

Introduction to Poetry

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a colour slide

or press an ear against its hive

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

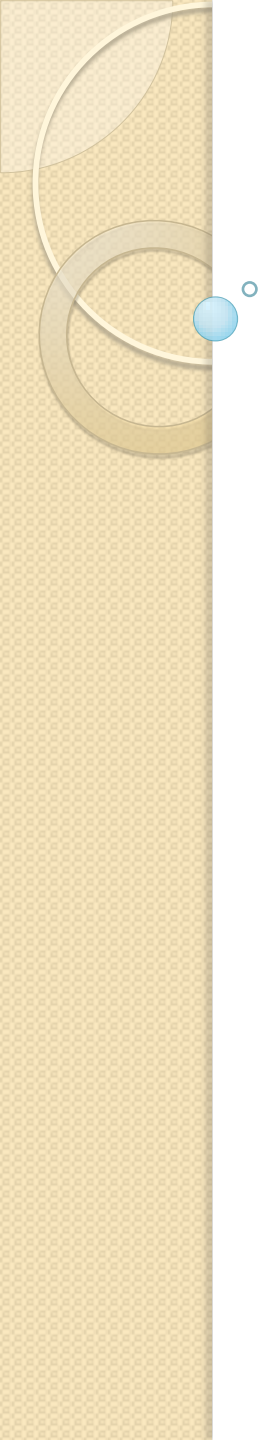
or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

– **Billy Collins**



Unseen Poetry

30 Minutes

18 Marks

The Title

- Consider the title and its connotations.
- What assumptions does the title lead you to make and how does the poem develop or subvert these ideas?

Autumn

Untied

First Love

The Father



AO1: Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations.

- This means you need **your own personal** and **critical** ideas about the poem.
- **Think imaginatively** about what the poet does with the **imagery**, the **themes**, the **voice**, the **language** etc.
- Just make sure they're credible and you can back them up.
- Select **good short quotations** to prove those ideas!



AO2: Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings.

- This means you have to look in **real detail** at the **words** and **techniques** the poet uses.
- Consider the **themes**, the **rhythm**, the **subject matter**, the **voice** and the **tone** of the poem.
- In addition, if you know what specific **form** of poem you are reading, you should make a point about how the poet uses that form – maybe it's a sonnet, a dramatic monologue etc...

Question to ask yourself:

- What **poetic devices** are used?
- Is there a **rhyme scheme** and has it been used for a reason?
- **Imagery? Contrasts? Specific vocabulary** etc..?
- How do they have on an impact? What effect does the structure have? What happens where?
- It may be something about **how each stanza starts**. It could be about when the poem **changes tone**. It could be about how the poem **builds**. It could be about a point or a line that is **repeated** to have a deliberate structural effect. Make at least **one point** about structure!

Looking for symbols and extended metaphors

- An easy way to get marks for interpretation!
- Can the poem represent something greater than the topic itself?

I try to warn my little sister
about unsuitable shoes,
point out my own distorted
feet, the callouses,
odd patches of hard skin.
I should not like to see her
in my shoes.

And so we got on our bicycles and rode home
down the lane, moving apart
and coming together again,
in and out of the ruts.

Not all poems will contain extended metaphors

- But there are plenty of other features to discuss.
- There are no marks for 'technique spotting'...
- But you should refer to the features by name when referencing them.

This is a metaphor.



The poet uses a metaphor here to provide the reader with a point of comparison as the topic is likely to be unfamiliar.



Elements to discuss:

- Expectations from the title or beginning.
- Overall theme or idea in the poem and how you/a reader may respond or relate to it.
- Any imagery or language you find particularly interesting – language analysis.
- Structure and how it reflects/echoes the theme.
- Mood or atmosphere.
- Change in tone or mood. (Or change in anything!)
- Interesting voice or viewpoint.
- Unexpected presentation of an idea.
- **Remember – build in poetic techniques!**

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

** nondescript - ordinary*

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

** nondescript - ordinary*

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.**'

Jenny Sullivan

* *nondescript* - ordinary

Unexpected



Rejects usual
ideas of how
it feels

Can't hide it
- metaphor

Uses sense
for imagery -
appeals to
range

Repetition
shows how
personal it
is/feels

Extremity of
it -
like a marker

Gives
impression
people are
talking

Unpleasant
and deceitful

Almost
onomatopoeic -
can hear/observe
and makes us wince

Rejects
stereotypical

Graphic -
unpleasant

Moment of
reflection - still
piecing it
together

Left alone -
vivid image -
unconventional
comparison -
clear and sad.

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.



Autumn

Autumn arrives

Like an experienced robber

Grabbing the green stuff

Then cunningly covering his tracks

With a deep multitude

Of colourful distractions.

And the wind,

The wind is his accomplice

Putting an air of chaos

Into the careful diversions

So branches shake

And dead leaves are suddenly brown

In the faces of inquisitive strangers.

The theft chills the world

Changes the temper of the earth

Till the normally placid sky

Glowes red with a quiet rage.

Alan Bold

Autumn

Autumn arrives

Like an experienced robber

Grabbing the green stuff

Then cunningly covering his tracks

With a deep multitude

Of colourful distractions.

And the wind,

The wind is his accomplice

Putting an air of chaos

Into the careful diversions

So branches shake

And dead leaves are suddenly brown

In the faces of inquisitive strangers.

The theft chills the world

Changes the temper of the earth

Till the normally placid sky

Glows red with a quiet rage.

Alan Bold

Autumn

Autumn arrives

Like an **experienced robber**

Grabbing the green stuff

Then **cunningly covering** his tracks

With a deep multitude

Of colourful **distractions**.

And **the wind**,

The wind is his **accomplice**

Putting an **air of chaos**

Into the careful diversions

Structure – continuous =
Autumn thief won't stop
until the change is
complete?

So branches shake

And **dead leaves** are suddenly brown

In the faces of **inquisitive strangers**.

The **theft** **chills the world**

Changes the temper of the earth

Till the normally placid sky

Glows red with a quiet **rage**.

Alan Bold

Different line lengths make it difficult
to predict what's next = reflects the
chaos mentioned.

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*



Point	Notes/Comments
The poem's content – what it is about	
The ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about	
The mood or atmosphere of the poem	
How it is written – words or phrases you find interesting, the way the poem is structured or organised, and so on	
Your response to the poem – how do you feel about it? Why?	

Slow Reader

How do you think the speaker feels about the child and his experience of learning to read?

At the start of the poem, the poet **uses a list** to show the child's many other varied skills: "make sculptures...fabulous machines...invent games". **The specific use of dynamic verbs and positive adjectives in the list** show that at **the start of the poem**, **the poet believes in the child's different abilities**. By using the **words "sculptures" and "invent"**, which are **words that conjure up complex adult and artistic endeavours**, the **poet clearly sees the child as incredibly capable**. In addition, **the use of "fabulous"** helps to show that what he puts together is worthy of high praise. As mentioned, **at the outset of the poem**, the poet clearly values the child. The poet does this in order to strongly show in the rest of the poem that **the process of reading is only one of many difficult experiences that children have to learn and they may struggle in spite of their other valuable skills**.

Blue = AO1 - Ideas, quotations, interpretations

Red = AO2 – Language, structure, form

How does the poet present the speaker's feelings?

The poet has the child allow the words to “go cold as gristly meat”. This simile is used to present a child who can hardly bare to read the words. The comparison to “gristly meat” presents reading as an unpleasant experience for the boy, one that he has to constantly chew on. The use of “Gristly” also suggests that it is tough and, as gristle itself is not proper food, and has no proper nutritional value: there may be no point to actually going through the reading process for the boy. The adjective “cold” also combines with the “gristle” to make an even more potent visual image. There is no life in reading for the boy. It is presented as limp and dead in contrast to his other more exciting adventures.

EXPLAIN C	EXPLORE B	ANALYSE A	EVALUATE IMAGINE A*
You give details to make your point clear.	You investigate and look at points in detail. You see that there is more to discover.	You delve deeper into the poet's methods. You examine them as if under a microscope.	You weigh up how effective the method is. You use your own judgements and invent your own ways of looking at the poem.
Catrin is the speaker's daughter. She uses a metaphor to illustrate that they are joined together as the 'red rope' is the umbilical cord. This shows that their relationship is still close.	Catrin is the speaker's daughter. She uses a metaphor to illustrate that they are joined together as the 'red rope' is the umbilical cord. This shows that their relationship is still close, but also that they are still connected even though she is grown up.	Catrin is the speaker's daughter. She uses a metaphor to illustrate that they are joined together as the 'red rope' is the umbilical cord. This shows that their relationship is still close, but also that they are still connected even though she is grown up. The red symbolises both the love and the anger that the relationship makes the speaker feel.	Catrin is the speaker's daughter. She uses a metaphor to illustrate that they are joined together as the 'red rope' is the umbilical cord. This shows that their relationship is still close, but also that they are still connected even though she is grown up. The red symbolises both the love and the anger that the relationship makes the speaker feel, but may also symbolise a warning that the changes in the relationship are going to bring more trouble as her daughter grows.

Tentative Language

- Perhaps...
- May...
- Might...
- Could...
- Hints at...
- Suggests...
- Possibly...
- Maybe...

A simple opinion...

- I liked this poem because...
- I found this poem sad/happy because...
- I enjoyed this poem because...
- I found this interesting...



- These responses show that you have engaged and interacted with the poems, but they are far too basic.

A sophisticated opinion...

- I found this interesting because...
 - I thought it was unusual how...
 - I found the most powerful phrase in the poem to be...
- 
- These are better, because they sound a little more confident and educated than simple 'I like, don't like' comments.

An assured opinion...

- I found the most powerful phrase in the poem to be...
 - I thought the contrast in... was interesting because...
 - I found the poet's use of...
 - I thought the way the poet handled...
 - What struck me about the poems was...
-
- Assured means that you have reached a decision after considering what is available. It is confident and has poise about it.

