

between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Unseen poetry: The shape of a poem

How do form and structure carry meaning?

Lesson 3 of 12 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification

What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Unseen poetry scheme for Literature Paper 2, Section C. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model paragraph and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring student packs: one question, three levels of support (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared question answered as a What-How-Why paragraph, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model paragraph and an exit ticket.

In the full scheme

- 12 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook
- Student packs at three levels for every lesson
- Six weeks of deliberate practice homework at three levels
- Two Feedback Loop mini assessments with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks
- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with level guidance and three annotated model answers

Lesson 3: The shape of a poem

SEQUENCE 1: READING ONE POEM • 60 MINUTES

How do form and structure carry meaning?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain how a Petrarchan sonnet is built: an octave, a sestet and a volta at line 9
- Analyse how repetition and the turn at line 9 change what the speaker asks for
- Write a What-How-Why paragraph on how the poet presents the speaker's feelings about being remembered

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lessons 1 and 2 and on poetic terms. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–20	Know	Pre-teach sonnet, volta, counsel and vestige. Read the poem aloud twice. Students number the lines, draw a line between lines 8 and 9, and count how often the word remember appears.	4–6
20–28	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about what the word “Yet” does at line 9, then students annotate their copy.	7
28–33	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	8–9
33–53	Master	Students write one What-How-Why paragraph using the student pack at their level. Share the model paragraph in the last five minutes.	10–11
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	12

Do Now answers

1	In ‘There Will Come Soft Rains’, what is the only human event the poem names?	The war
2	Which season is personified in the last couplet of ‘There Will Come Soft Rains’?	Spring (“Spring herself”)
3	In ‘Adlestrop’, which bird sings “Close by”?	A blackbird
4	What is a rhyming couplet?	Two lines next to each other that rhyme
5	How many lines does a sonnet have?	Fourteen

Vocabulary

sonnet	a fourteen-line poem with a set rhyme scheme, often about love
volta	the turn in a poem, where the thought or mood changes
counsel	to give advice

vestige

a small trace of something that has almost gone

Reading**Remember**

Christina Rossetti published this poem in 1862: on a first reading, count the lines and listen for the word that keeps coming back.

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand

It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), from *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862)

Word help **counsel:** to give advice · **corruption:** here, the decay of a body after death · **vestige:** a small trace of something that has almost gone

Explode the quotation**Method**

The volta at line 9, where a Petrarchan sonnet turns.

Zoom in

“Yet” warns us that the argument is about to change. “forget” appears for the first time, after three uses of “remember”.

“Yet if you should forget me for a while”**Effect**

The tone softens from command to permission, so the reader hears the speaker changing their mind.

Purpose

Rossetti uses the turn in the form to show love that can let go. The speaker wants the lover’s happiness more than their memory.

Hinge question

In lines 1–8 the speaker keeps saying “Remember me”. What changes from line 9?

- A. The speaker gives up on the lover, who is sure to forget.
- B. The speaker allows the lover to forget, if remembering would make them sad. (the right answer)**
- C. The speaker comes back from the “silent land” to visit.

What the answers tell you

A means the student has seen the change but missed its kindness: ask them to read the last two lines aloud. C means “silent land” has been read literally: recap euphemisms for death and start these students on Securing.

Why the answer is right

After “Yet” the speaker says “do not grieve” and that it is “Better by far you should forget and smile”, so the commands become permission.

Master task

In 'Remember', how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about being remembered?

Securing aiming for a 4 Quotations to choose from "Remember me when I am gone away" "Only remember me; you understand" "Better by far you should forget and smile" Starters In 'Remember', the poet presents the speaker as _____. The poet writes _____. The word _____ suggests _____. The poet wants the reader to feel _____ because _____.	Strengthening aiming for grades 5 to 6 Prompts What: Make a clear point about how the speaker feels, and whether that feeling changes. How: Choose a quotation from before or after line 9. Name the method (repetition, imperative, volta, euphemism) and zoom in on one word. Why: What does the poet want the reader to feel when the speaker lets the lover forget?	Soaring aiming for grades 7 to 9 The debate <i>"The speaker of 'Remember' is more selfless than selfish. How far do you agree?"</i> Write two paragraphs. In the second, give an alternative reading that begins with Alternatively.
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Model paragraph

What	In 'Remember', the poet presents a speaker whose wish to be remembered changes into a wish for the lover to be happy.
How	The octave is built on commands: "Remember me" is repeated at the start of lines 1 and 5, so the speaker sounds urgent, even desperate. At line 9 the volta arrives with "Yet", and the word "forget" appears for the first time. The final couplet sets "forget and smile" against "remember and be sad", so the two choices sit side by side.
Why	Rossetti uses the turn in the sonnet to show love changing as the speaker thinks aloud. The reader sees that real love can mean letting go, and the calm last line feels braver than the commands at the start.

Exit ticket

The volta at line 9 of 'Remember' matters because...

Teacher notes

Subject knowledge

'Remember' is a Petrarchan sonnet: an octave rhyming ABBAABBA and a sestet rhyming CDDECE. The octave pleads, with "remember" used three times; the volta at line 9 ("Yet") brings "forget", and the sestet gives permission to forget. Death is softened by euphemism ("gone away", "the silent land") until "darkness and corruption" names the decay of the grave. The final couplet is not a rhyming pair: "smile" and "sad" close lines that rhyme with earlier lines, and the antithesis of the last two lines carries the meaning. The speaker addresses a lover ("our future that you planned"); the poem does not say whether the speaker is the poet.

Common misconceptions

- Saying the speaker has already died. The poem looks ahead to a death that has not happened.
- Calling it a sonnet without saying what the form does to the meaning.
- Missing the volta and writing as if the whole poem demands to be remembered.
- Reading the ending as bitter. The speaker chooses the lover's happiness.



Adapting the lesson

Everyone answers the same question on the same poem. Students who chose A or C in the hinge question start on Securing. Move anyone who completes the Securing frame in ten minutes to the Strengthening prompts for a second paragraph. Students who can already explain the octave and sestet start on Soaring.

The shape of a poem

How do form and structure carry meaning?

Securing

aiming for a 4

Do Now: five quick questions

- 1 In 'There Will Come Soft Rains', what is the only human event the poem names?
- 2 Which season is personified in the last couplet of 'There Will Come Soft Rains'?
- 3 In 'Adlestrop', which bird sings "Close by"?
- 4 What is a rhyming couplet?
- 5 How many lines does a sonnet have?

Vocabulary

sonnet	a fourteen-line poem with a set rhyme scheme, often about love
volta	the turn in a poem, where the thought or mood changes
counsel	to give advice
vestige	a small trace of something that has almost gone

Reading

Remember

Christina Rossetti published this poem in 1862: on a first reading, count the lines and listen for the word that keeps coming back.

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand

It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
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Word help **counsel**: to give advice • **corruption**: here, the decay of a body after death • **vestige**: a small trace of something that has almost gone

Explode the quotation

Annotate each box as your teacher explodes the quotation.

Method	Zoom in
“Yet if you should forget me for a while”	
Effect	Purpose

Your task

In ‘Remember’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about being remembered?

Word bank

plead	to ask for something in an urgent, emotional way
selfless	caring more about someone else than about yourself
volta	the turn in a poem, where the thought or mood changes
euphemism	a gentle word or phrase used in place of a harsh one, such as gone away for dead

Choose your quotations

- “Remember me when I am gone away”
- “Only remember me; you understand”
- “Better by far you should forget and smile”

Worked example

The poet presents the speaker as unwilling to leave. In “half turn to go yet turning stay” the speaker stops halfway, which suggests they find it hard to part.

The example uses a different quotation. Choose one from the list above for your own paragraph.

Your task

In 'Remember', how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about being remembered?

Write your paragraph

What: In 'Remember', the poet presents the speaker as ____.

How: The poet writes _____. The word _____ suggests _____.

Why: The poet wants the reader to feel _____ because _____.

Exit ticket

The volta at line 9 of 'Remember' matters because...

The shape of a poem

How do form and structure carry meaning?

Strengthening

aiming for grades 5 to 6

Do Now: five quick questions

- 1 In 'There Will Come Soft Rains', what is the only human event the poem names?
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Effect	Purpose

Your task

In ‘Remember’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about being remembered?

What, How and Why

What	Make a clear point about how the speaker feels, and whether that feeling changes.
How	Choose a quotation from before or after line 9. Name the method (repetition, imperative, volta, euphemism) and zoom in on one word.
Why	What does the poet want the reader to feel when the speaker lets the lover forget?

Plan your paragraph

My point answers the question	
My quotation short and exact	
Method and zoom the method, and the one word I will explore	
The poet’s purpose what they wanted readers to think or do	

Your task

In 'Remember', how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about being remembered?

Write your paragraph

Check your paragraph

- ☐ My point answers the question
- ☐ I use a short, embedded quotation
- ☐ I name a method and explain its effect
- ☐ I zoom in on one word
- ☐ I mention the sonnet form or the turn at line 9

Exit ticket

The volta at line 9 of 'Remember' matters because...

The shape of a poem

How do form and structure carry meaning?

Soaring

aiming for grades 7 to 9

Do Now: five quick questions

- 1 In 'There Will Come Soft Rains', what is the only human event the poem names?
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Your task

In ‘Remember’, how does the poet present the speaker’s feelings about being remembered?

The debate

“The speaker of ‘Remember’ is more selfless than selfish. How far do you agree?”

Write two paragraphs. In the second, give an alternative reading that begins with Alternatively.

Think about

- How the imperatives of the octave compare with the permission given in the sestet
- What “darkness and corruption” add to a poem that began with the soft “gone away”
- Whether the last line comforts the lover or makes the reader sadder

Verbs to try

pleads · relents · concedes · juxtaposes

Plan your argument

My argument	An alternative reading

Your task

In 'Remember', how does the poet present the speaker's feelings about being remembered?

Write your answer

Exit ticket

The volta at line 9 of 'Remember' matters because...