**De Aston**

**English Department**

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**Year 11: Unseen Poetry**

**Academic Excellence Booklet**

The role of the Academic Excellence Booklet is for you to complete these tasks over the next six weeks. These activities are purposely designed to challenge you, so don’t worry if you find them difficult. You’re meant to! Learning happens when people have to think hard. That being said, your English teacher is a specialist, so ask any of us for help, anytime!

1. *You Being Born*

* Read, annotate and analyse the poem using the FLIRTS prompts to guide you.

I saw you born.

It was remarkable.

You shot out from between your mother’s legs

like a rugby ball from a scrum

and the stocky Geordie midwife caught you neatly

and cried ‘Whoops! She’s come!’

You had a wrinkled jammy head

and spasmy legs like a portly frog’s.

From your belly button a white root waved

that had fed you all the months you’d grown

and ripened in your mother’s womb.

And let me tell you – I’m ashamed –

I forgot your mother completely – she had been

those things to me that one day you’ll discover

in someone else, and think ‘God, this is it!’

– My sweetheart, my warm dear, my red hot lover –

But for those moments, as the doctor

shoved cotton wool up your flat nose

and swabbed your eyes and cleaned your bum

I forgot completely all my life and love

and watched you like a pool of growing light

and whispered to myself ‘She’s come! She’s come!’

**F:** From what perspective is the poem written? Who does the voice belong to, one or could it be applied to many? How does the poet’s use of narrative form convey the speaker’s emotions?

**L:** Identify examples and then analyse the effect of the poet’s use of the following: declaratives, similes, repetition.

**I:** Focus on stanza three. Exploring quotations, write a SQuAD paragraph responding to the following question: To what extent do you agree that *You Being Born* has moralistic undertones?

**R:** How does the poet’s use of an irregular rhyme scheme reflect the experience that is being described? Can you spot any words in particular that rhyme and if so, why do you think the poet has done this?

**T:** Highlight vocabulary that contributes to a semantic field of reflection. Does the theme of reflection (memory) always appear positive?

**S:** Write a short summary of each stanza exploring how the focus (shift or return), and tone reflects the speaker’s emotion. What is the effect of the poet including dialogue in the poem?

2. Poetic Meter

What is meter?

Meter is a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that defines the rhythm of some poetry. These stress patterns are defined in groupings, called feet, of two or three syllables. A pattern of unstressed-stressed, for instance, is a foot called an [iamb](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/iamb). The type and number of repeating feet in each line of poetry define that line's meter. For example, iambic pentameter is a type of meter that contains five [iambs](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/iamb) per line (thus the prefix “penta,” which means five).

Some additional key details about meter:

* The study and use of meter in poetry is known as "prosody."
* A poem can use a single meter throughout, or it can have different meters in different places. Meter can be analysed on the level of a whole poem, a [stanza](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/stanza), a line, or even a single foot.
* The way meter is measured depends on the language in which a poem is written. Meter in English verse is accentual, meaning it is derived from the emphasis placed on certain syllables.

**Iambic Pentameter**

The unstressed-stressed pattern of the iamb (da-**dum**da-**dum**) closely mimics the natural rhythm of speech, making it a versatile foot for composing poetry.

**Question:** How does Shakespeare’s use of iambic pentameter in Sonnet 18 reflect the speaker’s process of internal thought?

## Sonnet 18

*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?   
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:   
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,   
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:   
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,   
And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;   
And every fair from fair sometime declines,   
By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm’d;   
But thy eternal summer shall not fade   
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;   
Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,   
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:   
   So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,   
   So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

1. Preparing to Compare

Remind yourself of the poem *You Being Born.*

Recap questions:

From what perspective is the poem told? What emotions does the narrative poem convey?

Now read the poem *Dad.*

* Read, annotate and analyse the poem using the FLIRTS prompts to guide you.

**Dad**

*Elaine Feinstein*

Your old hat hurts me, and those black

fat raisins you liked to press into

my palm from your soft heavy hand:

I see you staggering back up the path

with sacks of potatoes from some local farm,

fresh eggs, flowers. Every day I grieve

for your great heart broken and you gone.

You loved to watch the trees. This year

you did not see their Spring.

The sky was freezing over the fen

as on that somewhere secretly appointed day

you beached: cold, white-faced, shivering.

What happened, old bull, my loyal

hoarse-voiced warrior? The hammer

blow that stopped you in your track

and brought you to a hospital monitor

could not destroy your courage

to the end you were

uncowed and unconcerned with pleasing anyone.

I think of you now as once again safely

at my mother's side, the earth as

chosen as a bed, and feel most sorrow for

all that was gentle in

my childhood buried there

already forfeit, now forever lost.

**F:** From what perspective is the poem written? Who does the voice belong to, one or could it be applied to many? How does the poet’s use of narrative form convey the speaker’s emotions?

**L:** Identify examples and then analyse the effect of the poet’s use of the following: declaratives, metaphor, hyperbole.

**I:** Focus on stanza three. Exploring quotations, write a SQuAD paragraph responding to the following question: To what extent do you agree that the poem *Dad* expresses feelings of admiration and courage?

**R:** How does the poet’s use of an irregular rhyme scheme reflect the experience that is being described? Can you spot any words in particular that rhyme and if so, why do you think the poet has done this?

**T:** Highlight vocabulary that contributes to a semantic field of reflection. Does the theme of reflection (memory) always appear positive?

**S:** Write a short summary of each stanza exploring how the focus (shift or return), and tone reflects the speaker’s emotion. What is the effect of the poet including caesura and end-stop line in the poem?

1. Completing and Unseen Comparison

Using your analysis of the poems *You Being Born* and *Dad,* write a practice exam response to the following question.

Question**: To what extent do the poems *You Being Born* and *Dad* communicate the importance of reflection and appreciation?**

Use the following planning grid to help you organise your response. Remember, you are only aiming for a possible 8 marks.

TOP TIP: Aim to make a brief comment on each of the following for BOTH poems, remembering to consistently compare.

**F: Form**

**L: Language**

**I: Interpretation**

**R: Rhyme**

**T: Tone**

**S: Structure**

|  | ***You Being Born*** | ***Dad*** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Introduction (comment on form, perspective, summary of the poem) | . |  |
| Paragraph one (point one). Message of the poem? How does LANGUAGE convey this? Remember techniques! | . |  |
| Paragraph two (point two). Feelings expressing in the poem, how does structure reflect this? | . |  |
| Paragraph three (point three). Poet’s intention, do they want us to reflect on our own relationships/values? |  |  |
| Paragraph four (point four). What methods are different? Does poem A use different figurative language techniques? |  |  |
| Conclusion. How successful/what methods are the most effective? What can we take away from the poems? |  |  |

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For more resources, including literacy support, visit www.deastonenglish.com