

Introduction - elite English skills target series - Unseen Poetry

These exercises are designed to allow students to practice analysing English poetry. Similar type exercises can be found in the Secondary School curriculums of some Hong Kong elite schools as well as schools all over the world.

The questions give students practice in the following areas:

- ★ General comprehension
- ★ Vocabulary
- ★ Identifying Poetic (literary) language
- ★ Metaphors/Similes/Personification etc
- ★ Imagery
- ★ Rhyming scheme and form
- ★ Themes and messages
- ★ Mood and tone
- ★ Thinking skills

Instructions for students:

1. Refer to the explanation of poetic devices.
2. Print off the blank exercises and attempt them.
3. Check the answers against the answer key.

Handy Hints - Literary Language/Poetic Devices

<h3>Alliteration</h3>	
Words beginning with the same sound	
Example	The <u>b</u> ouncy <u>b</u> lue <u>b</u> alloon <u>b</u> urst.
<h3>Simile</h3>	
Comparing one thing/person/animal to another using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>	
Example	She is a busy <i>as</i> bee. Her hair was <i>like</i> silk. Like a pearl, her skin shimmered in the sunshine.
<h3>Metaphor</h3>	
Comparing one thing/person/animal to another <u>without</u> <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> Using one word to represent another word	
Example	Her hair <i>was</i> silk. The snake curled around the mountain. (snake = river)
<h3>Anthropomorphism</h3>	
Giving something that is not human or an animal the characteristics of a living thing	
Example	The pen danced across the paper. The happy spoon jumped into the chocolate ice-cream.
<h3>Onomatopoeia</h3>	
Words that sound the same as the way they are spoken, suggesting the meaning	
Example	Crash! Bang! Buzz!
<h3>Imagery</h3>	
Using words (especially using the 5 senses) to paint pictures in the reader's mind	
Example	The sweet smell of cakes baking filled my nose. His cheeks were rose-red. The deafening thunder woke me from my dream.

Exercise 1

Read the poem and answer the questions in complete sentences.

The Wind and the Leaves

“Come, little leaves,” said the wind one day,

“Come over the meadows with me and play.

Put on your dresses of red and gold;

For summer is gone, and the days grow cold.”

Poem Hint

Think about why the poet uses speech marks. Who is speaking? How is this special?

Soon as the leaves heard the wind’s loud call,

Down they came fluttering, one and all.

O’er the brown field then they danced and flew

Singing the soft little songs they knew.

Dancing and whirling, the little leaves went,

Winter had called them, and they were content.

Soon, fast asleep on their earthy beds,

The snow laid a coverlet over their heads.

Vocabulary Hint

O’er: over

Vocabulary Hint

coverlet: an old word meaning blanket

George Cooper

Exercise 1 - questions

What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?

Who is speaking in the first stanza?

What literary device is this? (e.g. metaphor, alliteration, personification, simile)

What does the third line of the first stanza tell us about the season of the year?

What does the poet mean by "Singing the soft little songs they knew"?

Why does the poet say the leaves are 'fast asleep'?

What is the main topic of the poem?

What is the mood of the poem?

Exercise 1 - answers

What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?

The rhyming scheme is AABB.

Who is speaking in the first stanza?

The wind is speaking in the first stanza.

What literary device is this? (e.g. metaphor, alliteration, personification, simile)

The literary device is personification.

What does the third line of the first stanza tell us about the season of the year?

It tells us that it is autumn. (The leaves are red and gold - the previous and the next line are also clues)

What does the poet mean by "Singing the soft little songs they knew"?

The poet means they were making a rustling sound as they dropped from the trees in the wind. (accept any similar answer)

Why does the poet say the leaves are 'fast asleep'?

The leaves are sleeping because they are lying on the floor/dead.

What is the main topic of the poem?

The main topic of the poem is autumn leaves and how they fall from the trees in the wind in autumn/winter. (Accept any similar answer)

What is the mood of the poem?

The mood of the poem is happy/joyful/soft/admiring of nature. (Accept any similar answer with a positive adjective)

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