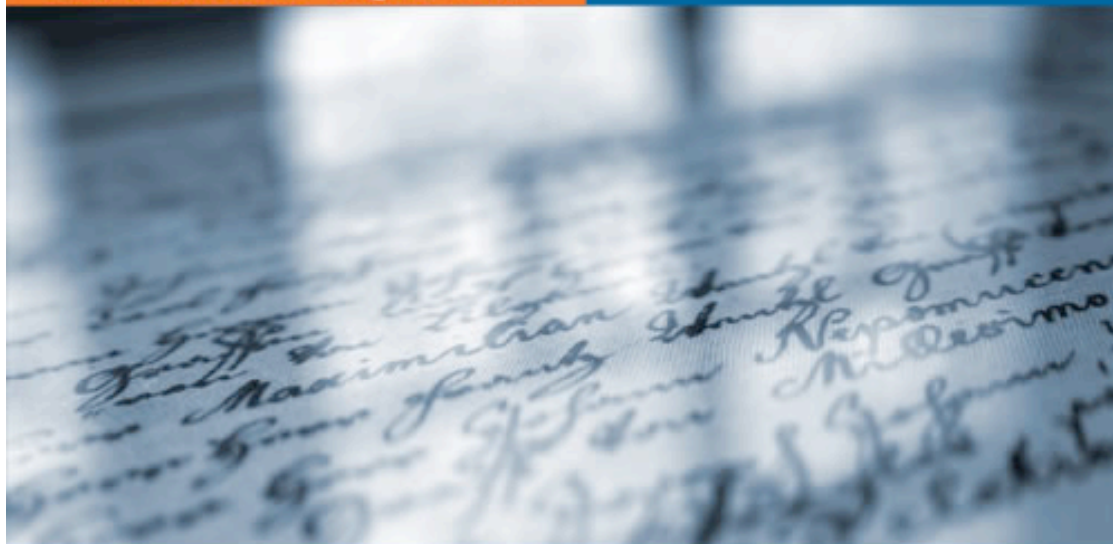


**REVISE**

**WISE**

**ENGLISH**

Junior Certificate - Higher Level

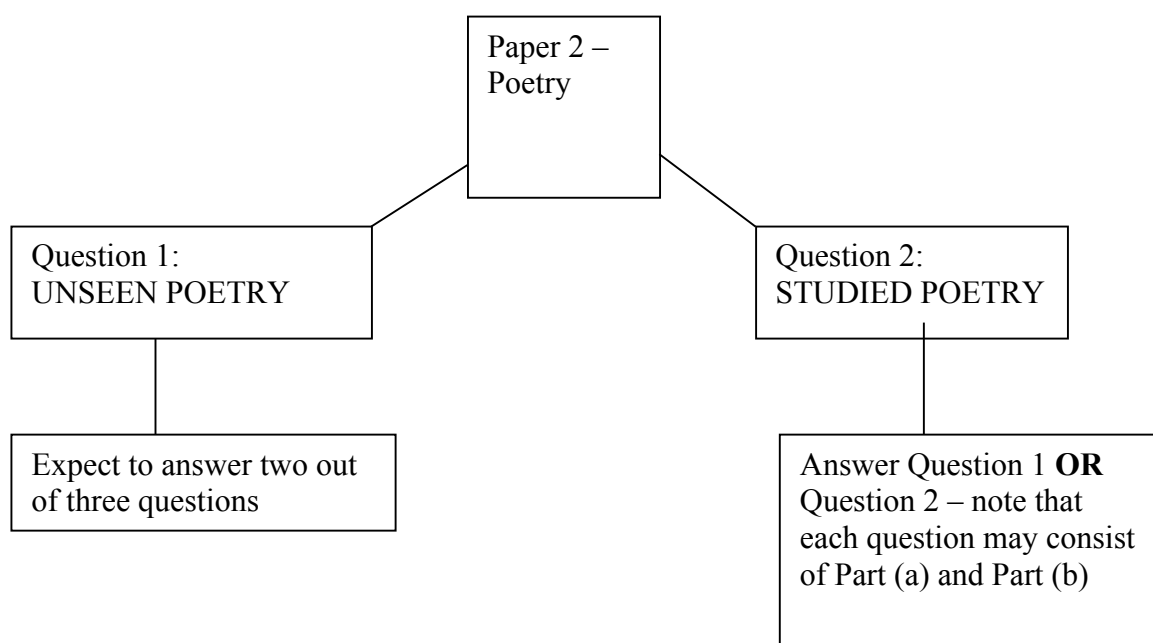


**STUDY GUIDELINES: POETRY**

## Paper 2 – Poetry

### Study Guidelines

The second section to appear on Paper 2 of the Higher Level exam paper is the Poetry Section. The structure of the Poetry Section may be summarised as follows:



In the Poetry Section, you have to answer questions on both an **unseen poem or poems** and on a **studied poem or poems**. In preparing for the poetry questions, ensure you understand:

- the subject matter of a poem,
- the poet's / speaker's viewpoint on this subject
- the poem's theme and its images
- the poet's style of writing.

## Unseen Poetry

It is impossible to say what type of poem might come up in the unseen section. The poem may be a short lyric or a longer narrative poem; it may even be the words of a song.

While one poem appears most years, occasionally two unseen poems have come up on the exam paper.

Above all else, you must read that poem several times. It will probably be very unfamiliar to you, so to engage with the poem at all, you do need to get a feel for what is being said or suggested in the poem.

You would definitely benefit from a second and even a third reading. Remember, the quality of your answer will depend upon the quality of your reading of the poem, so spend a few minutes reading carefully and attentively.

- **First reading** – read the poem slowly and carefully. Your first impression of the poem begins. Aim to get some sense of what the poem is about. Don't worry if you can't understand every line or every word of the poem.
- **Second reading** – Now re-read the poem. Try to read it 'aloud' in your mind and try to 'hear' the tone of the speaker's voice. On the second reading you should also listen out for any rhyme patterns that begin to emerge.
- **Third reading** – Now you're in a better position to think about the way the poet writes his/her poetry. Areas you may need to focus on include:
  - Think about the **structure** of the poem. Has the poet used quatrains? Is the poem written in a recognisable form, such as a sonnet or ballad?
  - Look closely at the **language**. Is the language simple or complex? Is the language concrete or abstract, informative or emotive? Does the poet use slang? Does he/she use conversational language or is it much more formal? Does the poet use imagery? Can you see similes or metaphors? What is the impact of such imagery?
  - Is the **mood** of the poem cold or warm? Is the poem one of bitterness, regret, gratitude, thanks or forgiveness? What words and images give you that feeling? Are there any colours in the poem? Is the setting bright or dark?
  - Do the **sounds** in the poem help to create a particular mood or atmosphere? Does the poet use alliteration, assonance or onomatopoeia? Any rhyme patterns?

Overall, you want to arrive at a clearer sense of what the poet's intention is in writing the poem. What is the poet's attitude towards the subject? Does the poet attempt to persuade the reader to adopt a similar viewpoint? Is the poem persuasive? Was there anything in the poem that surprised you or angered you or even shocked you?

# REVISE WISE - EXAMS WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT THEM!

After practising on unseen poems, your **skill** at reading attentively will improve. Close readings will also give you a **stronger like or dislike** of the poem. In questions where your personal assessment of the poem is expected, you'll be well prepared for giving a **genuine response** and be able to support your ideas with **relevant reference** to and quotation from the poem.

Each time you read the poem, underline and annotate images/phrases/lines from the poem that could be linked with the key words in the question. Or you could use a highlighter to mark areas of the poem that will be most useful to you in your response.

## Studied Poetry

You will be given a choice in the studied poetry question. You must answer one of two questions. Expect to see two general statements about poetry or a poem. Your task is to discuss one of the statements and to use a poem/poems studied by you in your discussion.

You may be asked to discuss two poems by one particular poet. You may be asked to compare poems on a similar theme by two poets – e.g. war, love, death, childhood, and happiness.

Make sure when you are revising your poetry, that you select poems on a variety of themes.

You may be asked to write about a poem's imagery or themes or setting.

You must make close reference to the poem(s) under discussion. If you can, quote a few phrase or lines from the poem where it is appropriate

Remember to give the title of the poem(s) and the name of the poet.

When answering this question, keep the following points in mind:

- Make sure you **read both questions very carefully** before deciding on which one to answer.
- **Underline the key words** in the question.
- Briefly, jot down a few poems you have studied which might be suitable in answering. Think about these for a few moments before **selecting a poem(s)** that gives you the best opportunity of exploring the statement fully.

### Remember:

Don't answer a question that wasn't asked –

*Make sure you answer the question asked. Read the questions carefully and underline the **key terms**. You must be clear about what is expected from you in your answer.*

# REVISE WISE - EXAMS WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT THEM!

Don't summarise the poem –

*Sometimes students who didn't revise their studied poems can remember reading them in class, but little more. All they can do is summarise the 'story' of the poem. But summary is rarely adequate.*

*You must revise your poems and come into the exam with an understanding of theme, language, imagery, and sound in the poems you have revised.*

Don't forget to support your points –

*While you are encouraged to engage with your poems on a personal level, you must support your points with evidence that is grounded in the poem(s) under discussion.*

Weak answers in the studied poetry section consist of vague, rambling answers, relying on summary, but with little analysis or insight.

## Questions for Student to Answer

Read the poem below attentively and then respond to the questions below.

### Nettles

My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.  
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,  
That regiment of spite behind the shed:  
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears  
The boy came seeking comfort and I saw 5  
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.  
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.  
At last he offered us a watery grin,  
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade  
And went outside and slashed in fury with it 10  
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade  
Stood upright anymore. And then I lit  
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead  
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain  
Had called up tall recruits behind the shed: 15  
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.

*Vernon Scannell*

[taken from *Oriental Streets*, ed. By John White, Edco, 1991, p.84]

*Nettles*, written by Vernon Scannell, is an example of a:

- a) ballad.
- b) sonnet.
- c) lyric.

The poem's structure is composed of:

- a) four quatrains.
- b) two octets.
- c) one octet and four rhyming couplets.

Which type of pattern does the poem have?

- a) An irregular rhyme pattern
- b) A regular rhyme pattern
- c) No rhyme pattern at all

Which of the following describes the rhyme pattern of the first quatrain?

- a) aabb
- b) abac
- c) abab

Which lines in the poem have a rhyme pattern of 'cdcd'?

- a) Lines 13,14,15,16
- b) Lines 5,6,7,8
- c) Lines 9,10,11,12

The line, 'Till not a nettle in that fierce parade' includes an example of:

- a) assonance.
- b) onomatopoeia.
- c) alliteration.

The phrase 'blisters beaded' includes an example of:

- a) assonance.
- b) onomatopoeia.
- c) alliteration.

The phrase 'green spears' includes an example of:

- a) assonance.
- b) onomatopoeia.
- c) alliteration.

What are several words and phrases in the poem associated with?

- a) War
- b) Peace
- c) Death

Which phrase shows the speaker's anger at what happened?

- a) 'We soothed him till his pain was not so raw'
- b) 'slashed in fury'
- c) 'I lit / A funeral pyre'

Which phrase shows that the boy feels a little better, having been comforted?

- a) 'he offered us a watery grin'
- b) 'his pain was not so raw'
- c) 'With sobs and tears/The boy came seeking comfort'

What is the main theme of the poem?

- a) That love hurts
- b) That nettles hurt
- c) That life hurts

The speaker in the poem is:

- a) a dreamer.
- b) a realist.
- c) a romantic.

The speaker's relationship with his son is one of:

- a) contempt.
- b) neglect.
- c) understanding.

The poem includes some very striking:

- a) aural images.
- b) tactile images.
- c) abstract images.

The image of the nettles as 'tall recruits' is an example of:

- a) symbolism.
- b) personification.
- c) exaggeration.