GCSE English Literature Paper 2
Unseen Poetry Revision Booklet
Glossary and Practice Questions

Name: __________________________
Unseen Poetry Revision Guide

- Read the poems and try to understand what their message is. You may have to read them several times before you start to understand.
- Have your terminology sheet with you when you read. Identify any poetic devices. Ask yourself: what does this word/device make me think/feel and what were the poet’s intentions when he/she used it?
- When comparing the poems, make tables or Venn diagrams to make the similarities and differences clear. **REMEMBER TO COMPARE THE POETS’ METHODS RATHER THAN THEIR IDEAS**
- Practise answering questions under exam conditions. You would usually spend 45 minutes answering both questions. As Q1 one is worth 24 marks, you should spend 33 minutes on this question and 12 minutes on question 2, which is worth 8 marks.

Past exam questions:

1. How does the writer of A Gull present his thoughts and feelings as he observes a seagull? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. In both Considering the Snail and A Gull, the writers explore ideas about how humans feel about animals. What are the similarities and differences in the way that both poets present these feelings? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

**Considering the Snail**

The snail pushes through a green night, for the grass is heavy
with water and meets over
the bright path he makes, where rain
has darkened the earth’s dark. He
moves in a wood of desire,
pale antlers barely stirring
as he hunts. I cannot tell
what power is at work, drenched there
with purpose, knowing nothing.
What is a snail’s fury? All
I think is that if later

I parted the blades above
the tunnel and saw the thin
trail of broken white across
litter, I would never have
imagined the slow passion
to that deliberate progress.

_Thom Gunn_

**A Gull**

A seagull stood on my window ledge today,
said nothing, but had a good look inside.
That was a cold inspection I can tell you!
North winds, icebergs, flash of salt
crashed through the glass without a sound.
He shifted from leg to leg, swivelled his head.
There was not a fish in the house – only me.
Did he smell my flesh, that white one? Did he think
I would soon open the window and scatter bread?
Calculation in those eyes is quick.
‘I tell you, my chick, there is food _everywhere._’
He eyed my furniture, my plants, an apple.
Perhaps he was a mutation, a supergull.
Perhaps he was, instead, a visitation
which only used that tight firm forward body
to bring the waste and dread of open waters,
founded voyages, matchless predators,
into a dry room. I knew nothing.
I moved; I moved an arm. When the thing saw
the shadow of that, it suddenly flapped,
sattered claws along the sill, and was off,
silent still. Who would be next for those eyes,
I wondered, and were they ready, and in order?

_Edwin Morgan_
1. How does are ideas about parenthood presented in 3 a.m. Feed? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. Both 3 a.m. Feed and Night Feed explore the relationship between children and parents. What are the similarities and differences between the ways in which both poems explore these ideas? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

3 a.m. Feed

Soon we abandoned our “turns”. I volunteered
Finding that, alone, the world hushed, I could almost hear
It whispered – “This is your son.”
In the crook of my arm, a perfect fit,
You were those words given weight.
Your fish mobiles made it seem we sat on the sea bed,
Your bottle a little oxygen tank,
Your gentle sucking like a tick, tick, tick
Timing how long before we had to go up,
Face currents that tugged us apart – the fuss
Of want-to-hold relatives and, worse, the office
That kept me from your first step, first clear word.
Those moments were in the presence of grandparents and mum,
Remembered in detail – “Ten past one,
Blur on the radio; he went from the armchair
To the coffee table.” Still, for me,
Those feeds have equal clarity,
Last week coming so strongly to mind –
Caught T-shirted in a summer storm,
My forearm felt drops as large and warm
As the one I’d splash there to test the temperature
That white drop would sometimes dribble
Down to my palm – a pearl.

Steven Blyth
Night feed

This is dawn
Believe me
This is your season, little daughter.
The moment daisies open,
The hour mercurial* rainwater
Makes a mirror for sparrows.
It's time we drowned our sorrows.

I tiptoe in.
I lift you up
Wriggling
In your rosy, zipped sleeper.
Yes, this is the hour
For the early bird and me
When finder is keeper.

I crook the bottle.
How you suckle!
This is the best I can be,
Housewife
To this nursery
Where you hold on,
Dear life.

A silt* of milk.
The last suck
And now your eyes are open,
Birth-coloured and offended.
Earth wakes.
You go back to sleep.
The feed is ended.

Worms turn.
Stars go in.
Even the moon is losing face.
Poplars* silt for dawn.
And we begin
The long fall from grace.
I tuck you in.

Eavan Boland
1. How does the poem Yew Tree Guest House present old age? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. Getting Older and Yew Tree Guest House both explore the feelings that surround growing old. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray old age? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

(Getting Older)

The first surprise: I like it. 
Whatever happens now, some things that used to terrify have not:

I didn’t die young, for instance. Or lose my only love. My three children never had to run away from anyone.

Don’t tell me this gratitude is complacent. 
We all approach the edge of the same blackness which for me is silent.

Knowing as much sharpens my delight in January freesia,+
hot coffee, winter sunlight. So we say

as we lie close on some gentle occasion: every day won from such darkness is a celebration.

*Elaine Feinstein*
Yew Tree Guest House

The guest-house lounges
everly ladies shrivel away
wear bright beads and jumpers
to colour the waiting day
between breakfast and bed.

Grey widows whose beds and meals are made,
husbands tidied with the emptied cupboards,
live in mortgaged time
disguising inconstancy
with shavings of surface talk, letters
to nieces, stitches dropped in the quick-knit jacket,
picked up for makeweight meaning.

Weekdays are patterned by meals –
sole chance for speculation –
will it be cabbage or peas; boiled fish or fried?
Dead Sunday is dedicated to roast beef –
knives and forks are grips upon existence.
This diversion lengthens the journey;
and since Mrs Porter ceased to come downstairs,
ceased altogether,
the ladies at the Yew Tree Guest House
draw closer to the table.

Phoebe Hesketh
1. How does the poem The Moth’s Plea present the moth’s life? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. The Moth’s Plea and Weasels both explore the lives of animals who are thought of as pests. Compare the ways in which the poets present these ideas. [8 marks – 12 minutes]

The Moth’s Plea

Elizabeth Jennings

I am a disappointment
And much worse.
You hear a flutter, you expect a brilliance of wings,
Colours dancing, a bright
Flutter, but then you see
A brown, bedraggled creature
With a shamefaced, unclean look
Darting upon your curtains and clothes,
Fighting against the light.
I hate myself. It’s no wonder you hate me.

I meddle among your things,
I make a meal out of almost any cloth,
I hide in cupboards and scare
Any who catch me unaware.
I am your enemy – the moth.

You try to keep me away
But I’m wily and when I do
Manage to hide, you chase me, beat me, put
Horrible-smelling balls to poison me.
Have you ever thought what it’s like to be
A parasite,
Someone who gives you a fright,
Who envies the rainbow colours of the bright
Butterflies who hover round flowers all day?
Oh please believe that I do understand how it feels
To be awake in and be afraid of the night.
Weasels

John Tripp

They are only scrap for a furrier
Or trimming for a lady’s wrap.
But before they end on a heap
They are awful in the fields and streams.

Red-brown and nine inches long.
They eat mice and moles and frogs;
Rooks, crows and owls are nothing to them.
Weasels will get through a bush or hedge
For thrush and blackbird eggs
And swim a mile when they sniff dead fish.

My granddad saw one
Wipe out a granary of rats
And then look around to see
If he had missed any
Before he enjoyed his huge supper.

Once, in America, a hawk was found
With a weasel’s skull locked to its throat.

Even when chased by a fox
They may stop to kill a chicken.

Weasels like rabbits, too
They will also attack a man
If trapped – single and alone
They jump for the neck.

In Carmarthen they have hunted in packs
Scampering behind the poor scared hares
Lolloping in the moonlight.

20 They will live anywhere smelly
Inside a maggoty sheep carcass

30 Or a rotted tree-stump,
A crumbled wall crevice or a fish hole

In the riverbank. Their innocent babies
Nest tight at the back of the holes.
1. How does the poem November Story present the narrator’s experience? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. November Story and November Night, Edinburgh both explore the narrators’ experiences of November. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets do so? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

**November Story VERNON SCANNELL**

The evening had caught cold;
Its eyes were blurred.
It had a dripping nose
And its tongue was furred.

I sat in a warm bar
After the day’s work:
November snuffled outside,
Greasing the sidewalk.

But soon I had to go
Out into the night
Where shadows prowled the alleys,
Hiding from the light.

But light shone at the corner
On the pavement where
A man had fallen over
Or been knocked down there.

His legs on the slimed concrete
Were splayed out wide;

He had been propped against a lamp-post:
His head lolled to one side.

A victim of crime or accident,
An image of fear,
He remained quite motionless
As I drew near.

Then a thin voice startled silence
From a doorway close by
Where an urchin hid from the wind
“Spare a penny for the guy!”

I gave the boy some money
And hastened on.
A voice called, ‘Thank you guv’nor!’
And the words upon

The wincing air seemed strange –
So hoarse and deep –
As if the guy had spoken
In his restless sleep.
November night, Edinburgh

The night tinkles like ice in glasses.
Leaves are glued to the pavement with frost.
The brown air fumes at the shop windows,
Tries the door, and sidles past.

5 I gulp down winter raw. The heady
Darkness swirls with tenements.
In a brown fuzz of cottonwool
Lamps fade up crags, die into pits.

Frost in my lungs is harsh as leaves

10 Scraped up on paths. - I look up, there,
A high roof sails, at the mast-head
Fluttering a grey and ragged star.

The world’s a bear shrugged in his den.
It’s snug and close in the snoring night.

15 And outside like chrysanthemums
The fog unfolds its bitter scent.

NORMAN MACCAIG
1. How does the poem Names present growing up and getting old? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. Names and In Oak Terrace both explore the theme of growing old. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray this theme? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

Names
by Wendy Cope

She was Eliza for a few weeks
when she was a baby –
Eliza Lily. Soon it changed to Lil.
Later she was Miss Steward in the baker’s shop
And then ‘my love’, ‘my darling’, Mother.
Widowed at thirty, she went back to work
As Mrs Hand. Her daughter grew up,
Married and gave birth.
Now she was Nanna. ‘Everybody
Calls me Nanna,’ she would say to visitors.
And so they did – friends, tradesmen, the doctor.
In the geriatric ward
They used the patients’ Christian names.
‘Lil,’ we said, ‘or Nanna,’
But it wasn’t in her file
And for those last bewildered weeks
She was Eliza once again.

In Oak Terrace
by Tony Connor

Old and alone, she sits at nights,
Nodding before the television.
The house is quiet now. She knits,
rises to put the kettle on,
waits a cowboy’s killing, reads
the local Births and Deaths, and falls
asleep at ‘Growing stock-piles of war-heads’.
A world that threatens worse ills
fades. She dreams of life spent
in the one house: suffers again
poverty, sickness, abandonment,
a child’s death, a brother’s brain
melting to madness. Seventy years
of common trouble; the kettle sings.
At midnight she says her silly prayers,
And takes her teeth out, and collects her night-things.
1. How does the poem Summer in the Village present the changing community? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. Summer in the Village and Incoming Calls both explore the theme change. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray this theme? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

Summer in the Village

Now, you can see
where the widows live:
nettles grow tall and thistles seed
round old machinery.

5 Hayfields smooth under the scythe
simmer with tussocks;
the hedges begin to go,
and the bracken floods in.

Where the young folk have stayed on
gaudy crops of caravans
and tents erupt in roadside fields;
Shell Gifts, Crab Sandwiches, To Let,
the signs solicit by the gates, left
open

10 where the milk churns used to stand;
and the cash trickles in.

‘For Sale’ goes up again
on farms the townies bought with
good intentions

20 and a copy of The Whole Earth Guide;

Samantha, Dominic and Willow play
among the geese and goats while
parents in the pub
complain about Welsh education and
the dole.

25 And a new asperity creeps in.

Now, you will see
the tidy management of second
homes:

30 slightly startled, old skin stretched,
the cottages are made convenient.
There are boats with seats;
dogs with the work bred out of them
sit listlessly by garden chairs on
Kodakcolor* lawns;
and all that was community seeps
out.

CHRISTINE EVANS
Incoming Calls

Thriving in the borders
We know we'll never be Welsh
But our children are or will be
And we're happy to help.

5 We're refugees from the cityscape
We came here to give them freedom
to grow
Where the air won't line their lungs
With grey snow.

10 Yes, some of us are ageing hippies
Who art and craft and grow green
vegetables
For seemingly little gain
But we add our incoming voices loud
To the chorus who want the village
school to remain
We came here to join the community
Though some fear we're taking over
'cause we want to protect what we came here for

20 When some who've been here for
hundreds of years
Want jobs no matter what the ecological discord

And some of your sons and daughters
Can't live in the place they were born to
'cause some of us had loads of cash
From the sale of our city semi-detached

30 And we've forced the prices
Beyond your dreams
And you don't see why your kids
Have to leave
And it's happened before
It'll happen again
We can only try
To help our children be friends

'cause everyone wants a better life
And everyone fights to have it
And change is a river that flows on and on
No matter how much you damn it

LABI SIFFRE
1. How does the poem *Impressions of a New Boy* present the experience of school? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. *Impressions of a New Boy* and *Only the Wall* both explore childhood experiences. What are the similarities and differences in the way that the poets portray this theme? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

**Impressions of a New Boy**

This school is huge – I hate it!
Please take me home.
Steep stairs cut in stone,
Peeling ceiling far too high,

5 The Head said ‘Wait’ so I wait alone,
Alone though Mum stands here, close by.
The voice is loud – I hate it!
Please take me home.

‘Come. Sit. What is your name?’

10 Trembling lips. The words won’t come.
The head says ‘Speak’, but my cheeks flame,
I hear him give a quiet sigh.
The room is full – I hate it
Please take me home.

15 A sea of faces stare at me.
My desk is much too small.
Its wooden ridge rubs my knee,
But the Head said ‘Sit’ so though I’m tall
I know that I must try.

20 The yard is full – I hate it.
Please take me home.
Bodies jostle me away,
Pressing me against the wall.
Then one boy says, ‘Want to play?’

25 The boy says, ‘Catch’ and throws a ball
And playtime seems to fly.
This school is great – I love it.

*MARIAN COLLIHOLE*
Only the Wall

That first day
only the wall saw
the bully
trip the new boy
behind the shed,
and only the wall heard
the name he called,
a name that would stick
like toffee.

The second day
the wall didn’t see
the fight
because too many
boys stood around,
but the wall heard
their cheers,
and no one cheered for
the new boy.

The third day
the wall felt
three bullies
lean against it,
ready to ambush
the new boy,
then the wall heard
thumps and cries,
and saw blood.

The fourth day
only the wall missed
the new boy
though five bullies
looked for him,
then picked another boy
instead. Next day
they had him back,
his face hit the wall.

The sixth day
only the wall knew
the bullies
would need that other boy
to savage.
The wall remembered
the new boy’s face
going home,
saw he’d stay away.

MATTHEW SWEENEY
1. How does the writer of Grandfather present the narrator’s feelings about her grandfather? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. In both Grandfather and Jessie Emily Schofield the writers remember their grandparents. What are the similarities and differences in the ways they present their ideas? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

Grandfather

I remember
His sparse white hair and lean face...
Creased eyes that twinkled when he laughed
And the sea-worn skin
Patterned to a latticework of lines.
I remember
His blue-veined, calloused hands.
Long gnarled fingers
Stretching out towards the fire –
Three fingers missing –
Yet he was able to make model yachts
And weave baskets.
Each bronzed Autumn
He would gather berries
Each breathing Spring
His hands were filled with flowers.

I remember
Worshipping his fisherman’s yarns.
Watching his absorbed expression
As he solved the daily crossword
With the slim cigarette, hand rolled,
Placed between his lips.
I remember
The snowdrops
The impersonal hospital bed,
The reek of antiseptic.

I remember, too,
The weeping child
And wilting daffodils
Laid upon his grave.

SUSAN HRYNKOW
Jessie Emily Schofield

I used to wash my grandmother’s hair,
When she was old and small
And walked with a frame
Like a learning child.

She would turn off her hearing aid
And bend into the water,
Holding the edge of the sink with long fingers;
I would pour warm cupfuls over her skull
And wonder what it could be like

In her deaf head with eighty years of life.
Hers was the softest hair I ever felt,
Wedding dress silk on a widow;
But there is a photo of her
Sitting swathed in hair

That I imagine chestnut from the black and white,
Long enough to sit on.
Her wet head felt delicate as a birdskull
Worn thin by waves of age,
As she stood bent.

My mother’s mother under my hands.

JUDY WILLIAMS
1. How does the writer of Foghorns present the effect that noises have on people? [24 marks – 33 minutes]

2. In both Foghorns and The Fog Horn the writers explore their experiences of foghorns. What are the similarities and differences in the way that both poets present these feelings? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

**Foghorns**

When Catrin was a small child
She thought the foghorn moaning
Far out at sea was the sad
Solitary voice of the moon

Journeying to England.
She heard it warn ‘Moon, Moon’,
As it worked the Channel, trading
Weather like rags and bones.

Tonight, after the still sun
And the silent heat, as haze
Became rain and weighed glistening
In brimful leaves, and the last bus
Splashes and fades with a soft
Wave-sound, the fog-horns moan, moon –

Lonely and the dry lawns drink.
This dimmed moon, calling still,
Hauls sea-rags through the streets.

**GILLIAN CLARKE**
The Fog Horn

In this soup thick night, the fog horn
Calls, like a cow in pain
Sounding its lonely rhythms. Its long

Notes travel not only the sea’s swell, but
5 Float over fields full of sleeping cattle, then
To towns, through deserted streets,
Pulsing through my window, reaching

My ears. How many people listen,
Lying in their beds awake
10 To the soft displacement of silence.

Like hearing a dying animal,
It proves that yet a life exists
Marking the human shorelines
With its pulse.

15 And all around the sea
Stretches, falling over the horizon’s rim.

FRANCES WILLIAMS
1. How does the writer Human Interest present the narrator’s feelings about their crime? [24 marks – 33 minutes]
2. In both Human Interest and In the Can, the writers explore ideas about criminality. What are the similarities and differences in the way that both poets present these ideas? [8 marks – 12 minutes]

**Human Interest**  
Carol Ann Duffy

Fifteen years minimum, banged up inside  
for what took thirty seconds to complete.  
She turned away. I stabbed. I felt this heat  
burn through my skull until reason had died.  

I’d slogged my guts out for her, but she lied  
when I knew different. She used to meet  
some prick after work. She stank of deceit.  

I loved her. When I accused her, she cried  
and denied it. Straight up, tore me apart.  
On the Monday, I found the other bloke  
had bought her a chain with a silver heart.  

When I think about her now, I near choke  
with grief. My baby. She wasn’t a tart  
or nothing. I wouldn’t harm a fly, no joke.

**In the Can**  
Rosie Jackson

Every second is a fishbone that sticks  
In the throat. Every hour another slow  
Step towards freedom. We’re geriatrics  
Waiting for release, bribing time to go.  
I’ve given up trying to make anything  
Different happen. Mornings: tabloids, page three.  
Afternoons: videos or Stephen King,  
Answering letters from relatives who bore me.  
We’re told not to count, but the days mount here  
Like thousands of identical stitches  
Resentfully sewn into a sampler,  
Or a cricket bat made out of matches.  
Nights find me scoring walls like a madman,  
Totting up runs: one more day in the can.