

O Level English Literature 2010

Unit 3: Poetry

Outline

As with Prose and Drama, the scheme of work will be illustrated by reference to a text, in this case the CIE Anthology, *Songs of Ourselves*. However, as there are already notes on the set poems available on the CIE website, reference will be made to these rather than to specially constructed appendices. In the past, students have tended to learn and reproduce notes from various study aids as an alternative to engaging actively with the poems and the questions set. Freshness of personal response rooted in the detail of the text is the key to success in the study of this genre.

Learning outcomes	Suggested Teaching activities	Learning resources
(i) to enjoy poetry as a vehicle for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – description – personal reflection – exploration of ideas – expression/ excitement of emotion – narrative – a mixture of two or more of the above. 	The danger in work on poetry is that the student becomes so bogged down by technical information that s/he is unable to produce a <u>fresh, personal response</u> . It is strongly advised that students should only be introduced to literary concepts when and if they are ready for it – when it will help them to articulate their own observations. They can be reassured that in the examination at this level, they need only know the basic terms and that if they are not aware of the right term, they can still score highly by describing it and its effect. For example, it is better for students to <i>explore</i> how the languor of Keats's Autumn is created by the repetition of z and s in 'the last ooziings hours by hours' and by his allusion to a worker trying to keep his eyes open in the narcotic atmosphere of the cider-press rather than merely identify 'assonance', 'onomatopoeia', 'personification' or 'metaphor' for their own sakes. Mere catalogues of technical terms indicate nothing about the student's response.	Set text CIE's Poetry Anthology <i>Songs of Ourselves</i> (Foundation Books, ISBN 81-7586-248-8) for use as a set text and/or an additional resource (or a similar anthology).
(ii) to enjoy and to be able to describe the sounds and music of poetry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – rhythm – rhyme and assonance – alliteration – onomatopoeia – enjambement/caesuras 	It is hoped that there will be much reading aloud of the poems at all stages so that the sounds can be appreciated.	CIE Notes for Teachers on Poems from the <i>Songs of Ourselves</i> .
(iii) to relate the sounds of poetry to meaning, tone and feeling	It is hoped that there will be much reading aloud of the poems at all stages so that the sounds can be appreciated.	A list of literary terms (e.g.) http://www.english-teaching.co.uk/sample/ (Critical terms.doc or Critical terms.pdf)
(iv) to appreciate the choice of diction in a poem, appreciating the various associations or connotations of words	Learning Outcomes (viii) and (ix) are crucial. It follows that students should be encouraged in all their activities to appreciate that there may be more than one way to read a poem and that all poetry readers find passages obscure or ambiguous at times precisely because poets are often trying to express almost inexpressible insights. They should not be afraid to say if they find part of a poem difficult to understand but they should be encouraged to explore what they think might be the meaning.	Past examination papers
(v) to enjoy the imagery of poetry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – similes – metaphors – personification 	Learning Outcomes (viii) and (ix) are crucial. It follows that students should be encouraged in all their activities to appreciate that there may be more than one way to read a poem and that all poetry readers find passages obscure or ambiguous at times precisely because poets are often trying to express almost inexpressible insights. They should not be afraid to say if they find part of a poem difficult to understand but they should be encouraged to explore what they think might be the meaning.	Past examination papers
(vi) to appreciate how imagery	Learning Outcomes (viii) and (ix) are crucial. It follows that students should be encouraged in all their activities to appreciate that there may be more than one way to read a poem and that all poetry readers find passages obscure or ambiguous at times precisely because poets are often trying to express almost inexpressible insights. They should not be afraid to say if they find part of a poem difficult to understand but they should be encouraged to explore what they think might be the meaning.	Past examination papers

Learning outcomes

- enhances/deepens the meaning and emotional charge of poetry.
- (vii) to appreciate the structure of poems and relate this to the rhyme, scheme and rhythm.
- (viii) to understand that there may be many layers of meaning in a poem
- (ix) to understand and enjoy ambiguity/ambivalence in poetry
- (x) to respond to the tone/ changes of tone in a poem
- (xi) where helpful, to appreciate cultural/historical backgrounds of different poems
- (xii) where helpful, to appreciate the relevance of literary antecedents to the work, for example in understanding the treatment of the ballad form in *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.
- (xiii) to experience the poem as a whole with each of the above relating to other items on the list to explore the ways that different poems explore similar themes to be able to communicate these experiences in essay form

Suggested Teaching activities

Students should also come to expect that their understanding of a poem will usually grow enormously through time and should not be disheartened if all does not immediately fall into place after a first contact with it.

The following types of task are progressive in nature and it is hoped will enable students to search ever more deeply into set poems:

1. Students to read widely in the anthology and select one poem to read out aloud perhaps and explain briefly why they enjoyed it or why it meant something to them. This might be an individual, pair or group exercise.
2. The teacher takes the class through one or two of these poems, helping the class to deepen their response, perhaps with the aid of the sort of activities suggested in the Notes for Teachers on the Anthology.
3. Groups or pairs prepare answers to the tasks on some of the poems delineated in the Notes for Teachers and bring their answers and observations to a full class discussion. Teachers would try to value all of their judgements, except when they show clear misunderstandings.
4. Individuals will prepare detailed responses to some of the poems and introduce class discussion on them, much as the teacher did at stage 2 of the process.
5. Individuals will prepare analyses of some of the poems as in the example in Appendix 6.

Students will proceed to answer examination-type questions on the poems they have studied.

Learning resources

Appendix 6