

Think about the Connotations of individual words and phrases. Write about the effects of these.

Poetry Framework (SUSTIT)

Subject

What is the poem about? What happens in the poem?

Unusual language

What words or phrases seem interesting? Why do they stand out?

Structure

How is the poem 'built'? Is there a clear speaker?

Tone

What feelings does the poem present?

Images

Describe the mind pictures that are created in the poem. How does the poet create these?

Themes

What message does the poem convey? What ideas does the poet want the reader to consider?

Comparisons
 comparatively...
 compared with...
 equally...
 in the same way...
 likewise...
 similarly...

Contrasts
 alternatively...
 as for...
 but...
 despite this...
 in contrast...
 instead
 nevertheless...
 still...
 the opposite...
 yet...

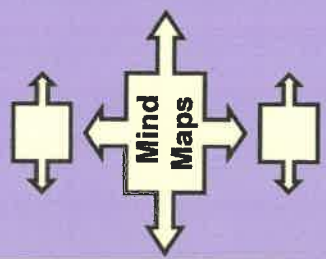
Ways to say 'shows'...
 describes...
 demonstrates...
 emphasises...
 establishes...
 expresses...
 highlights...
 illustrates...
 implies...
 indicates...
 introduces...
 presents...
 proves...
 reveals...
 suggests...

Poetic terms
 alliteration
 assonance
 first person
 juxtaposition
 metaphor
 onomatopoeia
 oxymoron
 rhyme
 rhythm
 repetition
 simile
 stanza
 third person

Ways to say 'effective'...
 accurate
 apt
 clever
 dramatic
 dynamic
 eye-catching
 helpful
 inventive
 original
 sensational
 successful
 unique
 unusual
 valuable
 vivid

Spend 5 minutes planning...

- create a mind map of your key ideas
- expand your ideas
- add notes about the content of each section and the techniques you will use
- decide on your introductory point
- decide on your concluding point
- put your remaining ideas into a logical order to give your work a solid structure.



Remember to expand your ideas fully. Use PEE to make your points effective...
Point
Evidence
Explanation / Effect(s)
 (Effect intended by the writer/ effect on the reader/ effect on you)

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Reading and writing about poems.....where to start?

Before you start writing about a poem in detail, read and re-read it, ideally underlining and annotating as you go. You may well find your initial opinions alter once you've read the poem a couple of times!

Points to think about during these initial readings:

- Take note of the title: it may be perfectly self explanatory, or it may carry a deeper meaning. Either way, it usually gives a useful lead.
- What is the train of thought? The best way to determine this is to track through systematically, reading in units of sense, not line by line. It's usually useful to read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark, which will help break the poem into units of sense. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE END OF A POEM! Often the poet's key message comes towards the end of the poem, so it's important to be thorough.
- Is there are specific voice? If so, whose? Poets sometimes write as if they were a different character (sometimes called the persona), although often they write as themselves, too. In either case, what is the effect of the voice?
- Is it addressed to someone? Love poems, for example, sometimes use the second person ("you") which can create a very intimate feeling. If the poem is addressed to a specific person, what is the effect of this?
- What is the aim of the poem? Does it, for example, tell a story, describe an experience, protest about something, describe a place? Try asking yourself why the poet wrote the poem.
- What is its mood and atmosphere? Does it change at all? How do you know? Pinpoint words and phrases that help create the mood and atmosphere. (If you're a bit stuck, some people find it helpful to think in terms of the sort of music or colours that would provide a background to the poem.)
- Focus closely on the words used, and their effects.
- Is there any distinctive imagery, and what are the effects of any imagery used?
- NEVER "SPOT" TECHNIQUES ("There is a simile in the second stanza") It's fine to use the terminology, but what's most important is to understand the effects of the actual words and phrases used.
- Remember to make a point, prove it with evidence, then explain how the evidence you have selected makes your point (sometimes abbreviated to PEE)

- What about the way the poem is put together, or organised - the lengths of lines, significant pauses, the use of stanzas, any distinctive rhythm or rhyme? Again, don't spot, but explain how what you select fits in with the overall meaning.
- What is your personal response? Does it, for example, connect with any of your own experiences or anything else you've read or seen?

When you're ready to write, here are some points to bear in mind as you do so:

- sum up what the poem's about.
- say something about the title.
- having divided the poem into units of sense, write about these units one at a time.
- focus on words and what they suggest to you.
- write about the mood and atmosphere.
- say why you think the poet wrote the poem, which will include its theme or message.
- give your feelings about the poem as a whole.

ALWAYS EXPLAIN YOUR POINTS CAREFULLY!

For comparing and contrasting poems, there are three main approaches:

Either: After a general introduction about both poems, write about poem 1, then about poem 2, then make points of similarity and comparison between them.

Or: After a general introduction about both poems, write about poem 1, then write about poem 2, referring back to poem 1 and noting similarities and differences as you do so.

Or: Discussing both poems at the same time (sometimes called the integrated approach)

Whichever you choose, make sure that you write a roughly equal amount on both poems, and highlight similarities and differences between them.

SECTION B

Spend about 1 hour on this section. Think carefully about the poems before you write your answer.

In both of these poems the poets describe what their homes mean to them.

6. 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. [20]

Table

We were going to sell the table.
It's big where it is,
with those elbowing edges
coming after us
and corners
that force us into corners.

But we decided not to. Instead,
we said
we'd rub down the surface,
get rid of each burn and dent
and moon of stain
and the stuck inch of newsprint.

But we've not even been able
to start cleaning our old table.

It's had too many babies
changed on it,
too many trumpets
and spoons whanged on it,
too many whales and witches
drawn on it
to do anything with it;

there's been too much homework and grief
dumped on it, too much laughter
heard round it, too many candles
burned down over it,
to do anything else but leave it there,
in the awkward place it's in,

elbowing us with its edges,
reminding us.

Robert Hull

Sold

Others want this house and soon
we must either leave or stay.
Is it the house or love
we are moving out of?
Perhaps we cannot say

but it hurts, all afternoon
our marriage has moved inside me –
the boys, the prints on the stairs,
the broken down cars, the holidays
in heaven and hell, long Saturdays
in market towns, mad neighbours ...

I pick you a pear from the tree
but you have disappeared again
into silence you inhabit,
your second home, where a whisper
might fall heavily to the floor –
an incendiary, pear-shaped
and loaded with pain.

Shall we stay or leave then, love?
It's only the years moving inside us
and everything hurts in the autumn.
Where shall we put them,
the years, in our new house?
The years we are moving out of?

Paul Henry

EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR UNIT 1 POETRY QUESTION

The following examples are responses to a **question on the contemporary poems *Sold*, by Paul Henry and *Table* by Robert Hull**, taken from the 2015 Unit 1 January examinations:

Answer 1 (Higher Tier):

In both of these poems the poets describe what their homes mean to them. 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.

In both poems we read the description, from the poets of what their homes mean to them. The poems; 'Table' by Robert Hull and 'Sold' by Paul Henry are both very detailed accounts of homes.

Hull's poem seems to take into account that the table is the centre of the home. Without the 'Table' there is a house, not a home. Homes are where families have past memories and ponder about the good and sometimes bad memories to come. The poem, 'sold', seems to be more the moving on of a family.

Robert Hull uses the title 'Table' as the central theme of his poem. The description of what home is, is the 'Table' where the family comes together. The rhyme scheme is irregular with only one rhyming couplet in the centre of the poem. This once again brings us back to the central theme. 'elbowing edges coming after us', the use of alliteration and personification adds imagery greatly with the creativity of Hull's imagination. The onomatopoeia used in the language or 'whanged' is sudden in its appearance in the poem. The 'Table' is describes as 'awkward' as it is 'big where it is' but the decision to 'leave it' there brings happiness to the reader as we know that the 'Table' belongs with the special memories of the home.

The form of the poem is a little bit irregular. This is due to the placement of one rhyming couplet, in the middle, to represent symbolism of the recurring theme of the center. The conversation style is used by Hull as almost every line is enjambment along with a clear narrative style for this particular poem. The unique poem is cyclical at the end as the personification is repeated, also 'reminding us' the memories and the family are happy for the reminder. They can't let go.

The poem 'Sold', however, is the opposite to Robert Hull's poem as the family is moving on and letting go. The similarity is that the final decision still has to be made as the poem ends with a question, 'we are moving out of?' The title seems to indicate that the decision has really been made and the family have literally 'sold'.

The style of the poem is quite regular with 4, same sized stanzas. Though, it has an irregular rhyme scheme. The narrative poem's form has many caesura's, using a dash, to pause the poem as the description is being recounted in the persona's mind. The thoughts and hesitations of whether the family should 'either leave or stay'.

The imagery of the actual home is barely used, unlike the other poem, the thoughts and feelings of actually letting go is haunting the parents of the family. Also, the language used is rather conversational as the parent personas go back and forth on their decisions. Questions in the poem are often used and answered by the same persona asking them. This shows the confusion and fright of a sudden, big change.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[WJEC > GCSE English Literature > Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[WJEC > GCSE English Literature > Principal Examiners' Report](#)

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The following examples are responses to a question on the contemporary poems *Sold*, by Paul Henry and *Table* by Robert Hull, taken from the 2015 Unit 1 January examinations:

Answer 1 (Higher Tier) *continued*:

In both of these poems the poets describe what their homes mean to them. 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.

'Is it the house or love we are moving out of?' The change may be splitting the marriage or a loss of love may have been formed due to the many distractions of life. There is a possibility that 'sold' is the moving on of a family but seems that some sort of separation of the parents could be involved too. This is another difference between the two poems as 'Table' is of a happy and slightly chaotic family however, 'sold' may have a hidden notion of separation and an obvious notion of pain. Thought the reader is not specifically told whether the pain is due to moving home or from a partner.

Personally, I prefer the poem 'Table' by Robert Hull. It seems to be more uplifting and happy. The poem also reminds me of the chaotic life families have, especially mine when moving home, and this brings a smile to my face.

The other poem, 'sold' by Paul Henry has a deeper rather than literal meaning. I don't relate this to my life as I am lucky enough to have a happy family. Paul Henry's poem refers to moving on as the 'house' as if the new place can never be a home that could bring the family back together.

Both poems have similarities and differences that make them totally unique. When I read these two poems only one brought a smile to my face and I think that's what poetry should do. It should make you feel something for what you read as a piece of art.

Paul Henry has made me remember and realise how lucky I am to have such an amazing family. Even when times are tough there is always at least one loved one to reassure you that everything will be fine.

My family has a similar 'Table' to the one in Robert Hull's poem. It may not be at the center but it is central to our lives to allow us to sit after a long day and be with the ones we love. It may be old, battered and bruised but each mark, or dent or stain has a significant memory. The happiness of families always needs a little bit of chaos.

Examiner's Comments:

Some close focus on language in places although not always exploring how ideas and emotions are conveyed. Some spotting of devices. Shows clear understanding of main ideas in 'Table', works from tone and mood into the subtext in 'Sold.' Consistently finds substantial comparison points between poems.

15 marks

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