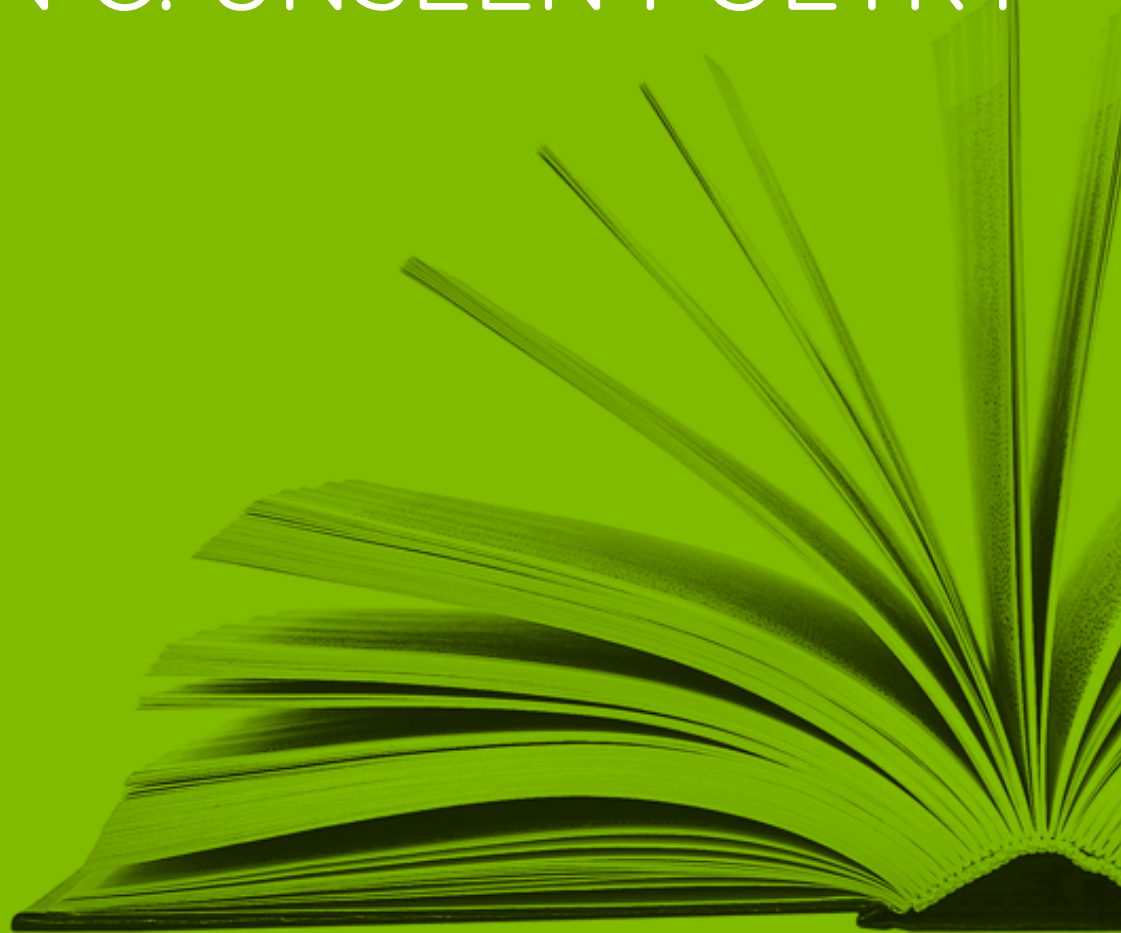


GCSE

WJEC Eduqas GCSE in
ENGLISH LITERATURE

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COMPONENT 2
SECTION C: UNSEEN POETRY



KEY ASPECTS OF THE SPECIFICATION FROM 2015

COMPONENT 2, SECTION C: UNSEEN POETRY

AREA OF STUDY	DESCRIPTION
<u>First reading of Unseen Poems</u>	Points you should encourage learners to consider on the first reading of unseen poems.
<u>Writing about 'Unseen' Poems</u>	Factors to consider when teaching learners to write about unseen poems.
<u>Comparing Poems</u>	Factors to consider when teaching learners to compare unseen poems.
<u>Example 'Unseen' Poetry Question</u>	An example 'unseen' poetry question, based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn.
<u>Example 'Unseen' Poetry Question Mark Scheme</u>	The specific Assessment Objectives, Mark Scheme and Indicative Content for the example 'unseen' poetry question, based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn.
<u>Example 'Unseen' Poetry Question Responses</u>	Four example responses to the example 'unseen' poetry question, based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn. Also including examiner's comments.

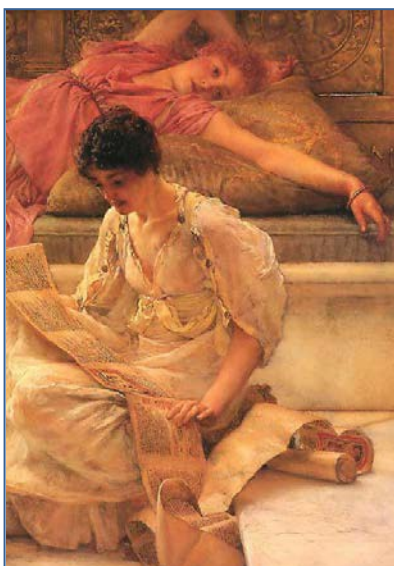
AREA OF STUDY

Reading Poems

Key Points:

- Learners should be encouraged to read and re-read poems before they begin to write about them. They should be aware that their opinions may alter once they've read through a poem a couple of times.
- Some learners find it helpful to consider the sort of music or colours that would provide a background to the poem when trying to determine mood.
- Learners should track through the poem systematically, reading in units of sense, not line-by-line. It is usually useful to read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark.

AMPLIFICATION FOR TEACHING



Learners should:

- Take note of the title: it may be self-explanatory, or it may carry a deeper meaning. Either way it usually provides a useful lead.
- Focus closely on the words used and any distinctive imagery, and its effects.
- Consider the voice of the poem – is the poet adopting a persona or writing as themselves. What's the effect of the voice?
- Consider if the poem is addressed to someone, for example is this an intimate poem written to someone in particular? If the poem is addressed to a specific person then learners should consider the effect of this.
- Consider the aims of the poem – does it tell a story, describe an experience, protest about something, describe a place etc? What were the poet's reasons for writing the poem?
- Consider the structure of the poem – the length of the lines, significant pauses, the use of stanzas and any distinctive rhythm or rhyme.
- Consider their personal response to the poem – does it connect with any of their own experiences or anything else they've read or seen?

Learners shouldn't:

- 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.
- 'Spot' techniques (e.g. "there is a simile in the second stanza"), it's fine to use the terminology, but more important to understand the effects of the actual words used.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

AREA OF STUDY

Writing About Poems

Key Points:

- Learners should be encouraged to read and re-read poems before they begin to write about them. They should be aware that their opinions may alter once they've read through a poem a couple of times.
- Learners should remember to make a point, prove it with evidence and explain how the selected evidence makes their point (sometimes abbreviated to PEE).
- Learners should track through the poems systematically, reading in units of sense, not line-by-line. Having divided the poems into units of sense, they should write about these one at a time.

AMPLIFICATION FOR TEACHING



When learners are ready to write about a poem they should bear in mind the following points:

- It's important to provide a summary of the poem as a whole.
- Consider the title – is it self-explanatory or does it carry a deeper meaning?
- It's important to focus closely on the words used in the poem, their effect, and what they suggest to the learner.
- Learners should write about the mood and atmosphere conveyed in the poem – does it change at all? They should also pinpoint the words and phrases that help create this mood and atmosphere.
- Consider the poet's reasons for writing the poem, which will include its theme or message.
- Learners should consider their personal response to the poem – does it connect with any of their own experiences or anything else they've read or seen? How do they feel about the poem as a whole.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

AREA OF STUDY

Comparing Poems

Key Points:

- In the exam learners will have an hour in which to write about two unseen poems, they are asked to compare as they write about the second poem.
- Note that the second part is worth considerably more marks than the first part, 25 as opposed to 15 respectively, and so learners should make sure that they allow plenty of time to answer the second part of the question.
- Learners should remember to use words that signpost comparison, such as: however, but, whilst, on the other hand, like, similarly, and so on.

AMPLIFICATION FOR TEACHING



When learners are comparing poems they should:

- Consider how the poems may be similar/different in terms of **content**.
- Consider how the poems may be similar/different in terms of **themes/messages**.
- Consider how the poems may be similar/different in terms of **mood/atmosphere**.
- Consider how the poems may be similar/different in terms of **style** and **structure**.
- Consider how the poems may be similar or differ in terms of the **personal response** they elicit.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Here are examples of our sample tasks taken from our full set of SAMs, which can be accessed from the **additional resources** section below.

COMPONENT 2: SECTION C

Unseen Poetry, answer *both 31 and 32*.

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on 31, and about 40 minutes on 32.

Read the poems **'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan** and **'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn**. In both of these poems the poets write about the effect animals have on people.

31 Write about the poem 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan, and its effect on you [15]

You may wish to consider:

- *what the poem is about and how it is organised*
- *the ideas the poet may have wanted us to think about*
- *the poet's choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create*
- *how you respond to the poem*

32 Now compare 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn and 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan. [25]

You should compare:

- what the poems are about and how they are organised
- the ideas the poets may have wanted us to think about
- the poets' choice of words, phrases and images and the effects they create
- how you respond to the poems



Select the image (left) for the Mark Scheme for this question



Select the image (left) for the Indicative Content for this question.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

'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

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

'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

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2 – MARK SCHEME

Here you will find the Assessment Objectives for the example 'unseen' Poetry question, based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn (taken from our full set of **Specimen Assessment Materials**, which can be accessed from the **additional resources** section below).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION
AO1:1a	Read, understand and respond to texts to maintain a critical style.
AO1:1b	Read, understand and respond to texts to develop an informed personal response.
AO1:2	Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.
AO2	Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.



Select the image (left) for the Mark Scheme for this question.



Select the image (left) for the Indicative Content for this question.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2 - MARK SCHEME

Here you will find the Mark Scheme for the **example 'unseen' Poetry question** based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn (taken from our full set of **Specimen Assessment Materials**).

31, AO1 and AO2 are equally weighted in this question.

BAND	AO1: 1a+b, AO1:2	AO2
5 13–15 marks	Candidates: sustain focus on the task, including overview, convey ideas with consistent coherence and use an appropriate register; use a sensitive and evaluative approach to the task and analyse the extract and wider text critically; show a perceptive understanding of the extract and wider text, engaging fully, perhaps with some originality in their personal response; their responses include pertinent, direct references from across the extract and wider text, including quotations.	Candidates: analyse and appreciate writers' use of language, form and structure; make assured reference to meanings and effects exploring and evaluating the way meaning and ideas are conveyed through language structure and form; use precise subject terminology in an appropriate context.
4 10–12 marks	Candidates: sustain focus on the task, convey ideas with considerable coherence and use an appropriate register; use a thoughtful approach to the task; show a secure understanding of key aspects of the extract and wider text, with considerable engagement; support and justify their responses by well-chosen direct reference to the extract and wider text, including quotations.	Candidates: discuss and increasingly analyse writers' use of language, form and structure; make thoughtful reference to the meanings and effects of stylistic features used by the writer; use apt subject terminology.
3 7–9 marks	Candidates: focus on the task, convey ideas with general coherence and use a mostly appropriate register; use a straightforward approach to the task; show an understanding of key aspects of the extract and wider text, with engagement; support and justify their responses by appropriate direct reference to the extract and wider text, including quotations.	Candidates: comment on and begin to analyse writers' use of language, form and structure; make some reference to meanings and effects; use relevant subject terminology.
2 4–6 marks	Candidates: have some focus on the task, convey ideas with some coherence and sometimes use an appropriate register; use a limited approach to the task; show some understanding of key aspects of the extract and wider text, with some engagement; support and justify their responses by some direct reference to the extract and wider text, including some quotations.	Candidates: recognise and make simple comments on writers' use of language, form and structure; may make limited reference to meanings and effects; may use some relevant subject terminology.
1 1–3 marks	Candidates: have limited focus on the task, convey ideas with occasional coherence and may sometimes use an appropriate register; use a simple approach to the task; show a basic understanding of some key aspects of the extract and wider text, with a little engagement; may support and justify their responses by some general reference to the extract and wider text, perhaps including some quotations.	Candidates: may make generalised comments on writers' use of language, form and structure; may make basic reference to meanings and effects; may use some subject terminology but not always accurately.
0 marks	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2 – MARK SCHEME

Here you will find the Mark Scheme for the **example 'unseen' Poetry question** based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn (taken from our full set of **Specimen Assessment Materials**).

32, AO1 and AO2 are equally weighted in this question.

BAND	AO1: 1a+b, AO1:2	AO2
5 21–25 marks	Comparison is critical, illuminating and sustained across AO1 and AO2. There will be a wide ranging discussion of the similarities and/or differences between the poems.	
	Candidates: sustain focus on the task, including overview, convey ideas with consistent coherence and use an appropriate register; use a sensitive and evaluative approach to the task and analyse the texts critically; show a perceptive understanding of the texts, engaging fully, perhaps with some originality in their personal response; their responses include pertinent, direct references from across the texts, including quotations.	Candidates: analyse and appreciate writers' use of language, form and structure; make assured reference to meanings and effects exploring and evaluating the way meaning and ideas are conveyed through language structure and form; use precise subject terminology in an appropriate context.
4 16–20 marks	Comparison is focussed, coherent and sustained across AO1 and AO2. There will be a clear discussion of the similarities and/or differences between the poems.	
	Candidates: sustain focus on the task, convey ideas with coherence and use an appropriate register; use a thoughtful approach to the task; show a secure understanding of key aspects of the texts, with considerable engagement; support and justify their responses by well-chosen direct reference to the texts, including quotations.	Candidates: discuss and increasingly analyse writers' use of language, form and structure; make thoughtful reference to the meanings and effects of stylistic features used by the writer; use apt subject terminology.
3 11–15 marks	Comparison is focussed across AO1 and AO2 with some valid discussion of the similarities and/or differences between the poems.	
	Candidates: focus on the task, convey ideas with general coherence and use a mostly appropriate register; use a straightforward approach to the task; show an understanding of key aspects of the texts, with engagement; support and justify their responses by appropriate direct reference to the texts, including quotations.	Candidates: comment on and begin to evaluate writers' use of language, form and structure; make some reference to meanings and effects; use relevant subject terminology.
2 6–10 marks	Comparison is general with some discussion of the obvious similarities and/or differences between the poems.	
	Candidates: have some focus on the task, convey ideas with some coherence and sometimes use an appropriate register; use a limited approach to the task; show some understanding of key aspects of the extract and wider text, with some engagement; support and justify their responses by some direct reference to the extract and wider text, including some quotations.	Candidates: recognise and make simple comments on writers' use of language, form and structure; may make limited reference to meanings and effects; may use some relevant subject terminology.
1 1–5 marks	Comparison is very limited. There may be a basic awareness of the obvious similarities and/or differences between the poems.	
	Candidates: have limited focus on the task, convey ideas with occasional coherence and may sometimes use an appropriate register; use a simple approach to the task; show a basic understanding of some key aspects of the texts, with a little engagement; may support and justify their responses by some general reference to the texts, perhaps including some quotations.	Candidates: may make generalised comments on writers' use of language, form and structure; make basic reference to meanings and effects; may use some subject terminology but not always accurately or appropriately.
0 marks	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2 – MARK SCHEME

Here you will find Indicative Content for 31 of the **example 'unseen' Poetry question** based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn (taken from our full set of **Specimen Assessment Materials**).

This is not a checklist. Please reward valid alternatives.

COMPONENT 2: SECTION C

Unseen Poetry, 'A Gull' and 'Considering the Snail', Question 31

Responses may include:

AO1

- An understanding of the key aspects of the gull, e.g. the intimidation or fear induced by him
- The use of setting
- The narrator's ambiguous stance towards the bird
- The gull's mysterious dignity
- The gull's exit

AO2

- Comments on Morgan's use of language to describe the gull
- The imagery used to describe the predatory, secret life of the the gull, e.g. 'foundered voyages' and 'dread open waters'
- The sinister tone of 'A Gull', e.g. 'Did he smell my flesh?'
- The way the gull's thoughts are represented in the poem through the use of direct speech 'I tell you, my chick,' to create an intimidating atmosphere
- The symbolic nature of the gull for example, the way he offers a glimpse of a wild landscape
- The use of words and phrases, such as a 'supergull' and a 'visitation' to imply the almost supernatural power of the gull
- The discomfort of the poet as evidenced through his final questioning



Select the image (left) for the extract from the example question.



Select the image (left) for the Mark Scheme for this question.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2 – MARK SCHEME

Here you will find Indicative Content for 32 of the **example unseen poetry question** based on the poems 'A Gull' by Edwin Morgan and 'Considering the Snail' by Thom Gunn (taken from our full set of **Specimen Assessment Materials**).

This is not a checklist. Please reward valid alternatives.

COMPONENT 2: SECTION C

Unseen Poetry, 'A Gull' and 'Considering the Snail', Question 32

Responses may include:

AO1

- An understanding of the poet's view of the snail in 'Considering the Snail' and how this compares with the view of the gull in 'A Gull'
- The poet's engagement and fascination with the progress of the snail and how this compares to the awe and intimidation evoked by the gull in 'A Gull'
- The presentation of the snail as an admirable and passionate creature and how this compares to the presentation of the gull
- How both poems deal with the theme of nature through a focus on everyday creatures

AO2

- How Gunn uses language to achieve specific effects and how this is compared to Morgan's use of language in 'A Gull'
- The use of personification to describe the snail in 'Considering the Snail' and the gull in 'A Gull'
- The elevated language used to describe the snail and the way the snail is imbued with powerful emotions such as 'desire', 'fury' and 'passion' and how this compares to the presentation of the gull
- The use of the first person to reveal the poet's thoughts and feelings about the animals in both poems



Select the image (left) for the extract from the example question.



Select the image (left) for the Mark Scheme for this question.

EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 1:

31

The first poem, 'A Gull', is about a man who is visited by a seagull which "stood on my window ledge today." Just from this first line, we can see that the narrator in the poem is speaking in the first person, evident from the word "my." Along with "my", the word "today" creates a sense of immediacy and makes it easier for us, the readers, to visualise the situation.¹

As the poem continues, we could say that the narrator becomes paranoid about the seagull² which is sitting on his window ledge. There is hints of this in the words, "that was a cold inspection, I can tell you" and "there was not a fish in the house – only me." By describing the seagull as judgemental, it appears that the narrator is becoming increasingly worried by the seagull's actions. It is as though the narrator sees himself as prey to the seagull.

From the way the narrator speaks about the seagull, it becomes increasingly clear that he is unnerved by the presence of the bird. This is clear when he says, "That was a cold inspection I can tell you." The narrator is obviously worried about the bird and in an attempt to protect himself, he aggrandises the seagull, by calling it "that white one." This name gives the seagull an image of power over the narrator.³ Just this reference alone shows how much the narrator is worried by the creature, and it is as if he is bigging up the bird to make it leave him alone, when in all reality, it is just a seagull.⁴

¹ Some analysis of use of language.

² Thoughtful interpretation.

³ Interpretation of detail – links into overview.

⁴ Engaged response showing secure understanding of key idea.

Continued on next page

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 1 (continued):

32

The second poem, “Considering the Snail” by Thom Gunn, is similar to “A Gull” in the fact that both poems are clearly describing an animal, and have no clear subtext.⁵ This is evident in the fact that both poems start with the name of the animal, “The Snail” and “A Seagull” respectively. By naming the subject in the very first line of each of the poems, the authors have made it very clear what the subject of the poems are, and there can be no confusion as to what the poems are about.

Furthermore, in Gunn’s poem we can see how the conditions in the poem are making life hard for the snail. This can be seen when the narrator says, “the grass is heavy” and “darkened the earth’s dark.” From these short phrases, the author could be trying to emphasise how hard the life of a snail is, or he could be describing the difficulties of this particular journey for the snail.⁶ This is a contrast to the life of the seagull in ‘A Gull’, where the author makes it sound as though the bird has an easy life of power and intimidation over others.⁷

The two poems are also different in the way that they describe the animals’ positions of power. For example, we are told that the snail has “pale antlers”, whereas the seagull could be “a supergull” with “scattered claws.” The fact that the snail has antlers suggests that it is prey to others, in contrast to the seagull’s description, which tells us that the bird is fierce and powerful, the opposite to how the snail is portrayed.⁸

⁵ Simple, rather general points.

⁶ Some understanding, with apt support.

⁷ Valid point of comparison, though underdeveloped.

⁸ Quotations selected here do not quite connect with the points made, though there’s some understanding of some differences in the presentation of the animals.

Examiner's Comments:

The response to the first poem is focused and clear with some thoughtful discussion, showing an understanding of key aspects of the poem. There is selection and the beginnings of evaluation of the writer’s use of language. This part of the question would just get into Band 4. Can you suggest more parts of the poem that could have been discussed, in order to produce a more thorough response?

The candidate is much less confident when comparing the two poems, in (b). As a result, although there is focus on the question, it is very underdeveloped, with some simple comments on some of the language, and would only get a mark representative of the top of Band 3. This would give the response as a whole a mark on the borderline of Bands 3 and 4.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 2:

31

Firstly, “A Gull” is a poem by Edwin Morgan and it is written from first person point of view. The voice of the poem suggests that we, as humans, underestimate a seagull and that we are not clear of its true intentions. Moreover, in the second line it becomes clear to us that the poem attempts to personify the bird.¹ He does this by stating that the seagull is just standing there on his “window ledge” and he says “nothing” as if the poet expected the gull to talk. Perhaps some kind of explanation as to why the gull is invading his privacy by having a “good look inside” of his window.² Furthermore, the poet uses certain words to emphasise a sense of feeling threatened by this gull. Morgan uses words such as “icebergs” and “cold inspection” to emphasise how uncomfortable he feels,³ knowing that the bird is still there. This is emphasised even further when the poet says that “there was not a fish in the house – only me” as if the narrator was describing himself as prey and almost like the gull was there to hunt him.⁴ Even more so, this poem becomes even more interesting when the narrator starts talking to the gull, “I tell you my chick” as if the narrator knows the bird and therefore tries to communicate with it. Also, the use of that speech suggests as though the narrator was inside the mind of the gull and could tell that it wanted to eat something. This is ironic as it refers the narrator to being like the bird in the same way that the narrator tries to personify the bird.⁵

Nonetheless, we begin to feel as though the narrator admires the gull as the poem progresses. By describing the bird as having a “tight firm forward body” it further emphasises the attempt to personify the bird.⁶

Alternatively, towards the end of the poem it would appear as though the narrator becomes somewhat scared of the gull. This is clearly shown when he describes the bird as being a “thing” as though it was no longer a seagull but something else. Therefore, by using the words “scattered claws” which would create a sense of abnormality especially considering the bird is now being described as a “thing.”⁷

Furthermore, it is evident that a sense of danger is brought to mind at the end of the poem considering the narrator asks “who would be next” as if he was not the only victim of this “thing.”⁸ He then goes on to asking whether or not the next victim would be “ready” for this encounter. Moreover, it is as if the reader feels as though the bird is purposely trying to bring fear upon him by glaring into the window. Also, the way the poet describes the bird as a “supergull” it seems that Morgan was trying to promote the idea of there being more than meets the eye and although it would seem as though the gull is inferior to humans, the poem suggests that animals in general should not be underestimated.⁹

¹ Immediately, the candidate is using technical terms accurately, showing an appreciation of the writer’s use of language.

² Notice how the use of short, integrated quotations is very economical, allowing more points to be made in discussion.

³ More focused discussion of language.

⁴ Increasingly assured understanding.

⁵ More assured analysis – reaching evaluation.

⁶ Maybe, although this point could be further developed.

⁷ Good to probe alternatives like this, and speculations are supported by analysis of language features.

⁸ Keeping interpreting right up to the end. Never neglect the end of a poem!

⁹ This conclusion shows a clear overview of the whole poem.

Continued on next page

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 2 (continued):

32

The poem called “Considering the Snail” by Thom Gunn is also similar to “A Gull” in the way that both poems seem to suggest that animals should not be underestimated.¹⁰ This is evident when the snail is described as being a hunter, “as he hunts”, which of course is ironic as they are not seen as being harmful and considering they are herbivores and they do not eat meat, then surely they are not hunters.¹¹ However, this just further emphasises how snails are underestimated perhaps because of their size or their speed of movement. Furthermore, a sense of irony is once again created when the slime a snail leaves behind is described in the poem as being a “bright path” which relates to a point that was made about “a gull” known as the expression, there is more than meets the eye.¹² Similarly, the narrator questions “what power is at work” which relates to the snail being more than just a snail in the same way the gull was described as a “supergull.” Also, both narrators of the poems speak of their animals in a way that would suggest that they are both fascinated by them.¹³

Even more so, both animals in both of the poems seem to be searching for food as the snail is travelling through a “green night” and the gull is told that there is “food everywhere:” which would suggest this. Also, both poems speak of the animals in first person.¹⁴

To conclude, both poems create an essence that animals should be appreciated for what they are and that they should not be underestimated. “Considering the Snail” is about appreciating the snail instead of the usual idea of seeing it as being disgusting. “A Gull” is about how the gull should not be underestimated and that there is more to an animal than what would first seem to appear.¹⁵

¹⁰ Clear point of comparison established from the start.

¹¹ Thoughtful, if a bit literal. Could maybe have probed a bit more deeply here. What else may be implied by the reference to “hunts.”

¹² Sustaining points of comparison between the poems.

¹³ More comparisons, clearly expressed.

¹⁴ More straightforward links between the poems.

¹⁵ Clear and focused conclusion.

Examiner's Comments:

The response to 31 is assured and closely read, revealing a clear appreciation of how the writer uses language for effects. There is also evidence of a confident overview, and all these qualities place it just into Band 5. The candidate has missed the opportunity to discuss the supernatural references, and mysterious dignity, but this is a very assured response.

32 is also quite thorough and thoughtful, but as the candidate has written in such detail on the first poem, it seems they have left themselves a bit short of time to deal with both the second poem and comparison. The response here would get a mark at the top of Band 4, making a total just on the border of Bands 4 and 5. With a bit better use of time (after all, there’s more to do in 32 so it should be a proportionately longer response) this could have been a Band 5 overall.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Specimen Assessment Materials](#)

[Approaches to unseen poetry](#)

EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 3:

31

The poem “A Gull” is about a seagull who sits on the narrator’s window, and how the narrator feels that the seagull inspects his life; and so appears to be superior to the narrator.¹ The poem starts off by talking about the “Inspection” which the seagull seems to be performing.² The poem then moves on to describe the movements made by the Seaquill, and the scared thoughts which pass through the narrator’s mind.³ It then escalates even more by describing the gull as a “supergull” or a “visitation”.⁴ Finally at the end of the poem, the gull flies away. But it is no longer called a seagull, but instead “thing” and “it.”⁵

I think the poet may have wanted us to think that the narrator is a young child, and the poem wants us to imagine amazing things after receiving a stimulus. Some choice of words like “supergull”⁶ lead us to think that it is a child, because it isn’t something an adult would say.

Overall, I like the poem as it does create pictures in my head of this seagull, and I can picture each description the author makes.

¹ Grasps the key idea.

² Selects the word “inspection” but doesn’t do anything with it. What comment could you make on the use of this word? How does it add to the overall meaning of the poem?

³ This shows some awareness, but is unsupported by detail. What short words or phrases from the poem could you select to support the points made here?

⁴ Another interesting point, but the words are left “hanging” again. What may these words suggest, in your opinion?

⁵ Again, words selected but not commented on. What may be the implications behind the use of “thing” and “it”?

⁶ Although the candidate is entitled to say what they think, the support presented isn’t all that convincing. It becomes quite a simple point.

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EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 3 (continued):

32

The poem "Considering the Snail" is similar to "A Gull" because they are both about animals. They also describe the actions of the animals.⁷ They also describe the actions of the animals e.g. in "A Gull" – "He shifted leg to leg, swivelled his head" and "it suddenly flapped, scuttered claws along the sill." And in "Considering a Snail" - "The snail pushes through a green night" and "He moves in a wood of desire."⁸

"A Gull" which contains a lot of description, gradually gets more and more inventive, which finishes off with the gull flying away. "Considering the Snail" on the other hand, speaks only about one event,⁹ and that is the snail moving over a short distance.

The poem "A Gull" is read line by line with a short pause at the end of each line. In contrast, "Considering the Snail" is to be read more like a sentence as each line flows with each other without the need of a pause.¹⁰

Both "A Gull" and "Considering the Snail" contain rhetorical questions. For example, in "A Gull" there is "Did he smell my flesh, that white one?" and in "Considering the Snail" "What is a snail's fury?"¹¹

Finally, I think "A Gull" was intended for young adults/children as the language is easier to read than "Considering the Snail". For example, "I would never have imagined the slow passion to that deliberate progress" compared to "A Gull"'s "A seagull stood on my window ledge today."¹²

⁷ Simple, straightforward points of comparison.

⁸ Just selecting phrases, without any discussion. What could you have found to say about these words? Start off with "This suggests..." or "This may imply..."

⁹ Simple, quite basic point of comparison.

¹⁰ Quite an empty observation, unless it is linked to something about the meaning of the poem, in order to show understanding.

¹¹ Empty feature spotting gains no credit...

¹² Very general and not altogether relevant conclusion. Always aim to end as strongly as possible.

Examiner's Comments:

There is an issue with both 31 and 32 here, in that although the candidate makes some valid points, and grasps some key, if quite straightforward ideas, when words are selected their effects are rarely discussed. The response is also quite brief, considering that an hour is suggested as a suitable time to spend on this question (maybe broken up into 20 minutes for the first poem and 40 minutes for the second poem, as that includes comparison, too).

The response to the first poem would get a mark at the bottom of Band 3, whilst the response to the second poem, which is limited in its development, would get a mark representing the top of Band 2, making a total which is right on the border of Bands 2/3.

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EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 4:

31

“A Gull” is a poem about a seagull that stands on a window ledge and how the voice of the poem reacts to it. The structure of the poem is one stanza that includes a variety of complex and simple sentences, which reflects the frantic thoughts of the voice as they observe the seagull.¹

The voice of this poem suggests a brilliance that this seagull may possess. They admire the quick “calculation in those eyes” and the “White one”’s “tight firm forward body.” The words “quick, tight and firm” suggest the bird has power whereas the phrase “white one” suggests a purity from the use of “white” and “one” suggests a sense of superiority as there is only “one.”²

The voice of “A Gull” compares the bird to a supernatural being or a force of great power. We can see this when they say the bird was “a mutation” “a supergull.”³ Likewise when the gull is described “to bring the waste and dread of open waters, foundered voyages, matchless predators.”

This description of the gull suggests that it is a bringer of devastation, which would explain why the voice may fear the seagull as they would not want the seagull to devastate their life.⁴

¹ Succinct overview, with assured use of technical terminology. This would have been improved further if examples of the complex and simple sentences had been offered.

² Very assured analysis of language and effects. Note the succinct use of embedded quotations.

³ Clear understanding here.

⁴ Sensitive overview and evaluation.

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EXAMPLE ANSWERS AND EXAMINER COMMENTS FOR QUESTIONS IN COMPONENT 2

Unseen Poetry, Example Answer 4 (continued):

32

On the other hand, “Considering the Snail” written by Thom Gunn, is a poem where the voice describes the effect on him from seeing a snail.

The snail, similarly to the seagull, is presented to possess a brilliance.⁵ For example the snail is described to make a “bright path” “where rain has darkened the earth’s dark” suggesting that the trail this snail leaves is able to enlighten “the earth’s dark” which not even something as pure and as natural as rain could.⁶

However, in contrast to “A Gull”, the voice of “Considering the Snail” does not feel intimidated or threatened by the snail, but rather simply fascinated by the “passion to that deliberate progress of a snail.”⁷ This quote suggests that snails are passionate about their lives and that their movement is not boring and sloth-like but rather a constant struggle they endure.⁸

Both poems suggest that animals are far more brilliant and spectacular than others would believe or see.⁹ They are compared to things far superior to themselves, such as the snail described to have “antlers” “as he hunts” comparing it to an animal with majesty, like a stag. The gull is compared to “north winds, icebergs” and a “flash of salt.” It is compared to fierce forces of nature when in reality it’s just a seagull.¹⁰

“Considering a Snail” attempts to make the reader question the viewing of something as simple as a snail. It suggests that rather than simply being a snail it is fascinating and remarkable. Similarly the seagull, which represents nature, is feared by the man, even though in reality it is just a seagull.¹¹

⁵ Sensible focus on comparison.

⁶ Appreciation of style and effects. Originality in this response, showing an assured grasp of the poem’s meaning.

⁷ Astute appreciation of different standpoints of voices in the poems.

⁸ Sensitive evaluation.

⁹ Gets to the central point of comparison of both poems.

¹⁰ Confident appreciation of writers’ use of language.

¹¹ Focused conclusion. A pity the point about the seagull was repeated – can you think of a more decisive final sentence?

Examiner's Comments:

This is a well balanced response, in that both poems are considered thoughtfully, with some sensitive appreciation of language and effects, which allows well developed comparisons to be made, which is why the total mark for this response is in Band 5. Although the response to 31 was at the top of Band 4, this allowed more time to be spent on part 32, with its heavier weighting of marks.

This shows how important it is to organise your time sensibly. You also need to set aside time for reading, thinking and annotating, before you even put pen to paper. This candidate clearly had their ideas well in place before they started writing, which has had an impact on their overall achievement.

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