

Analysing Poetry

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Analyse a single line: 'a pencil worn to bone' (stanza 1).

Step 1 · Method

Metaphor.

Step 2 · Connotations of 'bone'

Thinness, wearing away, the body, death.

Step 3 · Effect

The pencil, used down to almost nothing, quietly foreshadows the father's own decline.

Answer: A small image of use and wear that hints at mortality.

Check: Method → connotation → effect.

2. Now try one with the steps

Link form to meaning: why ABBA rhyme?

Step 1 · Describe the form

Step 2 · Link

Step 3 · Effect

Answer:

3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. What three strands should you analyse in a poem? [1]

2. How many stanzas does 'The Tin' have? Write the number. [1]

3. What is enjambment? [1]

4. What is a caesura? [1]
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5. What is a volta? [1]
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6. Identify the simile in stanza 2 of 'The Tin'. [1]
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7. Explain how the ABBA rhyme scheme links to the poem's subject. [2]
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8. What changes in stanza 3? [2]
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9. Why might the poet include the father's words 'Every plant can find its line' without speech marks? [2]
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10. Analyse 'The plot's gone wild. The council sent a letter.' [3]
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11. Explore two readings of the final words 'Doing better'. [2]
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12. How does 'He never wrote what he was thinking in' create meaning in stanza 1? [3]
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13. In Blake's 'London', what does the phrase 'mind-forg'd manacles' suggest? [2]
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14. Write a thesis for an essay on 'The Tin'.

[2]

4. Before you hand it in

Only analysing language, ignoring form and structure.

Always cover all three strands: ask why this shape, where it turns, how it ends.

'There is enjambment.' (and stopping)

Explain why the poet chose it here and what it does.

Assuming the speaker is the poet.

Say 'the speaker' unless you know otherwise.

Paraphrasing the poem line by line.

Organise by ideas or methods, with short quotations.