

Chapter 3: Written study text – Poetry

This chapter covers material on **poetry** which will help you prepare for Achievement Standard 91098 (English 2.1), 'Analyse specified aspect(s) of studied written texts, supported by evidence'.

This achievement standard forms part of the *Making Meaning (listening, reading, viewing)* and *Creating Meaning (speaking, writing, viewing)* strands in English, with a particular focus on reading and writing. You will be required to write a structured written answer in an academic essay format as a response to a topic in the external exam. A number of different written text types may be studied for this achievement standard and it is possible to write about a *combination* of texts.

This chapter focuses on analysing *short written texts*. The featured genre in this chapter is *poetry* and links to the broad theme of *Fear and Wonder* used throughout this learning workbook.

This chapter provides you with practice in a range of strategies to use when you are engaged in a *poetry* study. The featured poems in this chapter focus on the theme: *Our Natural World*, featuring views that express both fear and wonder about our world and about what is happening to it. These poems are: 'Lament' by Gillian Clarke (Wales); 'Flower-Fed Buffaloes' by Vachel Lindsay (USA); 'Composed on Westminster Bridge' by William Wordsworth (England), and 'Report to Wordsworth' by Boey Kim Cheng (Singapore/Australia). Any of these poems would be suitable for exam essays. You should become familiar with at least three poems to write about in the exam.

Other suitable poems are:

- Sujata Bhatt: 'A Different History'
- Gerard Manley Hopkins: 'Pied Beauty'
- Allen Curnow: 'Time'
- Judith Wright: 'Hunting Snake'
- Kevin Halligan: 'The Cockroach'
- Margaret Atwood: 'The City Planners'
- Boey Kim Cheng: 'The Planners'
- Norman MacCaig: 'Summer Farm'
- Elizabeth Brewster: 'Where I Come From'
- James K. Baxter: 'The Bay'
- Edward Thomas: 'Rain'
- Matthew Arnold: 'Dover Beach'
- George Meredith: extracts from 'Modern Love'
- Walt Whitman: extracts from 'Song of Myself'
- Thomas Hardy: 'He Never Expected Much'

- Fleur Adcock: 'The Telephone Call'
- Peter Porter: 'A Consumer's Report'
- Charles Tennyson Turner: 'On Finding a Small Fly Crushed in a Book'
- Percy Bysshe Shelley: 'Ozymandias'
- Stevie Smith: 'Away Melancholy'
- William Shakespeare: 'Sonnet 116'

Achievement criteria

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Analyse specified aspects of studied written texts, supported by evidence.	Analyse specified aspects of studied written texts, convincingly , supported by evidence.	Analyse specified aspects of studied written texts, perceptively , supported by evidence.

Success criteria

You are learning to analyse how specified aspects of poetry texts create meaning by:

- analysing the ideas in the texts
- analysing the purpose and audience of the texts
- analysing the poetic structure of the texts and how this structure develops the ideas
- analysing the language features and how these craft the ideas expressed in the poem.

You are learning to provide supporting evidence by:

- referring to specific, relevant details in the text and explaining their effect
- using specific, relevant quotes from the text and explaining their effect.

Read and respond

As part of a poetry study, you should read and respond to as many poems as possible, including the ones discussed in this chapter, ones you study in class and those you encounter when doing your other achievement standards. Think of your poetry journal as a tool that will help you express your own views and first impressions, as well as helping you contribute to class discussions. Write your notes as if you will be telling a classmate about the poems. The effort you make now will have a really positive spin-off when you write an essay in the exam which includes your own original insights.

The SIFT method to analyse and revise poems

- Specify the **s**ubject matter and sense of the poem through a brief summary.
- Inform us of the **i**ntention of the poet and his/her main ideas overall.
- Focus on the **f**orm (structure/punctuation) and the feelings conveyed (poet's attitude/tone used) and on how this highlights the main ideas.
- Tell us about the **t**echniques, imagery and poetic language that show the ways ideas are presented. Always include reference to sound (auditory) images.

Task 3.1 – Reading journal

Use the SIFT method to write responses for your journal entries. You can use a soft 1B5 lined book or any other suitable notebook. Glue a copy of the poem into your journal to annotate. Poetry appeals to our senses and often has a strong visual element. Draw or glue in pictures which relate to the poem.

Poetry study: Our natural world matters

Task 3.2 – ‘Lament’ by Gillian Clarke

Ans. p.179

Background

Gillian Clarke was born in Cardiff, Wales, in 1937. She is a poet, playwright, editor, translator (from Welsh), and President of Ty Newydd, the writers' centre in North Wales which she co-founded in 1990. Her work has been translated into ten languages. She runs an organic smallholding with her husband and children in Ceredigion, where they raise a small flock of sheep, and care for the land. All of the details which are woven through the poem 'Lament' are derived from newspaper items which distressed her at the time of the Gulf War of 1991. (Source: <http://www.ocr.org.uk>)

Read the poem 'Lament' and then answer the questions that follow.

Note: A lament is an expression of grief. It can also be a sad, military tune played on a bugle.

Lament

For the green turtle with her pulsing burden, in search of the breeding-ground.	
For her eggs laid in their nest of sickness.	3
For the cormorant in his funeral silk, the veil of iridescence on the sand, the shadow on the sea.	6
For the ocean's lap with its mortal stain. For Ahmed at the closed border. For the soldier in his uniform of fire.	9
For the gunsmith and the armourer, the boy fusilier who joined for the company, the farmer's sons, in it for the music.	12
For the hook-beaked turtles, the dugong and the dolphin, the whale struck dumb by the missile's thunder.	15
For the tern, the gull and the restless wader, the long migrations and the slow dying, the veiled sun and the stink of anger.	18
For the burnt earth and the sun put out, the scalded ocean and the blazing well. For vengeance, and the ashes of language.	21

Glossary

- Lines 4 and 16: cormorant / tern / gull / wader – types of seabird
 Line 5: iridescence – a surface of luminous or shimmering colours
 Line 11: fusilier – rifleman
 Line 14: dugong – large aquatic mammal

Questions

1. List all the nouns that follow the word 'For', then comment on why each stanza contains the word 'For'.

2. In stanza 1, Clarke uses an effective metaphor to describe the turtle's nest. Explain why it is effective.

3. In stanza 2, the cormorant is described as being covered in oil. Identify and comment on the technique that Gillian Clarke uses to describe this and explain the effect that is created.

4. In stanza 4, Clarke moves from the environmental cost of the war to the human cost. Who is Ahmed and why has she chosen this name?

5. Comment on the image, 'his uniform of fire'.

6. Quote and discuss three details which effectively convey the level of damage done to the environment.

7. In the table below, list the adjectives used to describe what has happened to nature.

Adjectives	Nature
	Earth
	Ocean
	Well

8. Comment on the effectiveness of the choice of adjectives to convey Clarke's message.

Task 3.3 – 'The Flower-Fed Buffaloes' by Vachel Lindsay

Background

Vachel Lindsay (1879–1931) was born in Illinois in the USA. His poetry, which he often sold on the streets, or traded for food and shelter during the long walking trips that he undertook, is characterised by experimentation with sound. There are recordings of his poetry, recited by the poet himself, available on the internet and it is worthwhile listening to some of these to understand the auditory effects Lindsay sought to create.

In 1830, an estimated 70–150 million buffalo roamed the Great Plains of North America in vast, seemingly endless herds. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were fewer than 1 000 buffalo on the entire North American continent (i.e. USA and Canada). They had been hunted to the brink of extinction by Europeans.

Before the arrival of Europeans, Native Americans – such as the Blackfeet and Pawnee tribes – hunted buffalo for meat and skins. This was hunting on a relatively small scale. However, once Europeans moved to the Great Plains, and especially after the building of railways started in the 1850s, the buffalo herds were hunted practically to depletion. A common practice, for example, was to shoot the animals from the windows of moving trains, leaving the carcasses to rot. Between 1870 and 1875 alone, it is estimated that European settlers and hunters killed about 2 500 000 animals.

Like the buffalo, the Blackfeet and Pawnee tribes' populations declined rapidly in the nineteenth century, as a result of conflict with the traditional enemies, and also because of diseases like cholera and smallpox that came with the European settlers, and to which the Native Americans did not have immunity.

(Sources: <http://wildlife.blurtit.com>; <http://englishlanguageliterature.wordpress.com>)

Read the poem 'The Flower-Fed Buffaloes' and then answer the questions that follow.

The Flower-Fed Buffaloes

The flower-fed buffaloes of the spring	
In the days of long ago,	
Ranged where the locomotives sing	
And the prairie flowers lie low: –	
The tossing, blooming, perfumed grass	5
Is swept away by wheat,	
Wheels and wheels and wheels spin by	
In the spring that still is sweet.	
But the flower-fed buffaloes of the spring	
Left us, long ago,	10
They gore no more, they bellow no more,	
They trundle around the hills no more: –	
With the Blackfeet, lying low,	
With the Pawnees, lying low,	
Lying low.	15

Questions

- Using the background information as a guide, comment on the main purpose and message of Lindsay's poem. Quote evidence to support your answer.

- In what ways are the buffaloes linked to the Blackfeet and Pawnees? What point is Lindsay making about them?

- Discuss how repetition, rhyme and punctuation have been used effectively in the poem to convey ideas about the buffaloes.

- Complete the table below.

Words / phrases describing the buffalo	Words / phrases describing the environment

- Comment on the tone and the poet's attitude to his subject matter as shown in these words and phrases.

- Explain the references to 'locomotives' and 'wheat' in relation to the main message of the poem.

The sonnet

The **sonnet** is a type of poem (always 14 lines long) that is used to express intense, personal emotion and to convey a poet's discovery of his or her feelings about life, love, religion, spirituality, death, suffering, beauty, etc. This poetic form has been popular since the sixteenth century. There are two main forms, the Petrarchan (or Italian) and the English (or Shakespearean) form.

Italian/Petrarchan sonnet	English/Shakespearean sonnet
Has one octave (consisting of 2×4 lines)	Has three quatrains (4 lines each)
Has one sestet (consisting of 2×3 lines)	Has one rhyming couplet (2 lines)
Rhyme scheme is: <i>abab cdcd efef ghg</i>	Rhyme scheme is: <i>abab cdcd efef gg</i>

Task 3.4 – ‘Composed on Westminster Bridge’ by William Wordsworth

Background

William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 to 23 April 1850) was a major English poet and one of those who helped to launch what became known as the Romantic Age in English literature. (Samuel Taylor Coleridge was another important Romantic poet and a friend of Wordsworth's.) With the Romantic Movement in poetry came a heightened awareness of the human spirit, and a renewed reverence for nature. Many Romantic poets held pantheist views, believing that there was an '*animus mundi*' or world spirit in creation, and that humans are all part of nature and of one another. In the Petrarchan sonnet 'Composed on Westminster Bridge', written in the summer of 1802, William Wordsworth shares a moment of quiet contemplation, looking over London while standing on the bridge as dawn approaches, to arrive at a profound truth about this '*animus mundi*'. The reverent tone and mood of contemplation he creates is expressed through the powerful simplicity of the language and the slow rhythms of the poem. The annotations offer a guide to an analysis of the poem, which reveals the poet's feelings and attitude to his subject matter.



Strong, declarative statement showing reverence and admiration of the view.

The diction here links to the noun 'soul' and to how the sight before him moves him so profoundly.

His reverence for London is shown in the use of a capital letter and the personification of the city as royalty wearing the beauty of the morning light like a cloak.

The sestet opens with another strong declarative statement. Its syntax is similar to that of the opening line, reinforcing how the dawn light soaks into the natural surroundings as beautifully as it did at the dawn of time – 'first splendour'.

Reference to soul – the spirit that moves the poet to admire this amazing sight.

Composed Upon Westminster Bridge

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by

A sight so touching in its majesty:

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still.

The sense of quiet is enhanced by the personification of the houses as being asleep and the way the people inside are referred to as the houses' 'mighty heart': the essence of the 'animus mundi' which still lies quiet and still in the early morning.

The poet's reverence for God as the creator of all that the poet sees before him is shown by the use of the adjective 'Dear' and the exclamation mark.

A calm mood is created by the use of the adjectives 'silent' and 'bare', as well as by the slow listing of the buildings that 'lie open' to nature, represented by the fields below and sky above: an all-encompassing world spirit.

The repetition of 'Ne'er / never' shows the depth of the poet's admiration and reverence, as well as a sense of intense calmness and peace.

The soft sibilance of the 's' sounds in the sestet reinforces the sense of peace and calm, as do the soft 'l' and 'th' sounds.

An exemplar paragraph about the poem, 'Composed on Westminster Bridge' by William Wordsworth

Topic: Analyse the ways in which a writer has responded to an important idea in a text you have studied.

The following paragraphs have been written on this topic, based on one poem, using the above notes and annotations. The paragraphs focus on aspects of tone and structure in the poem.

There is more guidance on writing paragraphs and essays in Chapter 8.

In the Petrarchan sonnet 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' by William Wordsworth, Wordsworth shares a moment of quiet contemplation, looking over London while standing on the bridge as dawn approaches, to arrive at a profound truth about the world spirit in creation. This belief in a world spirit, or 'animus mundi', was typical of the Romantic Movement at the time and with it came a heightened awareness of the human spirit, and a renewed reverence for nature.

Reference to poet's response/thesis statement.

Understanding of literary context and reference to nature.

The reverent tone and the mood of contemplation Wordsworth creates are expressions of his own feelings of awe about nature and the view, expressed through the powerful simplicity of the language and the slow rhythms of the poem. The strong, declarative opening statement (line 1) shows the poet's immediate feelings of reverence and admiration of the view, while the reference to 'soul' (line 2) conveys the spirit that moves him to admire this amazing sight. The diction here links to the noun 'soul' showing how profoundly the sight moves him. His reverence for London is also shown in the use of a capital letter for the word 'City' and the personification of the city as royalty wearing the beauty of the morning light like a cloak (lines 4–5). A calm mood is created using the adjectives 'silent' and 'bare', as well as through the slow listing of the buildings that 'lie open' to nature, represented by the fields below and sky above (lines 6–7). This shows the poet's belief in and reverence for an all-encompassing world spirit.

Immediate focus on tone to indicate poet's response/attitude/link to thesis statement.

Range of details and techniques discussed on aspects of nature.

The poem is structured so that the sestet opens (line 9) with another strong declarative statement with a similar syntax to that of the opening line, reinforcing how the dawn light soaks into the natural surroundings as beautifully as it did at the dawn of time, as we see in the biblical allusion to the 'first splendour' (line 10) when God created the world. The repetition of 'Never' (line 11) shows the depth of Wordsworth's admiration and reverence, as well as a sense of intense calmness and peace. The soft sibilance of the 's' sounds, found throughout the poem, emphasises the sense of peace and calm, as do the soft 'l' and 'th' sounds. The poet's reverence for God as the creator of nature and all that the poet sees before him is shown also by the use of the adjective 'Dear' and the exclamation mark (line 13). The sense of quiet is enhanced by the personification of the houses in the closing lines as being asleep and the way the people inside are referred to as the 'mighty heart' which is the essence of the 'animus mundi' lying quiet and still in the early morning (lines 13–14). Readers respond to the deep-felt emotion in the poem and can appreciate the experience of nature and creation that the poet has shared with them.

Focus on the poem's structure and related poetic techniques throughout paragraph.

Comment on sound devices is essential.

Good tie-back and focus on the readers' response.

POETRY

Note: Imagery is the use of figurative language such as personification, metaphors and similes to create a visual image of an important idea.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Ans. p.180

Boey Kim Cheng was born in Singapore in 1965. He now lives and works in Australia. This poem has echoes of several sonnets by Wordsworth (such as the one you have analysed in Task 3.4). As the references to Wordsworth's poetry are deliberate and have real relevance to the themes of the poem by Boey Kim Cheng, they need to be referred to as background. Wordsworth used the Petrarchan (or Italian) form of the sonnet but Cheng prefers here to use the Shakespearean (or English) form with the final rhyming couplet (see page 61).

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AS 91098 (English 2.1)

Chapter 1 – Written study text – Novel

Tasks 1.1 to 1.6

Students' individual work.

Task 1.7 – Symbolism (page 18)

1. A burning cross – the destruction of Christianity (cross symbolising Christ); rage (flames) at someone's death (cross symbolising death); or intense feelings about Christianity or death.
2. An enormous tree losing its leaves – the cycle of life and death as symbolised by the changing seasons; a person with a big personality (the tree) losing his or her liveliness (the leaves).
3. The colour red slashed on a black background – the red slash symbolises rage or violence, reinforced by the black background; a breaking heart (red slash).
4. Rain pelting down – feelings of intense sadness, like tears; someone's gloomy, angry mood.
5. The Wellington Beehive building – politicians working like busy bees in a hive of activity, or running around in circles.

Tasks 1.8 to 1.10

Students' individual work.

Chapter 2 – Written study text – Shakespearean drama

Tasks 2.1 to 2.10

Students' individual work.

Chapter 3 – Written study text – Poetry

Task 3.1

Students' individual work.

Task 3.2 – 'Lament' by Gillian Clarke (page 57)

1. Nouns: turtle, burden, eggs, nest, cormorant, veil, shadow, ocean's lap, Ahmed, soldier, gunsmith, armourer, fusilier, farmer's sons, turtles, dugong, dolphin, whale, tern, gull, wader, migrations, dying, sun, stink of anger, earth, sun, ocean, well, vengeance, ashes of language.
The poem is a lament for the suffering caused to all living things and to the environment by the war. The word 'for' is used in each stanza to indicate what and who are being lamented. The nouns following the 'word for' in every stanza represent everyone and everything that suffered: the environment, the ocean, animals, birds, and human beings. In addition, the poet laments and mourns for the desire for vengeance that caused the Gulf War.
2. The metaphor, 'nest of sickness', indicates that the eggs will not hatch normally since they have been laid in sand contaminated by the oil spills.

3. The poet uses a metaphor, 'the cormorant in his funeral silk', to show that the black oil in which the bird is covered will kill it. The oil is like black silk; black is the colour worn to funerals, and ironically it looks beautiful and is as soft as 'silk' but the effect of it on the bird is deadly.
4. This is a typical Middle-Eastern name and it has been chosen to show that it refers to an ordinary person who is suffering as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait for its oil, and the burning of the oil tanks in the Gulf War in 1991.
5. The phrase, 'the soldier in his uniform of fire', conveys a horrific image of a soldier ablaze as a result of the constant bombing in the war.
6. *Examples:*

Detail 1: the 'veil of iridescence' on the beach and sea casts a soft sheen of light but is, in fact, a 'shadow', indicating its bleak effect on the environment and showing the spreading stain of oil from bombed oil wells.

Detail 2: the 'ocean's lap with its mortal stain' shows how the oil spill on the ocean covers it like an enormous, ugly and deadly mark.

Detail 3: 'the burnt earth and the sun put out, the scalded ocean' conveys how the flames from the burning oil reach so high into the sky they seem to put the sun out. The flames also destroy the surrounding land, and the burning oil on the ocean's surface kills all life in the ocean. These metaphors powerfully evoke a sense of death hanging over this once beautiful, natural environment which has been ravaged by the effects of the Gulf War, conveying the poet's deep grief.

7. burnt Earth; scaled ocean; blazing well
8. The three adjectives together convey powerful images of the raging oil-well fires that have the ability to destroy living creatures both on land and in the ocean.

Task 3.3 – 'The Flower-Fed Buffaloes' by Vachel Lindsay (page 59)

1. Lindsay conveys the message that both animals – such as the buffalo – and indigenous peoples – such as the Pawnees and Blackfeet – can be brought to the point of extinction. This happens if there are no controls or restrictions on colonisation and 'progressive' technologies, as exemplified by the railways at the time he wrote.
Evidence: 'The flower-fed buffaloes of the spring / In the days of long ago, / Ranged where the locomotives sing' and 'They trundle around the hills no more: / With the Blackfeet, lying low, / With the Pawnees, lying low'.
2. Lindsay links the buffalo and the Native American people in the last four lines of the poem: 'They trundle around the hills no more: / With the Blackfeet, lying low, / With the Pawnees, lying low, / lying low' to show that both the animals and the people fell victim to the impacts of colonisation. These impacts include the building of railways across the range of the buffalo, and the spreading of diseases that caused illness and death.
3. The repetition of words and phrases, such as *flower-fed buffaloes; spring; long ago; wheels; no more; lying low*, ensure that these words remain in the memory of the listener or reader as they provide an overall summary of the main theme of the poem, namely that in times

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