

between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE SAMPLE

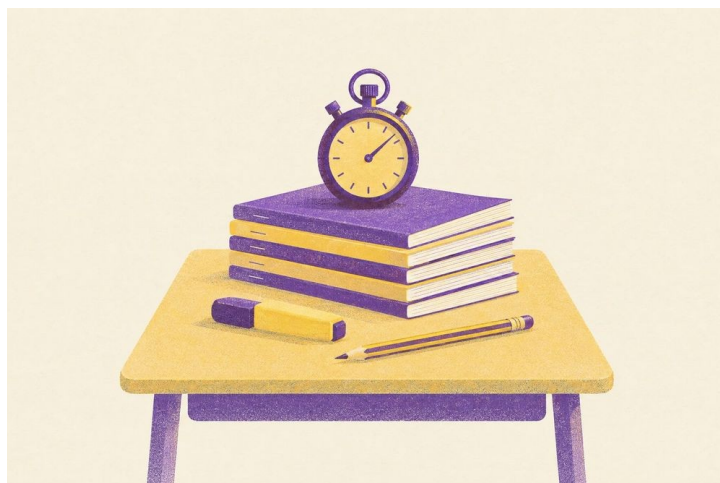
Unseen poetry: Raising Achievement

Free drill: teacher guide

1 drills of about 25 minutes

Slides, a student sheet and answers for every drill

Written for the AQA specification

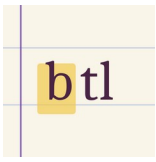


How the drills work

Thirty short Raising Achievement drills for AQA Literature Paper 2, Section C (unseen poetry), each built for a 25-minute intervention session. Every drill prints a short public-domain poem in full (two poems for a 28.2 drill), explodes one quotation through AO1 and AO2 questions (context, AO3, is not assessed in this section), then has students plan an answer, write an introduction or write one comparison paragraph, and check it in green pen. Poems with no title of their own take their first line as a title, as the exam would.

Do Now	Five quick retrieval questions, answered in silence and self-marked.
Focus reminder	What the skill or exam question asks for, in three or four plain points.
Read and check	The extract with line numbers, then quick questions to make sure everyone has understood it.
Quotation explosion	One quotation, exploded with AO1 and AO2 questions.
Technique	One method or sentence skill, modelled on the extract.
The question	An exam-style question in AQA's wording. Students plan an answer or write the introduction, never a full essay, then compare with a model.
Have a go	A second short task on a new moment or extract.
Green pen	A checklist to improve the answer before the sheets are collected.

Each drill comes as an editable slide deck with notes on every slide and a printable student sheet. Run them weekly in intervention sessions, in any order within a topic.



Topics

Nature

These drills train the reading routine on poems about the natural world: what happens, who speaks, how it feels, then how the poet does it. The most common error is describing the creature or the season and forgetting the speaker, so keep asking what the poem makes the speaker, and the reader, feel. Students also list techniques without effects; insist on 'this makes the reader...' after every method. Drill 5 is a short 28.2 comparison, written as one paragraph.

Drills: 1 (A narrow fellow in the grass)

Drill 1: A narrow fellow in the grass

Nature · How the poet presents the speaker's feelings about the snake

Do Now	Focus reminder, poem and check	Quotation explosion and technique	The question: plan	Green pen	Have a go
3 min	5 min	5 min	8 min	2 min	2 min

- Read the poem aloud and pause before the last line, so students hear the drop in tone.
- Common error: writing that the speaker hates nature. Stanza 5 shows the opposite: the snake is the exception.
- The poet never names the snake. Ask why: leaving it unnamed keeps it mysterious, and a little frightening.
- AO3 (context) is not assessed in unseen poetry, so the explosion uses AO1 and AO2 only. Biography can be mentioned in passing, but it earns no marks.

Do Now answers

1. Why do we write 'the speaker' about the voice in a poem, and not 'the poet'? **The voice may be an invented character, so we cannot assume it is the poet.**
2. What does question 28.1 ask you to write about? **One poem you have not seen before: how the poet presents a feeling, idea or person named in the question.**
3. Which two assessment objectives are marked in question 28.1? **AO1 (your response, backed by quotations) and AO2 (language, form and structure).**
4. What is a euphemism? **A mild or indirect word used in place of a blunt one, such as 'passed away' for 'died'.**
5. What is a quatrain? **A stanza of four lines.**

Check your understanding

1. What is the "narrow fellow"? **A snake. The poet never names it.**
2. Where does the snake like to live? **In "a boggy acre": cool, wet ground.**
3. What did the speaker think the snake was when they were a child? **A "whip-lash" lying in the sun.**
4. How does the speaker feel whenever they meet the snake? **Frightened: they feel "a tighter breathing" and "zero at the bone".**

Quotation explosion: "Without a tighter breathing, And zero at the bone."

AO1	What feeling does this ending show, and how is it different from stanza 5?	Fear. In stanza 5 the speaker feels warm "cordiality" towards "nature's people", but the snake always brings a cold shock.
AO2	What does the phrase "zero at the bone" suggest?	A cold that reaches the skeleton: fear felt in the body, deeper than the skin. "zero" also suggests nothing, as if the speaker is emptied out.
AO2	Why does the poet save this image for the very last line?	The poem opens in a light, chatty tone ("did you not"), so the last line is a sudden drop, like the snake's "notice sudden". The reader feels the shock with the speaker.

Technique: Naming a method: personification

Personification gives human qualities to something that is not human. Name it, quote it, then say what it makes the reader think or feel. Task: Write one sentence explaining what calling the snake a “fellow” suggests about the speaker’s attitude at the start of the poem.

The question**Question 28.1**

In ‘A narrow fellow in the grass’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about the snake?

Model plan

Thesis: The speaker describes the snake in polite, almost friendly language, but the poem shows a fear underneath the politeness that the speaker cannot control.

Point 1 (opening): personification of the snake as a “narrow fellow” who “rides”, and the chatty question “did you not”, make him sound like a gentleman caller, so the reader is drawn in.

Point 2 (middle): the childhood memory. The metaphor of a “whip-lash” that “wrinkled, and was gone” shows a creature that is hard to see and quick, so the danger is never fixed.

Point 3 (ending): the contrast between “cordiality” towards “nature’s people” and the bodily fear of “a tighter breathing, And zero at the bone”. The last line drops the polite tone.

Order: follow the poem from start to end so the change from politeness to fear is clear.

- The thesis answers the question and says how the feeling changes.
- Each point names a method and gives a short quotation.
- The points follow the poem in order, so the ending gets its own point.
- There is no context: all the marks are for AO1 and AO2.

Have a go

Look again at stanzas 3 and 4. Answer in two or three sentences. How does the poet use the speaker’s childhood memory to make the snake seem impossible to catch? Use one quotation.

The child stoops “to secure” what looks like a harmless “whip-lash”, but “It wrinkled, and was gone.” The short final clause is as quick as the snake: by the end of the line it has vanished, so the reader feels how impossible it is to hold.