,
 Last week coming so strongly to mind –
 Caught T-shirted in a summer storm,
 My forearm felt drops as large and warm
 As the one I’d splash there to test the temperature
 That white drop would sometimes dribble
 Down to my palm – a pearl.

Steven Blyth

Night feed

This is dawn
 Believe me
 This is your season, little daughter.
 The moment daisies open,
 The hour mercurial* rainwater
 Makes a mirror for sparrows.
 It’s time we drowned our sorrows.

I tiptoe in.
 I lift you up
 Wriggling
 In your rosy, zipped sleeper.
 Yes, this is the hour
 For the early bird and me
 When finder is keeper.

I crook the bottle.
 How you suckle!
 This is the best I can be,
 Housewife
 To this nursery
 Where you hold on,
 Dear life.

A silt* of milk.
 The last suck
 And now your eyes are open,
 Birth-coloured and offended.
 Earth wakes.
 You go back to sleep.
 The feed is ended.

Worms turn.
 Stars go in.
 Even the moon is losing face.
 Poplars* stilt for dawn.
 And we begin
 The long fall from grace.
 I tuck you in.

Eavan Boland

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This Morning I Could Do A Thousand Things

I could fix the leaky pipe
Under the sink, or wander over
And bother Jerry who's lost
In the bog of his crankcase.
I could drive the half-mile down
To the local mall and browse
Through the bright stables
Of mowers, or maybe catch
The power-walkers puffing away
On their last laps. I could clean
The garage, weed the garden,
Or get out the shears and
Prune the rose bushes back.
Yes, a thousand things
This beautiful April morning.
But I've decided to just lie
Here in this old hammock,
Rocking like a lazy metronome*,
And wait for the day lilies
To open. The sun is barely
Over the trees, and already
The sprinklers are out,
Raining their immaculate
Bands of light over the lawns.

Robert Hedin

In Your Absence

Not yet summer,
but the unseasonable heat
pries open the cherry tree.

It stands there stupefied,
in its sham, pink frills,
dense with early blooming.

Then, as afternoon cools
into more furtive winds,
I look up to see
a blizzard of petals
rushing the sky.

It is only April.
I can't stop my own life
from hurrying by.
The moon, already pacing.

Judith Harris

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First Love

I knew it had to come. I couldn't bear
it then; can't take it now. I'll make amends.
I'm willing to agree, now. So - be fair,
There's no need to split up. We'll just be friends.

Like you suggested. Not see quite so much
of each other. Please! I agree. You're right.
I made too much of what we had. Been such
a fool. I'll take the blame. We'll start tonight
- The New Improved Regime*. We'll both be free

to do just as we want - the adult way.
I'll do just as you want me to. You'll see.
I'm willing to do anything you say.
I promise. I won't make a scene. Won't cry.
If you'll do just one thing. Don't say goodbye.

Mick Gowar

**regime - system*

Rejection

Rejection is orange
Not, as one might think,
Grey and nondescript*.
It is the vivid orange of
A council worker's jacket.
A coat of shame that says
'he doesn't want you.'

Rejection tastes like ashes
Acrid, bitter.

It sounds
Like the whisper of voices
Behind my back.
'He didn't want her.
He dumped her.'

It feels
Like the scraping of fingernails
On a blackboard,
Not ache or stab of pain
But like having
a layer of skin missing.
Rejection looks like - me,
I suppose.

Slightly leftover
Like the last, curled sandwich
When all the guests
Have gone.

Jenny Sullivan

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Poem 1: The Beach

Weldon Kees

Squat, unshaven, full of gas,
Joseph Samuels, former clerk
in four large cities, out of work,
waits in the darkened underpass.

In sanctuary, out of reach,
he stares at the fading light outside:
the rain beginning: hears the tide
that drums along the empty beach.

When drops first fell at six o'clock,
the bathers left. The last car's gone.
Sun's final rays reflect upon
the streaking rain, the rambling dock.

He takes an object from his coat
and holds it tightly in his hand
(eyes on the stretch of endless sand).
And then, in darkness, cuts his throat.

Poem 2: Beach Sand

Raymond A. Foss

Maybe it is the memories
the change of pace that brings us there
the sense of vacation
maybe the smell of the place
the sights of the gulls, the dunes, the grasses
but oh it is the feel of it,
the crunch and slide of it
the feeling of beach sand
so different from dirt, soil, loam
no, not earthy, moist, rich,
but oh so granular and gritty
even when wet,
moveable paper spreading under toes
sliding beneath the soles
smoothing my skin
clearing my mind
unburdening me of the rest
drawing me to the tactile, the feel
of beach sand

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'Had I Not Been Awake'

Had I not been awake I would have missed it,
A wind that rose and whirled until the roof
Pattered with quick leaves off the sycamore

And got me up, the whole of me a-patter,
Alive and ticking like an electric fence:
Had I not been awake I would have missed it,

It came and went so unexpectedly
And almost it seemed dangerously,
Returning like an animal at the house,

A courier blast that there and then
Lapsed ordinary. But not ever
After. And not now.

Seamus Heaney

Dawn Revisited

Imagine you wake up
with a second chance: The blue jay*
hawks his pretty wares*
and the oak still stands, spreading
glorious shade. If you don't look back,

the future never happens.
How good to rise in sunlight,
in the prodigal smell of biscuits –
eggs and sausage on the grill.
The whole sky is yours

to write on, blown open
to a blank page. Come on,
shake a leg! You'll never know
who's down there, frying those eggs,
if you don't get up and see.

Rita Dove