

Unseen poetry structure and tips

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED?

- You will be asked a 24-mark question and an 8 mark question.
- The 24-mark question will be analysing one unseen poem and they will give you a focus within the question.
- The 8-mark question will be comparing the first poem you analysed with another 2nd unseen poem.

TIMINGS

- You'll be given 45 minutes for the 24 mark and 8 mark.
- Spend 30-35 minutes on the 24 marks.
- 10-15 minutes on the 8 mark (including reading time).

24 mark question

MARK SCHEME

WHAT IT MEANS

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical, exploratory conceptualised response to task and text Judicious use of precise references to support interpretation(s)
AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of writer's methods with subject terminology used judiciously Exploration of effects of writer's methods to create meanings

A01

- Critical**= giving multiple interpretations. Not just saying 'this shows...' but giving alternative interpretations and furthering your analysis. E.g., "Alternatively," "Moreover".
- Conceptualised response to task**= stay focused exactly on what the question is saying. Everything you analyse, bring it back to the focus of the question.
- Precise references**= embed in small quotes or even words into your writing. Making it blend in as if that word was already apart of your sentence.

A02

- Analysis of writer's methods**= language, form and structure. (look at our language sheet and the poetic key term sheet).
- Used judiciously**= do not throw it in, make sure you use techniques that further support your point.
- Create meanings**: think about the deeper meaning of what they are trying to show. If you understand the poem, you can go into a lot of depth with your analysis. Even if you're not 100% sure if the writer meant to show that, as long as you link it back to the question and explain it fully, you will be fine!

HOW TO APPROACH AN UNSEEN EXTRACT:

Look at the title –

- see if it tells you anything more about what the poem is about.

Read each stanza and summarise –

- each time you read a stanza (or an number of lines if there are no stanzas), just make a note at the side of each stanza roughly what its talking about, this will help you paint a clearer image in your head what the whole poem is about.

Write down form+rhyme, language+ structure and theme –

- once you've written it down, highlight each in 3 colours and then go through and make notes about all three.

HOW TO SPOT EACH:

How to spot form:

- look through how long the stanzas are, are they equal? Are some equal? Are all irregular? Is one shorter than the other and what is it talking about?

How to spot rhyme:

- have a look if any of the words at the end sound like they rhyme, if so, make note of highlighting them. Think about: is there regular rhyme? Is there no rhyme? Is there some occasional rhyme?

How to spot language:

- look through our list of language and structure techniques and see when you read each line if you can see any. Easy ones to spot if you're stuck is connotations, imagery, personification, and similes. Semantic fields are an impressive one to spot as it shows you're being critical about the whole text

How to spot a theme:

- have a look at the last line (normally is written to convey some type of overall message as it is the last thing the reader will read) and see if there is any overall topic/ idea it is showing. Then look to see if any other parts of the poem will fit that theme you have thought of.

To spot:

Form/
rhyme

Language+
structure

Theme

Theme of
isolation

Semantic field of
light
"lamps"
(repeated), "light"
and "moon"

Irregular stanzas

Only a few bits of
rhyme- mostly
irregular

End stops
throughout

A London Thoroughfare". 2 A.M.

They have watered the street,
It shines in the glare of lamps,
Cold, white lamps,
And lies
5 Like a slow-moving river,
Barred with silver and black.
Cabs go down it,
One,
And then another,
10 Between them I hear the shuffling of feet.
Tramps doze on the window-ledges,
Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks,
The city is squalid and sinister,
With the silver-barred street in the midst,
15 Slow-moving,
A river leading nowhere,
Opposite my window,
The moon cuts,
Clear and round,
20 Through the plum-coloured night.
She cannot light the city;
It is too bright.
It has white lamps,
And glitters coldly,
25 I stand in the window and watch the moon;
She is thin and lustreless,
But I love her,
I know the moon,
And this is an alien city.

Describing what he
can see in London

Describing the
night sky

Describing the
moon

Different ideas of what to spot

FORM	RHYME	LANGUAGE	STRUCTURE	THEME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regular stanzas</i> • <i>Irregular stanzas</i> • <i>Sonnet</i> • <i>Petrarchan</i> • <i>Sonnet</i> • <i>Shakespearean</i> • <i>Sonnet</i> • <i>Ballad</i> • <i>Dramatic monologue</i> • <i>Elegy</i> • <i>Epic</i> • <i>Ode</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Blank verse</i> • <i>Rhyming couplet</i> • <i>Free-verse</i> • <i>ABAB rhyme</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Alliteration</i> • <i>Connotation</i> • <i>Juxtaposition</i> • <i>Imagery</i> • <i>Plosive</i> • <i>Connotation</i> • <i>Semantic field</i> • <i>Diction</i> • <i>Personification</i> • <i>Pathetic fallacy</i> <p>Look on our language + structure sheet for more</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enjambment</i> • <i>Anaphora</i> • <i>Caesura</i> • <i>End stop</i> <p>Look on our language + structure sheet for more</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Abandonment</i> • <i>Isolation</i> • <i>Revenge</i> • <i>Friendship</i> • <i>Love</i> • <i>Self-awareness</i> • <i>Self-discovery</i> • <i>Fear</i> • <i>Loneliness</i> • <i>Fulfilment</i> <p>It can be any theme you can think of!</p>

Structure to use for an unseen extract

THEME PARAGRAPH

- Point about theme
- Evidence
- Technique + analysis
- Evidence
- Technique + analysis
- Writers intentions

LANGUAGE & STRUCTURE PARAGRAPH

- Point about question
- Evidence
- Language technique + analysis
- Evidence 2
- Structure technique + analysis
- Writers intentions

FORM & RHYME PARAGRAPH

- Point about form
- Analysis
- point about rhyme
- evidence + analysis
- writers intentions

IN 'A LONDON THOROUGHFARE. 2 A.M.' HOW DOES THE POET PRESENT THE SPEAKER'S FEELINGS ABOUT THE CITY AT NIGHT?

Lowell clearly establishes that the speaker's feelings about the city at night evoke a sense of loneliness as there is a prevalent theme of isolation throughout the poem. The writer describes "lamps", connoting warmth and light, as "cold" suggestive that the city at night loses all its warmth and comfort- instead becoming a place which is unwelcoming and makes you feel isolated. This theme of isolation is exacerbated in the last line where the speaker brands it as an "alien sky". The extra-terrestrial imagery showcases how she feels that the city at night is something undetectable and unearthly- the speaker is familiar with the "moon", another source of light and comfort, but feels isolated by this city in the "plum coloured night". As this is the last sentence in the poem, Lowell is reinforcing to the reader that the city at night holds a bleak darkness that not even the abundance of "lamps" can cut through. Thus, creating a lingering atmosphere of loneliness and isolation at the end of the poem.

Moreover, Lowell presents a sense of hopelessness regarding the speaker's feelings about the city at night. There is a semantic field of light that permeates the poem with the repeated motif of "lamps" and the "moon". In the first stanza, the speaker uses repetition on "lamps", highlighting her dismay at how there is only this unnatural light that is filling the "watered" streets of London. This sense of hopelessness is compounded through the diction "barred" regarding the "slow-moving river", creating an image of restriction. This alluding to how hopelessness pervades London as the speaker feels the city restricts all-natural matter and tries to illuminate its darkness through unnatural means. The end stops that litter the poem reinforces this hopeless stagnancy in London. Lowell makes each line end with an end stop to reinforce to the reader that nothing naturally flows in London at night- each street is filled with "cabs", "tramps" and "squalid". Therefore, Lowell presents the speaker's feelings as scathing of this bleak unnatural city and emphasises its hopelessness.

Lastly, Lowell utilises irregular stanza lengths to convey how the speaker feels that London is full of chaos and disorder with no sense of togetherness. The first stanza is the longest out of the 3, as it is describing the events that are unfolding within London, it is emulating the chaos that ensues on the streets of London- there is no sense of order or unity as everybody is embarking on their journeys, unphased by the "sinister" streets. Significantly, the 2nd and 3rd stanza, describing nature and the moon, are shorter as Lowell wants to emphasise how the speaker feels that nature has been abandoned and dismissed compared to the hollow city. Alternatively, the miniscule amount of rhyme on "night" and "bright" could showcase how there is some sense of togetherness amongst the chaos. Yet, as there are only two examples of rhyme throughout the entire poem, Lowell is suggestive that the speaker feels that the city at night consumes anything natural and innocent. Lowell utilises this bleak presentation to perhaps make her reader question the more dark and "sinister" natures of glorified cities.

Breaking down each part

1) THEME PARAGRAPH

Point about theme

Evidence

Technique & analysis

Evidence

Technique & analysis

Writers intentions

Lowell clearly establishes that the speaker's feelings about the city at night evoke a sense of loneliness as there is a prevalent theme of isolation throughout the poem. The writer describes "lamps", connoting warmth and light, as "cold" suggestive that the city at night loses all its warmth and comfort- instead becoming a place which is unwelcoming and makes you feel isolated. This theme of isolation is exacerbated in the last line where the speaker brands it as an "alien sky". The extra-terrestrial imagery showcases how she feels that the city at night is something undetectable and unearthly- the speaker is familiar with the "moon", another source of light and comfort, but feels isolated by this city in the "plum coloured night". As this is the last sentence in the poem, Lowell is reinforcing to the reader that the city at night holds a bleak darkness that not even the abundance of "lamps" can cut through. Thus, creating a lingering atmosphere of loneliness and isolation at the end of the poem.

2) LANGUAGE & STRUCTURE PARAGRAPH

Point about question

Evidence

Language Technique & analysis

Evidence 2
(I spoke about it throughout rather than one part)

Structure Technique & analysis

Writers intentions

Moreover, Lowell presents a sense of hopelessness regarding the speaker's feelings about the city at night. There is a semantic field of light that permeates the poem with the repeated motif of "lamps" and the "moon". In the first stanza, the speaker uses repetition on "lamps", highlighting her dismay at how there is only this unnatural light that is filling the "watered" streets of London. This sense of hopelessness is compounded through the diction "barred" regarding the "slow-moving river", creating an image of restriction. This alluding to how hopelessness pervades London as the speaker feels the city restricts all-natural matter and tries to illuminate its darkness through unnatural means. The end stops that litter the poem reinforces this hopeless stagnancy in London. Lowell makes each line end with an end stop to reinforce to the reader that nothing naturally flows in London at night- each street is filled with "cabs", "tramps" and "squalid". Therefore, Lowell presents the speaker's feelings as scathing of this bleak unnatural city and emphasises its hopelessness.

3) FORM & RHYME PARAGRAPH

Point about form

Analysis

Point about rhyme

Evidence & analysis

Writers intentions

Lastly, Lowell utilises irregular stanza lengths to convey how the speaker feels that London is full of chaos and disorder with no sense of togetherness. The first stanza is the longest out of the 3, as it is describing the events that are unfolding within London, it is emulating the chaos that ensues on the streets of London- there is no sense of order or unity as everybody is embarking on their journeys, unphased by the "sinister" streets. Significantly, the 2nd and 3rd stanza, describing nature and the moon, are shorter as Lowell wants to emphasise how the speaker feels that nature has been abandoned and dismissed compared to the hollow city. Alternatively, the miniscule amount of rhyme on "night" and "bright" could showcase how there is some sense of togetherness amongst the chaos. Yet, as there are only two examples of rhyme throughout the entire poem, Lowell is suggestive that the speaker feels that the city at night consumes anything natural and innocent. Lowell utilises this bleak presentation to perhaps make her reader question the more dark and "sinister" natures of glorified cities.

8-mark question

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 doors, 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.

*tenements: blocks of flats

*chrysanthemums: a type of flower

MARK SCHEME

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported response to task and text Comments on references
AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of writers' methods Some reference to subject terminology

WHAT IT MEANS

A01

- Focus on the question and make sure there are clear quotes supporting your point.

A02

- Talk about language, structure, and form

HOW TO APPROACH IT:

- You will be familiar with poem A already.
- Read through Poem B and make a note of the key theme (see if there is one similar to poem A).
- Notice if there are any particular language/ structure techniques
- Notice if the form is similar/ different.

Structure for 8 marks

THEME PARAGRAPH

- Sentence saying If share similar of different theme
- Evidence from poem A + analysis
- Compare with evidence from Poem B + analysis

LANGUAGE/STRUCTURE

- Sentence saying If share similar similar/ different language or structure techniques
- Evidence from poem A, technique + analysis
- Compare with evidence from Poem B, technique + analysis

FORM

- Sentence saying If share similar of different form
- Evidence from poem A + analysis
- Compare with evidence from Poem B + analysis

IN BOTH 'NOVEMBER NIGHT, EDINBURGH' AND 'A LONDON THOROUGHFARE. 2 A.M.' THE SPEAKERS DESCRIBE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CITY AT NIGHT.

WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND/OR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE METHODS THE POETS USE TO PRESENT THESE ATTITUDES?

In both poems, the poets explore the attitudes towards the city through a theme of hostility- both present their cities as hostile and unwelcoming in the darkness. In 'A London thoroughfare', Lowell highlights the darkness that pervades London, especially highlighting that at night the "sinister" part of the city prevails. This is akin to MacCaig in "November Night" where he speaks about how the "darkness swirls" and the weather appears hostile as "the frost" went into his "lungs".

However, both poets use a juxtaposing semantic field to explore their attitudes. In 'November night', there is a semantic field of extreme cold as there is "ice" in the "winter raw" causing "frost" in his lungs. This suggests that the bitter cold is prevalent throughout "November Nights" in "Edinburgh", as the semantic field is throughout the whole text it mimics how the cold is relentless. However, Lowell uses a semantic field of 'light' as she describes the light from "lamps" contrasting the "light" from the "moon". This showcases how Lowell is scathing of the unnatural light of the city that the natural light from the moon cannot compete with.

Lastly, in a "London thoroughfare" the stanzas are irregular, juxtaposing the regular quatrains in "November nights". Lowell utilises irregular stanzas to highlight the chaos, irregularity, and impersonal aspect there is to London at night- there is no warmth from natural light. Contrastingly, MacCaig uses quatrains to show the reader the regularity and relentlessness of these bitter nights that plague "November".

Breaking down each part

THEME PARAGRAPH

- Sentence saying if share similar of different theme.
- Evidence from poem A & analysis.
- Compare with evidence from poem B & analysis.

In both poems, the poets explore the attitudes towards the city through a theme of hostility- both present their cities as hostile and unwelcoming in the darkness. In 'A London throughfare', Lowell highlights the darkness that pervades London, especially highlighting that at night the "sinister" part of the city prevails. This is akin to MacCaig in "November Night" where he speaks about how the "darkness swirls" and the weather appears hostile as "the frost" went into his "lungs".

LANGUAGE / STRUCTURE

- Sentence saying if share similar/different language or structure techniques.
- Evidence from poem A, technique & analysis.
- Compare with evidence from poem B & analysis

However, both poets use a juxtaposing semantic field to explore their attitudes. In 'November night', there is a semantic field of extreme cold as there is "ice" in the "winter row" causing "frost" in his lungs. This suggests that the bitter cold is prevalent throughout "November Nights" in "Edinburgh", as the semantic field is throughout the whole text it mimics how the cold is relentless. However, Lowell uses a semantic field of 'light' as she describes the light from "lamps" contrasting the "light" from the "moon". This showcases how Lowell is scathing of the unnatural light of the city that the natural light from the moon cannot compete with.

FORM

- Sentence saying if share similar or different forms.
- Evidence from poem A & analysis.
- Compare with evidence from poem B & analysis.

Lastly, in a “London throughfare” the stanzas are irregular, juxtaposing the regular quatrains in “November nights”. Lowell utilises irregular stanzas to highlight the chaos, irregularity, and impersonal aspect there is to London at night- there is no warmth from natural light. Contrastingly, MacCaig uses quatrains to show the reader the regularity and relentlessness of these bitter nights that plague “November”.