



GCSE AQA English Literature: *Unseen Poetry*

♦ Paper 2 – Section C (Unseen poetry) ♦



EXAM & TIMING

- Question type: one unseen poem + one comparison question
- Marks: 24 + 8
- Paper 2 total time: 2 hours 15 minutes
- Suggested timing for unseen poetry: 45 minutes total
- Suggested 25% extra-time timing: 56 minutes total
- Suggested split: Q1 30 mins, Q2 15 mins
- With 25% extra time: Q1 37 mins, Q2 19 mins
- Suggested breakdown: 5 mins read and annotate, 25 mins write Q1, 15 mins compare Q2
- With 25% extra time: 7 mins annotate, 30 mins write Q1, 19 mins compare Q2

1 BIG IDEAS



meaning first



writer's feelings and ideas



methods create effects



personal interpretation matters



comparison should be clear and direct

2 KEY TERMINOLOGY



speaker – the voice of the poem.



tone – the attitude or mood.



imagery – word pictures and sensory detail.



metaphor / simile / personification – comparisons and effects.



structure – how the poem is organised.



enjambment / caesura – how lines flow or pause.



rhyme and rhythm – patterns that shape meaning.



contrast – important shifts and differences.

3 QUESTION 1: HOW TO APPROACH IT

1

Read twice and find the central idea.

2

Decide what the poet seems to feel or suggest.

3

Select 3 or 4 short quotations.

4

Analyse methods in relation to meaning.

5

End with a clear overall interpretation.

4 QUESTION 2: HOW TO COMPARE



• Start with a clear similarity or difference.



• Compare ideas first, then methods.



• Use short references from both poems.



• Comment on tone, viewpoint and structure.



• Keep the comparison concise and direct.

5 WHAT TO LOOK FOR



shifts in tone – feelings or attitudes change.



key images – powerful word pictures and senses.



voice and perspective – who is speaking and why.



contrast – differences, opposites, tensions.



repetition – words, phrases or ideas repeated.



structure – how the poem is shaped.



title and ending – set up meaning; leave impact.

6 WHAT A STRONG ANSWER DOES



Begins with an interpretation, not a technique list.



Explains how methods create meaning.



Uses short, relevant quotations.



Avoids forcing context or anthology links.



Stays precise and focused.



Trusts its own ideas.

7 QUICK CHECKLIST

	What is the poem really about?	☐
	How does the speaker feel?	☐
	Which words or images stand out?	☐
	What changes across the poem?	☐
	What is similar or different in the second poem?	☐
	Have I explained effects clearly?	☐



AQA LITERATURE SUCCESS REMINDERS: read carefully • interpret first • compare clearly • analyse meaning, not just techniques

