



GCSE English Literature Paper 2  
Unseen Poetry Revision Booklet  
Glossary and Practice Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Unseen Poetry Revision Guide

- Read the poems and try to understand what their message is. You may have to read them several times before you start to understand.
- Have your terminology sheet with you when you read. Identify any poetic devices. Ask yourself: what does this word/device make me think/feel and what were the poet's intentions when he/she used it?
- When comparing the poems, make tables or Venn diagrams to make the similarities and differences clear. **REMEMBER TO COMPARE THE POETS' METHODS RATHER THAN THEIR IDEAS**
- Practise answering questions under exam conditions. You would usually spend 45 minutes answering both questions. As Q1 one is worth 24 marks, you should spend 33 minutes on this question and 12 minutes on question 2, which is worth 8 marks.

### Past exam questions:

1. How does the writer of A Gull present his thoughts and feelings as he observes a seagull? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. In both Considering the Snail and A Gull, the writers explore ideas about how humans feel about animals. What are the similarities and differences in the way that both poets present these feelings? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

#### **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 there 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*

#### **A Gull**

A seagull stood on my window ledge today, said nothing, but had a good look inside. That was a cold inspection I can tell you! North winds, icebergs, flash of salt crashed through the glass without a sound. He shifted from leg to leg, swivelled his head. There was not a fish in the house – only me. Did he smell my flesh, that white one? Did he think I would soon open the window and scatter bread? Calculation in those eyes is quick. 'I tell you, my chick, there is food *everywhere*.' He eyed my furniture, my plants, an apple. Perhaps he was a mutation, a supergull. Perhaps he was, instead, a visitation which only used that tight firm forward body to bring the waste and dread of open waters, foundered voyages, matchless predators, into a dry room. I knew nothing. I moved; I moved an arm. When the thing saw the shadow of that, it suddenly flapped, scuttered claws along the sill, and was off, silent still. Who would be next for those eyes, I wondered, and were they ready, and in order?

*Edwin Morgan*

1. How does are ideas about parenthood presented in 3 a.m. Feed? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. Both 3 a.m. Feed and Night Feed explore the relationship between children and parents. What are the similarities and differences between the ways in which both poems explore these ideas? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **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*



1. How does the poem Yew Tree Guest House present old age? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. Getting Older and Yew Tree Guest House both explore the feelings that surround growing old. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray old age? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **Getting Older**

The first surprise: I like it.  
Whatever happens now, some things  
that used to terrify have not:

I didn't die young, for instance. Or lose  
my only love. My three children  
never had to run away from anyone.

Don't tell me this gratitude is complacent.  
We all approach the edge of the same blackness  
which for me is silent.

Knowing as much sharpens  
my delight in January freesia,\*  
hot coffee, winter sunlight. So we say

as we lie close on some gentle occasion:  
every day won from such  
darkness is a celebration.

*Elaine Feinstein*

## **Yew Tree Guest House**

The guest-house lounges  
elderly ladies shrivel away  
wearing bright beads and jumpers  
to colour the waiting day  
between breakfast and bed.

Grey widows whose beds and meals are made,  
husbands tidied with the emptied cupboards,  
live in mortgaged time  
disguising inconsequence  
with shavings of surface talk, letters  
to nieces, stitches dropped in the quick-knit jacket,  
picked up for makeweight meaning.

Weekdays are patterned by meals –  
sole chance for speculation –  
will it be cabbage or peas; boiled fish or fried?  
Dead Sunday is dedicated to roast beef –  
knives and forks are grips upon existence.  
This diversion lengthens the journey;  
and since Mrs Porter ceased to come downstairs,  
ceased altogether,  
the ladies at the Yew Tree Guest House  
draw closer to the table.

*Phoebe Hesketh*

1. How does the poem *The Moth's Plea* present the moth's life? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. *The Moth's Plea* and *Weasels* both explore the lives of animals who are thought of as pests. Compare the ways in which the poets present these ideas. [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **The Moth's Plea**

*Elizabeth Jennings*

I am a disappointment

And much worse.

You hear a flutter, you expect a brilliance of wings,

Colours dancing, a bright

Flutter, but then you see

A brown, bedraggled creature

With a shamefaced, unclean look

Darting upon your curtains and clothes,

Fighting against the light.

I hate myself. It's no wonder you hate me.

I meddle among your things,

I make a meal out of almost any cloth,

I hide in cupboards and scare

Any who catch me unaware.

I am your enemy – the moth.

You try to keep me away

But I'm wily and when I do

Manage to hide, you chase me, beat me, put

Horrible-smelling balls to poison me.

Have you ever thought what it's like to be

A parasite,

Someone who gives you a fright,

Who envies the rainbow colours of the bright

Butterflies who hover round flowers all day?

Oh please believe that I do understand how it feels

To be awake in and be afraid of the night.



## Weasels

*John Tripp*

They are only scrap for a furrier  
Or trimming for a lady's wrap.  
But before they end on a heap  
They are awful in the fields and streams.  
5 Red-brown and nine inches long.  
They eat mice and moles and frogs;  
Rooks, crows and owls are nothing to them.  
Weasels will get through a bush or hedge  
For thrush and blackbird eggs  
10 And swim a mile when they sniff dead fish.

My granddad saw one  
Wipe out a granary of rats  
And then look around to see  
If he had missed any  
15 Before he enjoyed his huge supper.  
Once, in America, a hawk was found  
With a weasel's skull locked to its throat.

Even when chased by a fox  
They may stop to kill a chicken.  
20 Weasels like rabbits, too  
And go deep into the dark burrows.  
In Carmarthen they have hunted in packs  
Scampering behind the poor scared hares  
Lolloping in the moonlight.  
25 They will also attack a man  
If trapped – single and alone  
They jump for the neck.

Weasels will live anywhere smelly  
Inside a maggoty sheep carcass  
30 Or a rotted tree-stump,  
A crumbled wall crevice or a fish hole  
In the riverbank. Their innocent babies  
Nest tight at the back of the holes.

1. How does the poem November Story present the narrator's experience? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. November Story and November Night, Edinburgh both explore the narrators' experiences of November. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets do so? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

**November Story VERNON SCANNELL**

<p>The evening had caught cold; Its eyes were blurred. It had a dripping nose And its tongue was furred.</p> <p>5 I sat in a warm bar After the day's work: November snuffled outside, Greasing the sidewalk.</p> <p>But soon I had to go 10 Out into the night Where shadows prowled the alleys, Hiding from the light.</p> <p>But light shone at the corner On the pavement where 15 A man had fallen over Or been knocked down there.</p> <p>His legs on the slimed concrete Were splayed out wide;</p>	<p>20 He had been propped against a lamp- post: His head lolled to one side.</p> <p>A victim of crime or accident, An image of fear, He remained quite motionless 25 As I drew near.</p> <p>Then a thin voice startled silence From a doorway close by Where an urchin hid from the wind "Spare a penny for the guy!" 30</p> <p>I gave the boy some money And hastened on. A voice called, 'Thank you guv'nor!' And the words upon</p> <p>35 The wincing air seemed strange – So hoarse and deep – As if the guy had spoken In his restless sleep.</p>
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## **November night, Edinburgh**

The night tinkles like ice in glasses.

Leaves are glued to the pavement with frost.

The brown air fumes at the shop windows,

Tries the door, and sidles past.

5 I gulp down winter raw. The heady

Darkness swirls with tenements.

In a brown fuzz of cottonwool

Lamps fade up crags, die into pits.

Frost in my lungs is harsh as leaves

10 Scraped up on paths. - I look up, there,

A high roof sails, at the mast-head

Fluttering a grey and ragged star.

The world's a bear shrugged in his den.

It's snug and close in the snoring night.

15 And outside like chrysanthemums

The fog unfolds its bitter scent.

**NORMAN MACCAIG**

1. How does the poem *Names* present growing up and getting old? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. *Names* and *In Oak Terrace* both explore the theme of growing old. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray this theme? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

## **Names**

*by Wendy Cope*

She was Eliza for a few weeks  
when she was a baby –  
Eliza Lily. Soon it changed to Lil.  
Later she was Miss Steward in the baker's shop  
And then 'my love', 'my darling', Mother.  
Widowed at thirty, she went back to work  
As Mrs Hand. Her daughter grew up,  
Married and gave birth.  
Now she was Nanna. 'Everybody  
Calls me Nanna,' she would say to visitors.  
And so they did – friends, tradesmen, the doctor.  
In the geriatric ward  
They used the patients' Christian names.  
'Lil,' we said, 'or Nanna,'  
But it wasn't in her file  
And for those last bewildered weeks  
She was Eliza once again.

## **In Oak Terrace**

*by Tony Connor*

Old and alone, she sits at nights,  
Nodding before the television.  
The house is quiet now. She knits,  
rises to put the kettle on,  
watches a cowboy's killing, reads  
the local Births and Deaths, and falls  
asleep at 'Growing stock-piles of war-heads'.  
A world that threatens worse ills  
fades. She dreams of life spent  
in the one house: suffers again  
poverty, sickness, abandonment,  
a child's death, a brother's brain  
melting to madness. Seventy years  
of common trouble; the kettle sings.  
At midnight she says her silly prayers,  
And takes her teeth out, and collects her night-things.

1. How does the poem *Summer in the Village* present the changing community? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. *Summer in the Village* and *Incoming Calls* both explore the theme change. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray this theme? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **Summer in the Village**

<p>Now, you can see where the widows live: nettles grow tall and thistles seed round old machinery.</p> <p>5 Hayfields smooth under the scythe simmer with tussocks; the hedges begin to go, and the bracken floods in.</p> <p>Where the young folk have stayed on</p> <p>10 gaudy crops of caravans and tents erupt in roadside fields; Shell Gifts, Crab Sandwiches, To Let, the signs solicit by the gates, left open</p> <p>15 where the milk churns used to stand; and the cash trickles in.</p> <p>'For Sale' goes up again on farms the townies bought with good intentions</p> <p>20 and a copy of <i>The Whole Earth Guide</i>;</p>	<p>Samantha, Dominic and Willow play among the geese and goats while parents in the pub complain about Welsh education and the dole.</p> <p>25 And a new asperity creeps in.</p> <p>Now, you will see the tidy management of second homes:</p> <p>30 slightly startled, old skin stretched, the cottages are made convenient. There are boats with seats; dogs with the work bred out of them sit listlessly by garden chairs on Kodakcolor* lawns; and all that was community seeps out.</p> <p><b>CHRISTINE EVANS</b></p>
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## Incoming Calls

- Thriving in the borders  
We know we'll never be Welsh  
But our children are or will be  
And we're happy to help.
- 5 We're refugees from the cityscape  
We came here to give them freedom  
to grow  
Where the air won't line their lungs  
With grey snow.
- 10 Yes, some of us are ageing hippies  
Who art and craft and grow green  
vegetables  
For seemingly little gain  
But we add our incoming voices loud  
To the chorus who want the village  
15 school to remain
- We came here to join the community  
Though some fear we're taking over  
'cause we want to protect what we  
came here for
- 20 When some who've been here for  
hundreds of years  
Want jobs no matter what the  
ecological discord
- And some of your sons and daughters  
25 Can't live in the place they were born  
to  
'cause some of us had loads of cash  
From the sale of our city semi-  
detached
- 30 And we've forced the prices  
Beyond your dreams  
And you don't see why *your* kids  
Have to leave
- And it's happened before  
It'll happen again  
We can only try  
To help our children be friends
- 'cause everyone wants a better life  
And everyone fights to have it  
And change is a river that flows on  
and on  
No matter how much you damn it

**LABI SIFFRE**

1. How does the poem Impressions of a New Boy present the experience of school?  
[24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. Impressions of a New Boy and Only the Wall both explore childhood experiences. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray this theme? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **Impressions of a New Boy**

- This school is huge – I hate it!  
Please take me home.  
Steep stairs cut in stone,  
Peeling ceiling far too high,
- 5 The Head said 'Wait' so I wait alone,  
Alone though Mum stands here, close by.  
The voice is loud – I hate it!  
Please take me home.
- 'Come. Sit. What is your name?'
- 10 Trembling lips. The words won't come.  
The head says 'Speak', but my cheeks flame,  
I hear him give a quiet sigh.  
The room is full – I hate it  
Please take me home.
- 15 A sea of faces stare at me.  
My desk is much too small.  
Its wooden ridge rubs my knee,  
But the Head said 'Sit' so though I'm tall  
I know that I must try.
- 20 The yard is full – I hate it.  
Please take me home.  
Bodies jostle me away,  
Pressing me against the wall.  
Then one boy says, 'Want to play?'
- 25 The boy says, 'Catch' and throws a ball  
And playtime seems to fly.  
This school is great - I love it.

### **MARIAN COLLIHOLE**

## Only the Wall

That first day  
only the wall saw  
the bully  
trip the new boy  
5 behind the shed,  
and only the wall heard  
the name he called,  
a name that would stick  
like toffee.

10 The second day  
the wall didn't see  
the fight  
because too many  
boys stood around,  
15 but the wall heard  
their cheers,  
and no one cheered for  
the new boy.

The third day  
20 the wall felt  
three bullies  
lean against it,  
ready to ambush  
the new boy,  
25 then the wall heard  
thumps and cries,  
and saw blood.

The fourth day  
only the wall missed  
30 the new boy  
though five bullies  
looked for him,  
then picked another boy  
instead. Next day  
35 they had him back,  
his face hit the wall.

The sixth day  
only the wall knew  
the bullies  
40 would need that other boy  
to savage.  
The wall remembered  
the new boy's face  
going home,  
45 saw he'd stay away.

**MATTHEW SWEENEY**



1. How does the writer of Grandfather present the narrator's feelings about her grandfather?  
[24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. In both Grandfather and Jessie Emily Schofield the writers remember their grandparents.  
What are the similarities and differences in the ways they present their ideas? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **Grandfather**

- I remember  
His sparse white hair and lean face...  
Creased eyes that twinkled when he laughed  
And the sea-worn skin
- 5 Patterned to a latticework of lines.  
I remember  
His blue-veined, calloused hands.  
Long gnarled fingers  
Stretching out towards the fire –
- 10 Three fingers missing –  
Yet he was able to make model yachts  
And weave baskets.  
Each bronzed Autumn  
He would gather berries
- 15 Each breathing Spring  
His hands were filled with flowers.
- I remember  
Worshipping his fisherman's yarns.  
Watching his absorbed expression
- 20 As he solved the daily crossword  
With the slim cigarette, hand rolled,  
Placed between his lips.  
I remember  
The snowdrops
- 25 The impersonal hospital bed,  
The reek of antiseptic.
- I remember, too,  
The weeping child  
And wilting daffodils
- 30 Laid upon his grave.

**SUSAN HRYNKOW**

**Jessie Emily Schofield**

- I used to wash my grandmother's hair,  
When she was old and small  
And walked with a frame  
Like a learning child.
- 5 She would turn off her hearing aid  
And bend into the water,  
Holding the edge of the sink with long fingers;  
I would pour warm cupfuls over her skull  
And wonder what it could be like
- 10 In her deaf head with eighty years of life.  
Hers was the softest hair I ever felt,  
Wedding dress silk on a widow;  
But there is a photo of her  
Sitting swathed in hair
- 15 That I imagine chestnut from the black and white,  
Long enough to sit on.  
Her wet head felt delicate as a birdskull  
Worn thin by waves of age,  
As she stood bent.
- 20 My mother's mother under my hands.

**JUDY WILLIAMS**

1. How does the writer of Foghorns present the effect that noises have on people? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. In both Foghorns and The Fog Horn the writers explore their experiences of foghorns. What are the similarities and differences in the way that both poets present these feelings? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **Foghorns**

When Catrin was a small child  
She thought the foghorn moaning  
Far out at sea was the sad  
Solitary voice of the moon

- 5 Journeying to England.  
She heard it warn 'Moon, Moon',  
As it worked the Channel, trading  
Weather like rags and bones.

- Tonight, after the still sun  
10 And the silent heat, as haze  
Became rain and weighed glistening  
In brimful leaves, and the last bus  
Splashes and fades with a soft  
Wave-sound, the fog-horns moan, moon –  
15 Lonely and the dry lawns drink.  
This dimmed moon, calling still,  
Hauls sea-rags through the streets.

**GILLIAN CLARKE**

## **The Fog Horn**

In this soup thick night, the fog horn  
Calls, like a cow in pain  
Sounding its lonely rhythms. Its long

Notes travel not only the sea's swell, but  
5 Float over fields full of sleeping cattle, then  
To towns, through deserted streets,  
Pulsing through my window, reaching

My ears. How many people listen,  
Lying in their beds awake  
10 To the soft displacement of silence.

Like hearing a dying animal,  
It proves that yet a life exists  
Marking the human shorelines  
With its pulse.

15 And all around the sea  
Stretches, falling over the horizon's rim.

**FRANCES WILLIAMS**

1. How does the writer Human Interest present the narrator's feelings about their crime? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. In both Human Interest and In the Can, the writers explore ideas about criminality. What are the similarities and differences in the way that both poets present these ideas? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

### **Human Interest**

Carol Ann Duffy

Fifteen years minimum, banged up inside  
for what took thirty seconds to complete.  
She turned away. I stabbed. I felt this heat  
burn through my skull until reason had died.

I'd slogged my guts out for her, but she lied  
when I knew different. She used to meet  
some prick after work. She stank of deceit.

I loved her. When I accused her, she cried  
and denied it. Straight up, tore me apart.  
On the Monday, I found the other bloke  
had bought her a chain with a silver heart.

When I think about her now, I near choke  
with grief. My baby. She wasn't a tart  
or nothing. I wouldn't harm a fly, no joke.

### **In the Can**

Rosie Jackson

Every second is a fishbone that sticks  
In the throat. Every hour another slow  
Step towards freedom. We're geriatrics  
Waiting for release, bribing time to go.  
I've given up trying to make anything  
Different happen. Mornings: tabloids, page three.  
Afternoons: videos or Stephen King,  
Answering letters from relatives who bore me.  
We're told not to count, but the days mount here  
Like thousands of identical stitches  
Resentfully sewn into a sampler,  
Or a cricket bat made out of matches.  
Nights find me scoring walls like a madman,  
Totting up runs: one more day in the can.