**Today’s key questions:**

1. Can I read and understand an unseen poem?
2. Can I comment on language, structure, tone, imagery and meaning when discussing a poem?
3. Can I produce a GCSE style answer to an unseen poetry question?

Period 7: UNSEEN POETRY

***The Vietnam War***

27.1 Unseen Poetry

**AO1** – Demonstrate your understanding of the poem’s meaning by selecting relevant quotations and discussing them in detail.

**AO2** – Discuss and analyse language devices used and comment on how the poem is structured and set out. Discuss the form of the poem. Remember to use the correct subject terminology and comment on how this links to the poet’s ideas.

**In ‘What Were They Like’, how does the poet present the speaker’s views about war?**

1. **Explore the connotations of the title.**
2. **Read the poem at least twice.**
3. **Consider the meaning of the poem and identify the poet’s ideas.**
   1. *If you are struggling to do this then look at the words used. Are they negative or positive?*
   2. *Look only at the beginning and the ending. What impressions/atmosphere are/is created?*
4. **Analyse the poet’s use of language and structure.**
5. **Select three quotations and analyse key words from them. What is the effect on the reader?**

**STEP ONE: CONNOTATIONS OF THE TITLE**

What Were They Like?

**STEP TWO: READ THE POEM (Twice)**

Did the people of Viet Nam  
use lanterns of stone?  
Did they hold ceremonies  
to reverence the opening of buds?  
Were they inclined to quiet laughter?  
Did they use bone and ivory,  
jade and silver, for ornament?  
Had they an epic poem?  
Did they distinguish between speech and singing?  
  
Sir, their light hearts turned to stone.  
It is not remembered whether in gardens  
stone gardens illumined pleasant ways.  
Perhaps they gathered once to delight in blossom,  
but after their children were killed  
there were no more buds.  
Sir, laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.  
A dream ago, perhaps. Ornament is for joy.  
All the bones were charred.  
it is not remembered. Remember,  
most were peasants; their life  
was in rice and bamboo.  
When peaceful clouds were reflected in the paddies  
and the water buffalo stepped surely along terraces,  
maybe fathers told their sons old tales.  
When bombs smashed those mirrors  
there was time only to scream.  
There is an echo yet  
of their speech which was like a song.  
It was reported their singing resembled  
the flight of moths in moonlight.  
Who can say? It is silent now.

***Denise Levertov***

**STEP THREE: IDENTIFY THE POET’S IDEAS**

**GRADE 4/5: Identify listing and a simile in the poem. Explain the effect.**

**GRADE 6: Identify listing, a simile and repetition in the poem and explain the effect. Highlight examples of positive language. Identify word classes and explain their effect on the reader. Why has Wordsworth used them in his poem?**

**GRADE 7+: Identify ONE semantic field and explain why it has been used. Discuss Wordsworth’s use of caesura and enjambment. What is the effect of these? Why does Wordsworth want to create this effect?**

**Grade 6/7**

The poet suggests that the Vietnamese were victims of war crimes in the war.

**Grade 4/5**

The poet suggests that the country of Vietnam was destroyed by war.

**Grade 7+**

The poet presents the peaceful Vietnamese as victims of brutality and inhumanity, and laments the loss of their individualism and culture.

**STEP FOUR: ANALYSE THE POET’S USE OF LANGUAGE, FORM AND STRUCTURE**

**Stuck? What are the connotations of “bitter”, “burned”, “charred”, “smashed”, “song”, “silent”?**

**Why does the poet use so many rhetorical questions?**

**Why do you think that the structure is so loose, with so much enjambment?**

**STEP FIVE: WHAT IS THE EFFECT ON THE READER?**

**WRITE YOUR QUOTATION IN HERE:**

**HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ON THE READER?**

**HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ON THE READER?**

**WRITE YOUR QUOTATION IN HERE:**

**HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ON THE READER?**

**WRITE YOUR QUOTATION IN HERE:**

**THE NEXT STEP: EXTEND YOUR LEARNING**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In ‘What Were They Like’, how does the poet present the speaker’s views about war? (24 marks)** |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

The final question is worth 8 marks. This question will require you to compare the unseen poem from the previous question to a new unseen poem.

It is likely this new poem will be quite short as you will not have a long time to answer it.

**This question is only testing you on AO2, meaning it is seeing if you can compare language, structure, form and other methods used by a writer.**

27.2 (8 marks)

**STEP ONE: CONNOTATIONS OF THE TITLE**

**The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner** by Randall Jarrell

**STEP TWO: READ THE POEM (Twice)**

From my mother’s sleep I fell into the State,

And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.

Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,

I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.

When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

**STEP THREE: IDENTIFY THE POET’S IDEAS**

**STEP FOUR: ANALYSE THE POET’S USE OF LANGUAGE, FORM AND STRUCTURE**

**Why is the ball turret gunner not named?**

**Why is the youth of the gunner mentioned?**

**What are the connotations of nightmare?**

**Why did they have to wash him out of the turret? What is this an image of?**

**STEP FIVE: WHAT SIMILARITIES ARE THERE WITH THE FIRST POEM?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In both poems, ‘What Were They Like?’ and ‘The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner’, the speakers describe their negative feelings about war. What are the similarities/differences between the ways that the poets present those feelings?** |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |